

Death Magic 151

Chapter 151: Prince Ernis

Lit and yet dim, the place quiet and devoid of noise. People enjoyed their meal in the comfort of the seventh floor of the building named Crystal. A place where most expensive shops and brands had their products out on display. From the ground floor up, the marble floor with brownish inlays gave the aura of wealth. As a result, only a few people were able to access this part.

It didn't matter, people of average living standards settled half-way across. No residential district in the capital, most made their homes near the outskirts. The city itself was reserved for business, entertainment, and work. A charm that many grew to like and admire.

"Quite spectacular for a mere restaurant," Aceline commented on the place's esthetic. "I agree," Staxius looked outside. "I care not for how the place looks; the food was absolutely divine. Even the waiters were pretty nice," Scott added his thought on the matter.

Their table was located near the edge, a place where a clear view of the outside made the food taste better. Nightlife here was a fairy tale. All the lights felt as if the stars had descended onto Vlaiwia. Buildings lit, advertisements, good looking people showing off their products, cars and many more. The disparities now apparent, technology did not just advance here, it became essential in daily life. It was hard to imagine how from a still-growing medieval continent such as Hidros could compare to Iqavea.

It felt like two complete eras living coherently in this bizarre yet amazing world. "I must say I like the capital a lot, there's so much to do and so little time," Aceline mumbled, her eyes passionately gaze upon the scenery.

"Anyways Lucy," the trance broke, Staxius got to business. "-care to enlighten us about his Imperial highness's presence?" a question that got everyone's attention. Even little Adete could not hide her curiosity. Staxius's soft hair became her new home. As if on a bed, she crawled up to his forehead and waited for an answer.

"Prince Ernis wanted to see his favorite artist," she took a sip of wine. "That's the extent of our visit," the glass placed on the table without making noise.

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"Are you sure about that?" Staxius's eyes glared at the blond-haired man, it made the latter feel threatened. "Come on,' Lucy leaned over and blocked the Prince's face from view. "Don't you believe me?" she asked trying to get out sympathy.

"Oh dear Lucy, I haven't changed since Claireville Academy. I still stand by my ideals,' the reply firm, he leaned back and the eyes lightened its intensity.

"The stuff about not trusting anyone apart from oneself?" she asked keen on knowing the ideals. "Not really, I don't mind having people around. It's just that I have a hard time believing the words that come out of anyone's mouth. One may say something and think another – tis is the way humans behave," words came out as sharp as blades.

Behind the eyes of the innocent prince, a fire burnt. He grew angry, the words from Staxius hit home. A mixture of anxiety and confusion settled in. The mind went blank from trying to decipher that ponytailed man. 'Has he figured out my plans or no,' the legs moved rapidly without effort – the pressure grew to be more than one could handle.

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'Come on break, dear prince,' Staxius thought and looked away, Scott and Aceline were oblivious to the mind games happening. Dark-arts was used earlier, he came to know some things that were never meant to be revealed. In their eyes, this was just an innocent talk.

"Lucy," a few seconds went by, "what is it now?" she asked without much thought; another drink was ordered. "What would someone do if by chance one's secret was found out – something so vile and disgusting it would change the definition of shameful," on the last word, Staxius stared Ernis in the eyes and smirked.

'He knows,' the prince panicked, the fingers twitched. "Prince Ernis," just as he tried to stand, Aceline began a conversation.

"I don't know really," Lucy downed another glass of wine. Not ladylike but none judged, "-I'd probably just disappear with my secrets," her face flushed a little.

"Excuse me Aceline, nature calls," with the utmost care as to not make noise, the prince stood and headed to the toilet.

"Scott," Staxius whispered, they sat right next to each other. "Hmm?"

"I think the prince is up to something, it's a hunch. I'll head to the toilet – cover for me," without giving the manager time to reply, Staxius set out after the prince with something hidden inside the pocket. Left alone with the two girls chatting, Scott didn't have anything to do else eat.

'Who is that man,' the prince washed his face, the water ran; cold and soothing. 'Does he know about my obsession with pretty things and how I like to keep them for myself,' one splash of water didn't suffice. He continued to wash the face till it went freezing cold.

"Prince Ernis," Staxius entered the empty washroom. "Y-yes," the voice cracked from fear. *Splash,* he began to rinse his face as well. "You needn't worry. That secret you hide isn't that bad of a thing. At last, the truth came to light." He took a step back and waited for a response. "What secret are you talking about?" Ernis looked away, the face red and cheeks boiling.

"What secret you ask," Staxius moved closer. Unwillingly, the prince stepped back till he could not proceed, the wall blocked the escape. "You like both men and women don't you," Staxius leaned in and whispered, the boy crumbled.

"H-how d-did you know," the breathing grew erratic. With a smile, he took a step back and watched. "I've got my ways, but there's nothing to be worried about. I can understand how that mindset can be detrimental in our still archaic world. Loving someone from the same sex may be wrong and all, but that doesn't give anyone the right to judge. Be free and live for yourself, for the moment thy life is dictated by others; tis isn't thine any longer."

Bang, a muffled noise echoed, Ernis hit his fist onto the wall. “How can you understand, my mind is a wreck. I can’t help but stare at both boys and girls. It hurts, if ever my father were to know about this – I’d be alienated from the only place I call home,” the voice filled with regrets.

“You speak true, I haven’t a single clue to how painful thy life is,” he paused and breathed in. “Loving both isn’t sin nor is it shameful. You might be confused at this moment, that obsession with things that are pretty and cute doesn’t make one girly. It’s normal to find things adorable. I’ve but a job and that is to protect Aceline,” the tone suddenly changed to serious. “If my client’s life, no scrap that. If my friend’s life is in any bit of danger, I swear that this conversation will make way to the Emperor,” Staxius held out a phone, one borrowed from Scott.

“...” the face changed from flushed to shocked, “I-I c-can’t b-believe it,” he fell onto his knees. “A-are you s-seriously going to b-blackmail me. Right after I thought I had found someone that could understand and accept me for who I am,” tears rolled down, “but I guess the world is filled with deception isn’t it,” the head rose, the expression of sadness and regret was one that would burn itself into the mind.

“Listen, Prince,” Staxius knelt in turn, “-don’t expect pity from anyone ever again,” he held Ernis’s shoulder. *Beep,* the file got deleted, “I won’t ask to be your friend or anyone close. Just promise that Aceline’s life is safe. She’s very open-minded and doesn’t care about stuff like having a weird secret. She may become the first one you open your heart too, but that can only happen if her life is safe. I don’t want to cause any problem with her lovely stay. If this concert were to change into a bloodbath; I can’t help but think how many people would needlessly die. This city has truly had an effect on me, the people all walk with smiles and eyes filled with happiness,” the tone filled with compassion and regret.

“I understand,” using the sleeves, the prince wiped the tears and threw out a smile. “You needn’t worry about her safety. There was really no threat to her life since the beginning. I just like to meet all the new up and coming artists. I did say I like pretty things, and she’s one of them. Anyone who doesn’t meet me first isn’t going to make it in the entertainment industry, you see – that side of the capital is ruled by me,” he pulled out his tongue. “Not in a bad way, I just like to give anyone a shot at fame and success.” By heart, the young prince wasn’t a bad person. Just someone misunderstood and one who needed a friend and a companion to rely on.

“No need to worry,” Staxius spoke, “-now that things are cleared up. If anything were to happen, you’ve got another person to seek out if needed,” he left without taking the time to listen.

‘It’s rather amusing to see that people don’t only have dark secrets, but ones that are innocent and unique, just like Ernis. I’m glad he didn’t turn out to be a lust-crazed individual; I’ve seen too much of that kind. Imagine the prince having plans to abduct Aceline and force her into doing a lustful thing to get by in the entertainment industry. It soothes my heart to finally see an untainted side of life,’ the table came in view, Scott waved.

“What took you so long?” the manager asked. “Just had a quiet little talk with his highness; a trustworthy fellow,” the phone got handed over.

“When did y-” baffled, Scott remained speechless.

"I'm back," Ernis sat with confidence and relief. "Welcome back your highness," Lucy spoke, the tipsiness went away, the mind regained its composure. "Thanks," he replied, dessert was ordered.

To that, Aceline bonded with the prince. Adete and Staxius spoke and fought, she stood on the table and held a toothpick; it was to be used as a sword. As her opponent, Staxius took another toothpick, both fought and played. Scott and Lucy conversed amongst themselves.

Minutes turned into hours; more food was ordered. Given that this place was high-end, the noise from conversations was kept to a minimum. Neither one of them did anything to disturb the other guest.

"Lucy," Ernis called out.

"Staxius," Aceline called out.

"Would you please tell us tales about how the both of you met," they spoke in tandem. With a shrug, he faced Lucy for confirmation. "Why not," she began, the tale of their encounter got told.

Scott and the rest were mesmerized. Since the start, the way Staxius was portrayed was of a boy confused most of the time. An indecisive strong boy who had gained fame in one day. From being accepted as an Apprentice to fighting on par with an SSS-ranked sorcerer, Lucy told how amazing he was. Here and there, he would correct her about things that were way off the mark.

"In the end, after defeating teacher, things happened. The only image I remember is the bloodied body being carried away. No explanation, no cause, just death; I truly believe that boy to have died," the story ended, she stared with a smile.

"Well no need to worry, I'm here, now aren't I?" not wanting any more questions to be raised, a waiter got called over. The bill was paid, 5 gold per person. After that, all headed into the hotel, Lucy and his highness stayed over as well. The top floor had more than enough beds to accommodate two more people. Ernis decided to stay with Scott and Staxius. Lucy long tried to argue that his safety was a priority.

"I shall be sleeping with Staxius and Scott, the former, if I'm to remind you, is far more powerful; why are you worried?" the words cut deep and the first day ended.

Chapter 152: Familiarity

Far, far away from Iqeavea, back in Hidros; a plane got readied. Karlson stood by and watched. The cargo filled rapidly with boxes containing God's ale. "Boss, we're ready to take off," one of the henchmen spoke.

"Alright, everything has been prepared. The airfield should be ready for landing at any given time tomorrow," nothing more needed to be said. The engine fired up, it roared. About 50,000 worth of gold coins were loaded. So much money just from a drink that most don't know its origin let alone its name.

The plane took off in the background. Karlson's car drove out, he sat at the back and thought; the face seemed worried. 'That was the last batch of God's ale we'll be able to send this month. I know not if our supplier has died or something bad happened. All that is sure is that contact has been lost,' cigar in mouth, a problem surfaced yet again.

'Who's making all that noise,' Staxius awoke to a room invaded by snores. Scott and he shared a bed whilst the prince stayed in another room. 'What an idiot,' the curtain closed, Staxius walked over. "Fresh air at last," the dim room lit, the sun rushed in as if a starved animal. It was accompanied by the trusty wind whomst filled the suffocating atmosphere with life.

"Scott," he spoke, the manager's sleep broke as soon as the window opened. "Thanks for waking me up," the hands reached for the glasses that laid near the bed.

"Sure," he didn't care for the stomach growled. "Can't you keep it quiet?" Adete crawled from underneath the t-shirt. "Sleep some more if you want," he offered. "Sure," she accepted and dozed off on the head. The hair now untied ran down the back. Without any facial hair, Staxius looked somewhat feminine. That was before the red-eye and symbol anyways, he now looked menacing.

Having slept only in a very small short and a t-shirt, the body filled with symbols and ancient writing came to light. The legs were filled, and so was the upper body. The arms began to have an engraving of its own, one that related to the symbol of power given by Lord Death.

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Click, the door opened, Ernis stood before a mirror and brushed his teeth. "Morning Prince," with the hand covering the mouth from a yawn, Staxius walked in without worry. "Morning Staxius," he returned the good morning graciously.

"I hope you don't mind me using the toilet, right?" Staxius leaned over the door left ajar. The latter separated the bath into two sections: one with a toilet and the other with a shower, bath, and a mirror.

"It's no worries," the prince in turned leaned backward and replied with a firm smile. "Awesome," Staxius proceeded to continue with the morning ritual.

Click, the door opened yet again, this time Scott walked in. "Man, for a luxurious hotel, having one toilet is sure inconvenient," he complained and rinsed his face.

"They have two taps at least, let's rejoice with what we have," Ernis dried the face with a towel. "I guess they got that going for themselves," Scott undressed without much thought.

"Ernis, you may be royalty and all, but I care not." The boxers dropped right beneath the prince's feet. "I appreciate the thought, being treated like a normal human is far better than the fake gestures of politeness," he replied with another smile.

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"Well, I'll take a shower first, Staxius join me if you want," Scott added with a serious snobbish tone. "Want me to wash your back whilst we're there?" from the toilet, he fired back sarcastically.

"Touché my friend, touché," Scott who stood butt naked now showered. "I'll go get dressed," the door opened yet again, Ernis left. Staxius now brushed his teeth, "Adete, opened your mouth," he asked, the still asleep girl pulled out a big grin. To that, Staxius took her in his hand and cleaned her mouth. In the end, the toothpaste covered her whole face.

"Be careful, I'm still a lady," her eyes barely opened, the usual attitude wasn't there yet. "Sure," using a cup, he dowsed her with cold water. "Rise and shine," he smirked, she stood with her arms crossed and

the eyes of a killer. "IT'S TOO EARLY," she flew and began to whale, to that, he grabbed her by the shorts and yawned.

"Scott, I think I'll join you," he got undressed and entered the shower, "me too," Adete demanded. She sat on his shoulder and all three had a shower. The sarcastic remark turned into reality; these guys were being themselves. No boundary, no tact, no filter, just guys being guys.

A few minutes went by, in the girl's room – both Lucy and Aceline were more respectful to one another. Each respected one's privacy. "Lucy, do you think the guys are ready to head out and eat?" both now dried their hair. She asked due to hunger, a heavy day laid ahead for the young idol. "Don't know really, they'll give a call once ready. No need to enter their room without reason," the reply sensible, both girls waited.

"Scott, Staxius, it's been thirty minutes; are you guys done yet?" Ernis knocked on the bathroom door, no noise came since they entered.

"Just a second," Scott called out, the door opened. "I apologize, prince, you must be hungry. He now stood half-naked, a pair of boxers helped in concealing the little dignity left. "You accidentally took the towel and left Staxius and I to our own devices," as nonchalant as one could be, the man in question came out right behind.

"We had to use magic to dry off," he explained with a monotonous tone.

"Question," something felt wrong, Ernis's mind filled with curiosity. "Did you guys actually shower together?" the face slightly blushed.

"Yes," a sharp voice yelled out, "-tis was the bonding of true men," Adete jested, they laughed. "We should probably get dressed, time is of the essence," the manager's pace quickened.

"Your highness," Staxius called out, "-what is your plan for today?" he asked, the trio exited the room. *Knock, knock,* Scott waited before the other chamber. "I know not really; we came on a whim yesterday. The most probable course of action would be my return to the imperial mansion. Being a prince and all, the emperor must be worried," the voice had an inch of regret.

"Enter," in the background, the door opened.

"No need to worry, I had fun," a smile later, they followed behind.

'Ernis Essin, what an interesting fellow. Kind, polite, and understanding – the perfect combination for a friend one could rely at any given time in life.'

The day began joyously, the new-made friends now sat for breakfast. All had a pleasant and lovely conversation, Aceline grew closer to the Prince, Scott and Lucy had more in common than expected. Staxius in turn just looked outside and thought, the scene too idyllic to ignore. Adete stood on the shoulder and leaned up against his face, the duo was intoxicated by the landscape.

From out of nowhere, a thought popped in the head, "Lucy, whatever happened to Silvio?" the face turned swiftly, she practically choked. "That came out of the blue," the composure regained. "Silvio and I got married about five years ago,' she answered with a tone filled with embarrassment.

“That’s excellent news,” Staxius felt enthusiastic, “-a childhood friend as a husband. Do tell him that I apologize for the time at Claireville academy. I sort of nearly punched the guy to death. I also apologize for being so rough back then, my head wasn’t quite straight,” the voice felt sincere.

“No need for such things,” she smiled, “-the past is the past. I’ll say this, that small time-lapse you spent with us was sufficient. It changed our class for the better – many looked up to the boy who fought against Sophie Mirabelle. It took a few months, but the whole of Class D climbed the ranks and remained at A-rank till graduation. Julius led the pack, Silvio and I guarded the back, a balance that would make our class famous. Though the war between Kreston and Dorchester had its major parts in our growth,” the eyes lit with bliss.

“What about you?” She asked, curious to know what Staxius had done over the past few years. “Nothing much really,” he didn’t want to give out information. “Come on, for old time’s sake,” to which he gave in.

“I guess I can tell you,” he didn’t mind saying a bit about the private life. “I’ve got a daughter who attends Claireville academy.” Aceline nodded as if to give confirmation, “-and that’s about it.” Rather short, but it worked. The conversation continued till it reached around ten.

“Look at the time,” Lucy stood, “The prince and I must get going,” she formally bowed. “Wait for us,” everyone else decided to see them off.

The car waited patiently outside, Ernis shook hands and embraced the newfound friends. “Tis was a pleasure meeting you all,” he spoke with gratitude.

“Have a safe trip,” Aceline yelled, the car drove off.

“Audience with Prince Ernis can be ticked off the things-to-do list,” Scott pulled out his phone to check the schedule. “Time to get serious,” Staxius calmed himself. For a moment experiencing the kindness shown by those two made protecting Aceline become a second thought. ‘I can’t get distracted now,’ the eyes changed from caring to neutral.

“Staxius, we’ve got things to do. Let’s get to work,” the manager led the way.

Next up was a visit to the location of the concert. The singer had to change outfits before leaving, the bodyguard loaded up on guns and anything necessary. Tharis was kept close. Scott loaded up with other commodities, paper works and things relating to the idol.

A car was sent over by Akhter, a familiar face in the driver’s seat. “Hello again,” Staxius sat in the front, the driver was the same one who escorted the trio to the hotel. “Are you going to serve as our private driver from this point on?”

“Yes,” the reply firm, “-and I’m glad to have you as my co-driver,” the man’s nervousness lessened. This time, the trip took a few more hours than before. From the hotel and till the entertainment district, one had to go through the always packed commercial district that stood in the middle of the city. From clothes too much more, anything that one could think was available for the right price.

The scenery never changed, it remained urban and clean. The only thing that altered was how people dressed, from nice clothes to now average, he watched with interest. Billboards filled with famous actors and actresses; all advertised upcoming movies or products. The commercial district was filled

with them, it looked charming in its own way. The flashing light of the shops and people trying to get the attention of potential customers.

“What a sight,” he mumbled, the drive came to an end – they entered the entertainment district. Buildings and more buildings, but rather than being close to one another – fields and parks were dotted around. It had more greenery than before, a place good for relaxing and taking some time off. Arenas, stadiums, and podiums were here and there. From small to large, it had everything – bars grew commonplace.

“We’ve arrived,” down the main road, a sharp turn into an empty field. A gigantic stage with speakers and screens. Workers were seen setting up instruments and testing out sounds and effects. The screen displayed a song performed by Sugar, another young idol for the female fanbase. The guy was quite handsome, it came with no shock that the ladies adored him. The car drove past the stage and into a parking lot where Akhter waited. A few caravans were stationed, the names of performing artists written in bold on the doors.

“Welcome to the land of fantasies,” as soon as she stepped out, he greeted her with an embrace. “Thanks for having me,” she casually smiled, Staxius stepped off, he stood shoulder to shoulder with Scott. The duo had grown a liking to one another. Scott liked how Staxius remained cavalier most of the time. Staxius enjoyed how the snobbish manager could lighten the day with serious jokes. A sense of humor that was quite unique.

Chapter 153: The Stage

‘The land of fantasies he says.’ The meeting felt tight and awkward but tis was the nature of Aceline’s job. Scott and Staxius had the easy task of sitting back and watching.

“It sure is an honor to have you perform with our other stars,” after a few steps, Akhter got a phone call. It seemed pretty important; most didn’t notice apart from Staxius. The fat man began to sweat a little. After which he acted tough as if nothing happened.

“Excuse me miss Aceline, something has come up.” With haste, an assistant was called over to act as the guide. The eyes wandered around, it looked for anything suspicious. The manager rejoined with the singer and the tour began.

“This is where everyone will perform,” not much care was given to where the fan would stand. The place looked just fine for the magic happened on stage and at the back. Light glimmered within her eyes, imagining the crowd of people that would stand before her – the moral raised tremendously. A few meters stood before the stage and the guide, “We’ll take a quick tour at the back before climbing those stairs,” the guide pointed at the entry into the world of dreams.

The speakers played loudly, the people in charge of sound tested everything out. Throughout the week starting tomorrow; small shows would be put on by local artists. A sort of showcase for people to attend; this was the first big music event organized. The screen seemed to not have enough of the man named Sugar, his song played constantly. Staxius could not but stand still and watch, a show in of itself.

“Hey,” Scott yelled, it snapped him out of the daydream. “Stay close or you’ll stay behind,” he urged him to follow. The seriousness from beforehand had dissipated. A quick scan of the entire arena using the All-seeing eyes had to be done whilst in the car. In the end, he followed.

A tour of the backstage was given, from wardrobes to changing rooms – it held everything. Spare musical instruments laid inside boxes. The guide seemed to enjoy the technical side of this. Aceline could not but smile at the man's passion. A few minutes later, the tour ended; the best saved for last. As a sign of respect, the guide stopped to let the young idol proceed, Scott and Staxius climbed behind her.

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"The sheer size of this place," Scott mumbled. All around the floor, markers were spotted. Places for the many bands to stand for reference. "Amazing," she was overwhelmed, the heart raced. With her on stage, the guys could practically hear the people cheering; truly magical.

"Hey Tom, we've got the live testing to do, where are the back-up musicians?" one of the tech guys rushed onto the stage, he spoke to the guide. "I think they took a break earlier," clueless, Tom stood without knowing what to say nor do.

"Damn it," the tech panted.

"Excuse me, but what's the matter?" out of character, Staxius approached the man covered with dirt. "Need people to test the live instrument. All the sound checks have been done, it's just the electronics," he explained into further detail. As complicated as it sounded, he understood every word.

"To summarize, you need people to play anything just so the equipment can be properly adjusted if needed?" All the information condensed into that sentence. "Yes, we've got two people on standby, but we need another three."

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"We can help," Scott jumped into the fray, Aceline's face lit. The rehearsal wasn't until four days later; a little practice never really hurt. "Awesome," Jim ran down the stairs to fetch the other members, tis was the name of the tech guy.

"Scott, don't you know I can't play anything," Staxius whispered, to which the manager laughed. "You'll be fine, tis but a test; none's going to judge if one plays in tune or no."

"Here we are," hands carrying various instruments – Jim walked in with two people behind. One was the same young man as seen on the screen, "is that Sugar?" Scott's eyes lit.

"Hello everyone," the voice felt soothing, Sugar walked in. Black hair, a face that would make anyone crumble, and blue eyes; a lady killer. In his hands, a black guitar. Next to him, a girl bearing black hair and fair complexion, her eyes were hazel instead. She also had a guitar, one with four strings – a bass. Rather than speaking, she nodded; the silent type.

Staxius could not but watch silently, Aceline took charge and greeted the rather popular artist. He smiled but the eyes told another story. "Greetings Aceline, glad to see that the pride of Hidros finally arrived safe and sound," despite soothing, there was something off about him. Scott tried to engage the man in a conversation but was straight up ignored, without paying much heed, he stepped back.

"Are you alright?" Staxius approached. Sugar and his partner walked by and stood in front. "I guess, I forgot that some famous people are like that. Egotistical and very prideful. That's the way of life in this industry."

Aceline's shoulder slumped, her confidence sapped away. 'Another battlefield', the face could not but smile.

"May I have your attention," Tom called out, "We need a keyboard and guitar player, as for singers; Sugar and Aceline can do a duet if needed. I'll play the drums," he walked over and sat. Jim took over the testing, wires ran from here to there; playing wasn't possible yet.

"A guitar?" Staxius glared at Scott who casually stood before the keyboard. "How the hell am I supposed to play?"

"You'll be fine," he threw a thumbs up. Holding a musical instrument completely foreign and untouched, Staxius looked around in hopes of finding a solution. The eyes came across a hidden Aceline, her presence nearly vanished.

"Are you alright?" he walked over to check; her eyes felt dim. The pleasure of seeing the stage vanished as soon as Sugar walked in. The latter and his partner were already playing. The speakers echoed around the empty spectator area. "I-I'll be f-fine," her confidence lost itself in the sea of doubt.

The bass played; the girl was pretty skilled. Accompanying her, a just as good guitar player, though it felt lacking. Tom's drumming skill made most of the workers move their heads along the beat. They were playing a song unknown to Staxius, he didn't have a single idea about how to begin.

"You three, are you just going to stand around and do nothing?" Sugar turned around; the eyes filled with pity. A single glare from Staxius made him immediately face forward, "who the hell is that guy?" he whispered to the silent girl.

"Follow me," he pulled the lost idol away from the back, they all stood around Scott's keyboard. "Lady Aceline, this stage will be yours to conquer in the upcoming days. Why don't you go all out and sing, we'll make you shine, trust in us," the words rolled off the tongue with ease. The eyes filled with trust; her daydream broke.

"I'm sorry for that," a moment of uncertainty. "You do your best, Staxius," she smiled and walked forward. "You idiot, how the hell am I supposed to play?" that quandary remained.

"Don't worry, just let her voice and my sound guide thy hands. I've witnessed how quickly you can learn; do the same thing. Think of the guitar like a piano, and you shall be fine," the words meant nothing at all. However, he could not but smile – this job was fun.

"Can you guys stop playing," Jim raised his hand; a problem occurred. This gave her time to walk and stand in front of everyone, the place where she belonged.

"Sugar, I'll take over the singing," the tone filled with determination, grudgingly he accepted. In the back, Staxius began to play the guitar without much noise – it was so silent only he could hear the sound being produced. 'Like a piano,' the fingers ran up and down the fretboard. The eyes closed, for a second; the body entered Clarity, all the knowledge needed was sought after.

"Got it," he whispered, the eyes reopened. 'Unlimited knowledge, a place where all my confusion is voided; I love it,' the hands burnt a little. Every time the mind traveled into that realm; a curse wrote itself onto the body. Ones that were usually inconsequential, living with curses became as natural as breathing.

"You're good to go," Jim yelled, the problem fixed. With a deep breath, Aceline took the lead and sang. Sugar and his friend were shocked, Scott joined in rapidly. The keyboard accompanied her harmoniously, the bass began to play as well. A few seconds later, the drums kicked in. Not wanting to be outdone, Sugar jumped into the mix and played; it sounded messy and sloppy. The young idol took a few tries but finally adjusted himself, though the song was way offline. Everything got turned upside down.

"What a mess," Staxius strummed, it caught everyone off guard. "IS THIS THE WHAT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TO PERFORM SOUND LIKE?" he yelled; this lit a fire under both idols. The guitar playing improved and so did the singer. That single note he played suffice, it got all on track.

She sang her heart out, all the faces began to smile. Without warning, the legs walked around the stage. Staxius's guitar didn't play, he watched without making much of an impact. "Come on Staxius, PLAY," she screamed; everyone stopped.

"What's happening?" Sugar asked. He was having fun until it all stopped. Not wanting to attract attention, the eyes closed, the hands moved on its own, he played. The only sound produced was that guitar of his, Tom jumped in. The heads moved furiously with the fast-paced rhythm Staxius installed. Scott cheered, the keyboard played, the bass moved rapidly, she complimented his playing.

With a big yahoo, Sugar jumped in, Aceline sang her heart out. All the workers stopped and stood in the spectator area. The faces held a smile, the head moved, in a weird way, Staxius had fun. 'So, this is your weapon,' slowly, he realized what she wanted to accomplish.

The prideful Sugar threw away his ego to play with the rest. To that end, he even seemed friendly, the people were pulled in as if attracted by a magnet. A few minutes went by, unknowingly, Staxius slipped into Clarity. The rhythm changed, the pace increased, the sound became more explosive but had a feeling of nostalgia hidden deep within.

Not able to keep up, Sugar stopped. He panted; the forehead sweated. Aceline followed, Scott's finger hurt; the speed became painful. In no way did this fast pace sound bad, it was different. As hard as Tom could have tried, the man failed in the end, exhaustion caught up. Oblivious to the surrounding, the music continued.

"Just who the hell is he?" Sugar wandered around and watched. The others followed him, Tom got off the drum, Scott off the keyboard. Aceline watched, tears began to flow down her cheeks. The melodies that came one after the other were painful. It reached a point where the left hand bled, the consciousness had strayed way deeper into Clarity.

"Give me a second everyone," Adete flew and slammed her forehead into his. He got pulled out instantly, "what happened?" he looked down to a bloodstained guitar. The hand raised; no pain was felt whatsoever. All who were present on stage rushed and gave a group hug. Whelmed by all this show of affection, he could not wait.

"I've found a new respect for you, Staxius Haggard," Scott's eyes teared up, the tight embrace ended. "Me too," Sugar jumped in. "That was the saddest thing I've ever heard in my entire life," the singer spoke lastly.

"I apologize for getting this guitar dirtied," the voice monotonous, the testing ended. "No need to worry," Tom reassured. The wound healed itself, the atmosphere regained its normality. The image of him playing was burnt into the heart of all who were present that day.

"It was a pleasure meeting you all," Sugar spoke, the tone changed from before. Near the foot of the stairs, his manager waited impatiently. Thus, the tour of the stage ended.

Chapter 154: Star Tower

On the outskirts of Vlaiwia, the prince's car drove. A few hours had gone by, both had a lovely conversation. Above, in the sky, a plane as black as the night sky wreaked havoc. The sound of the engines could have made one deaf. It came from the south, which meant Hidros.

"A bit weird to have that thing fly so far away from the airfields," he added whilst looking outside the window. "Did you forget," Lucy jumped in, "-that there lives another noble not so far away. The man is pretty reserved and we don't know in what business he deals in. One thing is certain, that man is wealthy, super-wealthy," the conversation ended for the imperial mansion came in view.

"Everyone, back to work," the supervisor stood on stage. The testing was completed, most wanted another song to be played – sadly, that would have to come at another time. Sugar left a few minutes prior, Staxius now sat in an empty room. Aceline could be seen a few steps in front. People were taking care of her appearance. On a seat next to him, the bloodstained guitar was placed with utmost care.

Scott bought the instrument. The reason remained unknown but said guitar belonged to them. "Staxius," the door opened, the manager arrived at last. "Over here," he waved for the place was dimly lit.

"I was right to purchase that guitar," the tone filled with excitement and confidence. "What about it?" uninterested, he asked without much care for the answer.

"The way Sugar looked at the instrument before leaving the stage earlier. It became obvious that he wanted it. And to my surprise, his manager contacted me asking if we would sell it," a smirk, he laughed.

"We are not selling that instrument," Aceline stood, she overheard the conversation. "Why not?" he fired back confused, this was a quick way to make a profit. "I don't see why not, tis but an instrument with no particular interest. The permanent bloodstain that for some reason won't go away is the only thing standing out," the player saw no reason either. Selling it was the correct course of action.

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Her eyes filled with disappointment, "you guys don't get it?" she sighed. "That thing you called worthless has now changed into something legendary. The Bloodstain guitar that a man played till he bled; doesn't that backstory motivate you to play?" her eyes lit.

"I see," Scott got the idea. As if a sword wielded by a hero of old, this one was wielded by a hero as well. "I won't argue that the story isn't enticing," Staxius spoke, "-however, today was the first and last day I ever pick up an instrument. I haven't the right, my battlefield is someplace else, far away from the world of entertainment." This trip began to change how he thought. The world was seen through the eyes of someone virtuous. One who saw everything as a good thing, an optimist. For him, this change of

mindset could prove to be detrimental later on. Imagine having to end a person's life but hesitate due to said ideas – it would not work.

Both the manager and idol didn't want to cause any more problems. The red-eye told more than enough. Not to mention, Adete stood on the shoulder with her arms crossed. It was her way of saying to not force the man into something he didn't want. "Anyway, what is done is done," he stood and the guitar was handed over to Aceline. "Though Scott owns it, as the one who bled; it gives me the right to choose an heir," the voice serious, Scott accepted.

"Do what you wish, it belongs to us all," he took a step back. "Do you have a pen or something that one can write with?" the body faced Scott who now searched. "Will this do?" a marker was handed over.

"Perfect," Staxius sat and took the guitar. "What are you doing?" Aceline took a seat to the left. "Something to give it more character," the hands moved as if gliding on air. Each stroke perfect and smooth. Symbols, pentagrams, and many more ancient letters were written. "Each one of these symbols has been enchanted with my mana. Every time a note or chord is played on here, these symbols will light up." To prove it, a single string was plucked.

"Awesome," her mouth opened in shock. "Aceline is now the new owner of Daisy." A name that randomly popped inside the mind. "Lovely, now lady Aceline has a goal to work towards. To turn Daisy into her muse."

After that, Daisy was placed inside a case. The tour ended hours ago; only the caravans remained to be checked. It took around fifteen minutes, but everything was now complete.

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In the distance, a car approached. "Our next destination is an interview for Radio Star," Scott voiced out the schedule. The car stopped, "-time to work," she entered. The journey took around another few hours. In the end, all arrived safely. A ten-story high building with a Star as its stood. "This is the entertainment district," Scott mumbled, buildings were everywhere. People moved around as if robots, a familiar scene.

"Not exactly, this is the business district for the entertainment side of things," a random bystander corrected the clueless manager.

"Thanks for the clarification," the accent snobbish, Scott was grateful.

As opposed to Akhtar's welcome; this place felt cold and oddly sinister. The smiles were fake. All these signs made Staxius raise his guard, an attacker could strike at any given time.

"I guess we need to enter," she took charge and climbed up the staircase.

"Miss Aceline," the receptionist called out, "-please head to the fifth floor," she pointed at the elevator.

"Must be hard to live that life," both Scott and Staxius sat in the corridor. A massive windowpane separated the idol from them. A sign above the door lit with ON AIR written. "Not really, some may see it as work. Aceline doesn't work that way, she views it as something fun." During the entire interview, the face held a smile – Scott spoke true.

'What is this,' a sinister aura came from outside. Bloodlust was in the air, Staxius sensed it. The feeling beforehand was a premonition about things to come. "Scott," he stood, "-I've got things that require my attention." No further question needed to be said, Staxius had a job to do and so did Scott.

The pace increased; the elevator door opened. Eyes closed, nothing out of the ordinary could be seen, the auras most were white with little fluctuations. "I need the All-seeing eye." From people to people, the sight jumped around.

Outside, hidden from view, a gang of hoodlums approached. "Alright people, today is the day we bring down Star's industry. Orders came from our Masters. People who don't listen are disposed of. Useless people; belong to the void," a total of ten individuals. Each one cheered, they rode inside a harmless-looking van.

Switching from people to people, nothing could be seen. Since the ability was new, Staxius could not control it as he wanted. That disadvantage proved to be more than he could handle. Precious time was lost, *BANG,* gunshots came from below.

The men rushed in; guards were killed. The heist began, five people came from the front and five in the back.

"WHERE IS THAT DAMN AKHTAR," they rushed in and demanded answers. The receptionist and workers were held at gunpoint. Many who didn't comply were shot without exception.

'I've lost precious time. But no matter,' the eyes finally locked onto the people responsible. The elevator reached the bottom floor, the doors remained shut. He scouted the area first, '-my job is to protect Aceline. Who cares if a few people die in the process,' the eyes changed; the aura grew from casual to emotionless. The pentagram on the hand lit. 'The sight of blood,' he saw a father get executed before his family, for standing out. The loss of someone precious, "I'm done," *Ancient Magic: Teleportation,*

In a snap, he appeared in a blue mist. "WHO ARE YOU," the men all pointed their guns. The hostages were put in a circle. "Death," he added with a smirk. "FIRE AT WILL," bullets raged on, the noise echoed till the recording studio.

"SCOTT, WHAT IS HAPPENING," Aceline ran out, the interview finished. "Stay up here, Staxius is taking care of business," the head faced the floor.

Death Element: Absolute Barrier, the victims cried out in fear, in a circular motion, all the bullets stopped in mid-air. The aura changed, 'killing them would not be advantageous. I need information before they die, else I could just perform necromancy,' the mind thought about the best possible course of action.

The attackers were left speechless, nothing could be done nor said. The bullets were stopped as if being rubber toys. "REVEAL YOUR IDENTITY," only one person spoke for the entire time. The leader, hidden behind a mask. Threatened, he continued to shoot whilst the others stopped.

"P-papa?" in that instant, a child walked out from underneath a desk. The father that died earlier had two kids, both girl and both twins. Before everything began, both children played hide-and-seek.

"DON'T COME OUT, KARINA," the mother yelled. It all happened in a matter of seconds.

Out of reflex, the man dashed over and held the girl. "If bullets can't kill you, I guess her head will be what we take," the voice unfaltering, the leader stood. The hostages could not but watch in pain, the mother cried her heart out. The other sister, remained in the crowd, her eyes blank and face emotionless. She stared emptily at the man she once called father. He bled out from the head, nothing could be done.

"Go ahead and shoot," Staxius spoke, the voice monotonous. "I care not for these people here. I've said this countless times; I'm not a hero nor will I ever become one. My task is to protect one person only." Hearing those words, the hostages could not but think that hope was lost. The mother continued to cry, she begged for her daughter to not be killed.

"LADY SHUT UP OR ELSE," Karina's eyes teared up, she cried in turn. "Honestly, those sure are thoughtless words for someone who appeared out of nowhere," the leader added with a touch of confusion.

'What am I even doing,' Time slowed down, 'this is no time to think about what is good or what is bad. Killing is what I do best. There isn't a need to worry about a title such as a hero or no.' Xula's face appeared to which he smiled.

"What are your demands," Staxius spoke, it took only a few seconds. "We want Akhtar, that man is wanted dead or alive. We prefer the former option, simpler and easier," he smirked, the gun continued to press against the girl's head. "Is that so," the eyes cold.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, from when you were born and till you die, I, the god of death, hold in my hands the strings which binds you to this world, by my authority, I order thy chains to be severed, spell: Tactus Interitus.

A single snap sufficed, the elevator opened, Aceline and Scott rushed out. One after the other, the attackers fell. "W-what d-did you d-do," the mother desperately tried to get an answer. Everyone heard the incantation, Staxius remained neutral. "You better check on your daughters," he walked over to the father.

"Someone's lucky," he sighed. *Rare Scroll: Healing Magic,* If it had been a few minutes later, saving him would not have been an option. Though the wound wasn't healed completely, the injury was brought to a stage where a small surgery could save his life.

Meanwhile, outside, ambulances and the guards arrived. People were taken out, some traumatized. The bodies of the lost guards hidden by white sheets. A television crew rushed over to cover the news.

The father was taken to the hospital, a few minutes went by. Staxius stood with Scott and Aceline.

"I detect a faint trace of magic," the guard in charge walked over. "You there," he pointed at Staxius who stood outside, the camera rolled, the reporter got close enough to hear the conversation. "-Care to answer some questions?" To that, Staxius glared back.

"Is that how you look at someone who upholds the law?" he approached; the tone filled with animosity. "Uphold the law," Staxius chuckled. "-don't make me laugh. The only law you're upholding is a thing of fantasy. Have you seen how many people are left dead? Where was the so-called law then? I was honestly happy when I heard this continent had people who endeavored to save the life of their citizens.

Alas, from what I've seen, tis naught but a scam," the tone remained dignified, it had more impact than expected.

"How dare you," the guard could not but glare back.

"Uphold the law," Staxius stepped closer, "I hail from Hidros. A place remote and not known to many, a place where we all live in constant fear of death. Tis a place where kids have to learn to fight at a young age. I can say without restraint that if such an incident were to take place in my continent, not a single victim would have gotten hurt. All who could or could not fight would have raised up; in no way are we heroes. We uphold one thing, and that is justice – not some glorified thing call law."

"That's enough, Staxius," Scott grabbed his shoulder. "It's fine, don't worry about it," Aceline held the other shoulder. "Let's go," they left, the camera remained on that trio.

"Scott," out of sight, he whispered. "How did you like that speech, any publicity is good publicity," Staxius chuckled. "Honestly," Aceline sighed.

Chapter 155: Realm Beyond Human

"Earlier today, at around noon," the radio and television played," Star tower was assaulted by hoodlums whose identities have yet to be revealed." The news broadcasted itself across the capital, the attack had made huge headlines; the first-ever large-scale act of violence. The reporter, a young girl who wore glasses sat in a studio. "Not many details of the nature of the assault has been made public. However, what is known is that many people were injured. Six guards died and five people were critically wounded. Their identities have been kept hidden; more details can be given by Sarah who was on the field earlier." The camera changed scenery, the now fully-alert Star building came onto the screen.

"As you can see," the girl wore a raincoat and spoke loudly for wind caused interference. "the emergency services have been called already." It displayed images of bodies being taken inside the vehicles. "The visiting singer from Hidros was caught up in the attack," the camera panned over to where she stood. It was there that the guard approached Staxius, the crew filmed it all. Word by word, the argument was caught and broadcasted to everyone. Despite the wind, the sound was audible, thanks to the young girl who walked closer. "We uphold one thing, and that is justice – not some glorified thing call law," that line was yelled, the trio walked away.

"As you can see, one of the people who were essential in limiting the damage is infuriated," the scene jumped to interviews with the many victims. People described Staxius as a hero, the one who saved Star Tower – Aceline's bodyguard.

A high-pitched sound later, the television turned off. The time now was night; a few hours had gone by since the incident. The trio all sat inside Aceline's room. Various television shows called for an interview. "Thanks, Staxius," the voice tired, Scott facepalmed. It grew overwhelming, that publicity stunt Staxius pulled made Aceline the talk of the city.

"No need to be sarcastic. The more people who are aware of Aceline's visit, the more spectator we'll have. Isn't your job to make her shine?" a point well made, he won over the tired manager.

“Still, I can’t believe what I saw,” the images from before continued to be played without end. “With a single snap,” she heard the incantation as well, “-all the people were killed. How is that even possible?” the face turned to the one responsible.

“You hail from a place where monsters and supernatural beings exist. You find me killing a few people with a snap that interesting, come on,” the tone unimpressed, she could not but give up the inquiry.

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‘What is happening,’ just as when Aceline gave up the pointless question, the vision got blurry. ‘Everything is going around in circles,’ the right eye began to lit up, it burnt; excruciating pain shot throughout the body. “Please excuse me,” teleportation was used, Staxius now sat inside the other room.

“What’s wrong with him?” the singer asked, “probably just tired,” Scott replied. The news came on television yet again. It distracted them from the fact that teleportation was used.

‘Is it the curses?’ the arms and legs shook without control, the heart raced, the breathing erratic. It felt as if his mind was going to explode, “IT HURTS,” the eyes squinted hard. “Your teeth,” Adete flew, she hovered above his face. “-the upper two canines are growing in length,” she spoke without restraint.

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“W-what do you mean growing in length,” the eyes barely opened, the face tensed up from the overflowing pain. “I think that Lord Balthazar’s blood has begun to activate,” the voice she spoke in felt monotonous. “Aren’t you the materialization of said power?” he asked, the speech slow and steady.

“You are right,” it became robotic, “-I, Adete from the Nox’s curse, am the apparition of the noble vampiric blood. Your body has grown accustomed to us foreigners. The reason for such pain is due to the initiation, the one left uncompleted days ago. It came as a shock when we entered your body, from curses to curses, it was hard to find a place to settle. However, that is now over, we’ve merged with the Death Element. The guardian, Lord Death, has given permission. Our goal is one of the same, to make the host Staxius Haggard, an individual capable of defeating a low-tier god. A task that is still unachievable at your current level. The God-slayer is growing more powerful each day. The rank assign is Mid-tier god,” her mind went into trance. “-day by day, gods and legendary creatures are being absorbed, with each kill, the strength is magnified. Host Staxius, heir to the god of death, you need to grow stronger. Mastery of the Symbol of power will be necessary, tis your only hope. The fate of Hidros is in thy hands; another world awaits – Draebala. A quest that only the strongest can attain. Champion from Lord Death, or Champion from Kronos; who shall become the chosen one. A Rogue hero or Death himself,” she stopped, the eyes blank.

“Who is this?” trying to fight the pain, Staxius managed to speak, “-I’m Hermes, a messenger from the Olympian gods, entities that rule over another dominion. Lord Death asked us for a favor, current, he fights with an entity even stronger than the God-slayer. The real threat, the titans, fallen gods who’ve only half-awaken. I shall quote the exact words: what’s up my heir. If Hermes is giving you this message then there’s nothing to worry about. Tis quite interesting here, the fallen gods are reawakening. For the most part, all is in check, Zeus and the others have managed to seal them again. There’s a task you need to complete: either defeat Scifer, the champion of Kronos, or find another way. Draebala is the real goal,

only there that the dormant powers of a god can be unleashed. Gather strength in any way possible, time is on your side. No need to rush, but focus on getting stronger,” the quote ended.

“Is there something else?” the words felt soothing, the intolerable pain subsided a little. “Nothing much I’m afraid, I’ll leave it all in the hands of Adete,” she who hovered fell onto the chest. “Glad to see things haven’t changed with Lord Death,” at that precise moment, no longer could it be contained. The mind went numb, the body fell unconscious.

“Lord Death,” somewhere in another realm, another dimension; another dominion. A few high-ranking gods hovered above an abyss. “-the message has been delivered to your prodigy,” Hermes materialized.

“The battle of champions, that shall be quite a treat to watch,” Zeus spoke, the hand holding a lightning bolt.

“Indeed, will time overpower death or will it be vice-versa. How cruel must creation be, I, the God of Death must send my heir to fight against my companions Kronos’s heir.”

“Rogue Hero versus Tactus Interitus,” a lady spoke, tis was Gophy, the goddess of Chaos. A high-tier god, one of the great four.

“We should not waste any more time,” Zeus ordered to which the fight continued.

Back in Vlaiwia, a few hours went by. News about the attack reached every possible corner. The speech given by Staxius had made the public a little doubtful about their protectors. The Guards had to come up with a plan to restore order. The General had no clue, even the emperor was notified. The scale of those very well-spoken words had many scared beyond belief.

“You there,” Paradus pointed at a butler, “-inform Prince Ernis about this quandary. Tell him to sort out this disturbance and regain the faith of the people. I care not about the method; anything is fair.” Not wanting to get involved, the responsibility fell into the prince’s hands.

Knock, knock, the door opened, dinner time had come. Scott and Aceline waited patiently for Staxius. The wait went on for too long, to which both decided to enter the room. “Staxius, are you ok?” the voice crawled from underneath the door and into the bedchambers.

The pain now grew tamer, the consciousness regained. “I’m fine,” he answered, the voice sick and tired. “Are you sure, we can order food if needed, over-exhaustion might be the worst thing for us to do,” Scott tried to dissuade him.

“I said, I’m fine,” the door opened violently, Staxius stood; the posture normal. “Shall we go get dinner?” before an awkward silence set in, Aceline spoke, both nodded.

The same restaurant, the same atmosphere. Dinner went by without hassle. People took more time to admire Aceline, her popularity grew due to the incident.

‘What was that all about,’ he spaced out, the message delivered got repeated over and over again. ‘Grow stronger by any means, the God-Slayer is mid-god-tier rank. I haven’t a single clue to how powerful that is.’ In an effort to answer some questions, Staxius used telepathy to get a hold of Undrar who slept peacefully.

“Undrar, are you there?”

“What is it?” contact was made. “Can you give me an explanation about how a mid-god-tier stands in our world?” an unconventional question. From laying down, Undrar sat on the bed and thought.

“I’ll explain it as simply as I can. You know the A-B-C-D-E ranking system, it goes on that same principle. However, the standards for that particular ranking is different. The reference point is far higher than what this realm has set. For example, SSS-rank, also known as Platinum means E-rank in the realm ruled by Kronos. From there on, you have D-C-B-A-S-SS-SSS. Those ranks aren’t to be trifled with, normal humans can barely reach C. After that barrier, one enters into the realm of inhuman. After surpassing A-rank, one can be called a demi-god ranging from S to SSS. If by chance, you manage to break the SSS level and get into the realm of gods. It then starts from low-tier to high-tier. A special ranking is given to the supreme god, the most powerful entity. To give a reference, a low-tier god could kill off a dozen SSS-ranked demi-gods. The difference in power is on an astronomical scale. All that applies to a completely different world which is governed by another set of rules,” the explanation ended.

“I see, the god-slayer sure is powerful. I’m Silver-ranked and he’s Mid-god tier.” Whilst he spoke with Undrar, Scott waved to get a reaction. “I don’t know why you would ask such a thing. Therefore, I’ll say this; don’t try to do anything stupid. The symbol of power is the thing that separates you from other people.” The conversation ended.

“Staxius,” a warm voice called out from behind. “I apologize,” he came back to reality. Scott used a glance to tell him to look backward.

“Sugar and his friend, what a lovely surprise,” the duo stood completely silent.

“Here we thought we were being sneaky,” he spoke in jest. “Why don’t you guys join us,” Aceline offered to which they accepted.

“We’ve seen the news, must have been quite a scare,” the male singer spoke. The voice felt sincerely worried. “Not really, I’ve got faith in my bodyguard,” Aceline added with pride and confidence, Staxius could not but smile.

‘I was living in a world filled with lies. All that training and work. In comparison, I don’t even have the right to say I have the power to protect something. God-slayer, mid-tier god or no. Sooner or later we’ll meet, and I promise when that day comes – I’ll slay you without skipping a beat,’ rather than get discouraged, Staxius had a firm goal to work towards. To become as strong if not stronger than Scifer.

Immortality, vampiric power, the control over death, symbol of power from Lord Death himself. The mastery of the fabled Death Element, the All-seeing eyes, the ability to see auras with eyes closed. Inhuman speed, Daemonum Gladio, excellent swordsmanship. Conduit to an angel, and countless curses. Staxius Haggard, all those skills may well be yours. However, the inability to control anyone of them, the lack of mastery over some of the crucial parts – those are your faults and flaws. Quality over Quantity, be smart and use them all. Combination, innovation, and ingenuity, brains over brawls; my dearest Heir. You needn’t doubt thyself. The path to being the one who can protect isn’t carved in one day. Our curse always looms overhead – lose everything to become stronger; that is the god of Death’s eternal quest.

In that moment of doubt, a voice spoke. Someone hid deep inside. The fragmented part of Lord Death’s soul; the one that caused the nightmares, the memories from the predecessors, the ones who always

watched. The thin thread inside Clarity. A long journey laid ahead, with newfound vigor, the eyes stared outside and into the stars.

Chapter 156: Pure Blood

“Staxius,” a voice called out, warm little hands pulled on the cheeks. It felt like mosquito bites but stronger. The stargazing broke, he turned around to see a worried little Adete trying to garner attention.

“What is it?” calmly, he spoke, the face gentle and voice soothing. “You were just out of it, things happened earlier,” she referred to the bizarre nap. “Worry not, there isn’t a thing to be cautious about. Count it as a dream of some sort,” the words used were to put the attention away from what happened beforehand.

In no way was hiding the truth from Adete the real goal. A quick look around the table revealed all the stares at his mouth, they wanted to know what happened. The curiosity in their eyes lit as if a kid finding a new toy.

“A few hours have gone by,” with Adete at ease, Staxius spoke to all. “I guess it’s time to call it a night,” Scott followed up the thought process.

“We should get going,” Sugar stood, “-our manager is a bit on the strict side. I’ll catch you all later,” both returned to whence they came.

No further words needed to be said, the return to the hotel was a pleasant one. Aceline fell asleep the moment the car drove. Staxius wasn’t ready just yet, the face remained neutral. The mind wandered off, ‘Akhtar’- he needed answers. The incident earlier today wasn’t a mere coincidence. The nature of said attack piqued his interest. The message from Lord Death said to not worry, thus the heir obeyed. Things that couldn’t be controlled were better left to the wild.

Music played, sat inside a dark room, a phone rang. It vibrated regularly and lit up partially the table on which it rested. With each ring, some parts of the room got revealed. It was as if a giant puzzle. In the end, a bottle of whiskey, a man of a rather large stature sat. The chair faced away from said table, it looked deep into the night sky. The twinkling star brought a feeling of calmness that could put anyone to sleep.

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Clang, the glass roughly landed on the table. “Damn it, my life is ruined,” he mumbled, the mind tipsy and the voice faltering, “I c-can’t b-believe that they would send attackers this early,” thinking out loud was common to people under the influence of alcohol. “Raiding Star tower, it was lucky that I had rendezvous with another up and coming idol.”

“Scott,” the car came to a stop. The streets lit; the shops opened but it differed. Rather than crowds walking around and having fun, only a few were spotted. The news about the attack had made many cautious. That incident reached deeper within their hearts; a result that many would not have expected. The trust was lost in this thing call law, Staxius’s word lit the fire of change. A change that had yet to be decided in nature. Whether they transformed into something better or worst depended on the citizens.

“What is it?” he replied whilst helping the half-asleep singer out of the car. “There’s something I need to take care of,” Staxius walked closer, he helped in carrying Aceline upstairs.

“This business, is it anything related to what happened previously?” for a manager, Scott was perceptive and witty. They now stood in the living room, “yes, I can’t let that incident create any more problems. I’ve got a vague idea of who’s responsible,” without hearing the response, Staxius walked out.

‘It’s a bit premature to point fingers at the dark-guilds. There’s a chance that whatever Akhtar did isn’t related to that organization. Despite this, I can’t shake this gut feeling.’ The elevator headed down, he stood still and thought. ‘Contacting Karlson would be the easier thing to do.’ An array of improbable options laid out, many possibilities.’ The doors opened. ‘Let’s keep it simple,’ the plan chosen in the end was to meet with Akhtar.

The bright hotel entrance came in view, receptionists and assistants were seen all around working. People sat on luxurious couches, some had tea while others read. None paid attention, the presence was erased. Inconspicuous was the best course of action.

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“Staxius,” Adete called out, she sat on his shoulder the entire time. “What is it?” he now wondered outside trying to figure out the way to Star Tower. “You should check a mirror,’ she voiced, the tone a bit frightened. Baffled, he stopped and stared at his reflection, “what about it?” he saw himself.

“Open your mouth,” she asked yet again. The truth came to light, the body had begun to change to adapt and assimilate the blood. As a result, the teeth grew sharper and longer. “What is the purpose of long teeth, I get that vampires survive off the blood of people. But surely, I don’t need said thing,” many questions were asked.

Rather than ignoring the variations, Staxius continued to watch every inch of his body. Something he rarely did. All the alterations began to sink in. From heterochromatic eyes to a symbol underneath the left eye. The face had changed over the course of time. From looking slightly feminine to now more masculine. He could not remember the countless time people mistook the man for a lady, this was due to the long hair. Nevertheless, that physical trait never really bothered him. It worked wonders as a child, passing for someone’s daughter to evade attention and things of that nature.

“I’ve sure changed,” he voiced with a smile. Control over facial expression remained to this day. He could swap from sad to happy in a matter of seconds. “About the teeth,” Adete flew and sat on the head. “They’ll stay like that permanently. I don’t know how the blood is going to alter the body furthermore,” she turned around and laid on her back. “-do expect more chances,” her legs raised to the sky, she played around.

“As long as its nothing more than teeth, I’m happy,” the walk resumed. It felt quiet and lonesome, the night sky slowly filled with clouds. Droplets of water fell, and it rained. The journey had taken them past the many districts, Shadow-step was used. “I should probably teleport to Star Tower.”

The mild showers increased in intensity. From gentle to now a full downpour, Staxius materialized outside, underneath the doorway. “As expected, the place is close,” not wanting to go inside just yet, he took a walk around to check if there were people. To his surprise, not a single soul.

“Adete, before we continue,” he spotted a faint aura on the fiftieth floor, “-could you tell me more about what sort of advantages and disadvantages turning into a vampire could bring?”

“Honestly, that question is vague at best,” she remained on his head. “-Being a vampire doesn’t necessarily mean one has to drink blood and not go out during day time. It all depends on how much the body assimilates. For example, some can’t walk during day time, whilst others can. The blood is what decides how powerful one becomes. The emphasis on the purity of blood is a big factor. Take two individuals, for example, one given a noble’s blood – a purebred, whilst the other, one of a commoner and lesser status. The former will receive more advantages than disadvantages compared to the lesser and tainted blood,” She took a pause and sat, “in your case; the blood given was the purest and most noble out of all. No disadvantages can be expected. A more charismatic aura, enhance speed, more acute senses, superhuman strength, and immortality. Those are a few of the main attributes, despite this, you’ve already got all of those things. A general increase in said abilities can be expected,” she flew and hovered before him. “-As said before, you’re still weak. I heard about the things that are to come. Get more powerful; the true skill that you need to master is the All-seeing eyes. The potential it has can rival even a demi-god; mastery will be crucial. I need not repeat what Hermes said. I may look weak and feeble,” her face grew serious, “-don’t let that deceive, vampires are beings that went against mother nature herself,” she sighed.

“I’m impressed,” he watched with amusement, “-Adete can get serious when she wants.”

“Sure, sure,” she sat back down on the shoulder. “Well, I’ve got things to master, why not start with the All-seeing eyes,” the left eye shut, the vision jumped from people to people. ‘This is so hard to control,’ a jolting pain rushed throughout the right side of the brain. “Found it,” at last, the eyes saw a man drinking and staring at the sky.

Ancient Magic: Teleportation, with a snap, a blue mist later, Staxius stood behind Akhtar.

“How pitiful,” the tone menacing and cold, he walked.

“Who stands there,” scared, the glass fell. The chair turned around and the hand immediately grabbed onto the gun hidden under the table. “Come on,” the footsteps approached. Seeing in this dark room was a challenge, the businessman could not but take the gun and aim in the general direction of the sound.

“Is this how you greet a friend,” the hand conjured a white fireball, the Void Flame. It lit his face. “Aceline’s bodyguard?”

The footsteps stopped, “what are you doing here?” he continued to ask questions, Staxius remained silent and watched. “Are you going to stand there and do nothing?” the lights came on.

“Let’s just say I came to pay a little visit,” the fireball dispelled. The gun remained aim at the head, Akhtar wasn’t going to back down that easily. “A little visit, did the dark-guild send you?” having tattoos and symbols on one’s face was a clear sign of being part of that organization. It was obvious that he would mistake Staxius for one of them.

“Wrong,” the voice monotonous. “Oh god,” he mumbled, at that moment, he accidentally revealed he had ties with them. No normal individual would ever try and say their name out loud. Especially when said organization was a myth in the public’s eyes.

Bang, scared, he fired.

Snap, it echoed around the room, the bullet stopped. The absolute barrier conjured. "Quite unwelcoming to use such brute force on someone who might have been innocent." The moment the bullet fell onto the floor, Staxius disappeared.

"Where are you?" fear overtook rational thought process, fight or flight kicked in. Desperate, the face looked around frantically. "Don't move," the voice came from behind.

The heart sunk, something pressed against his back. "W-what d-do you w-want?" Akhtar now felt what most people sensed before breathing their last breath. All the previous lives were taken by him, the death reaper. "Information, and that is all," the aura cold and ruthless.

"I'll tell you everything, just don't kill me," he said whilst tears began to build. The man sobbed; death was one thing he never wanted to experience. The tension from being tracked down by gang-members to now face to face with death, the mind crumbled and the gun fell.

Amidst the sobbing and begging, *driing,* the phone rang. "What do we have here?" Curious, Staxius looked over to check who called so late at night. The caller's id revealed the name of, Prince Ernis.

"I'll get that call for you," without much effort, he picked up the phone and answered.

"A bit late to be calling someone,"

"Who is this?" Ernis asked, the voice a little threatened.

"Don't tell me you've forgotten about a friend you made a few days ago," Staxius fired back.

"Why is there someone crying in the background?" he asked.

"SHUT UP AND STOP CRYING," the chair was kicked, Akhtar desperately tried to calm down. "I apologize about the noise, but tis Staxius, how may I be of help?" as nonchalant as always, he replied courteously.

"Quite a surprise, I call to ask information about the incident earlier. The Emperor is breathing down my neck to find a way to calm our citizens. Honestly, I'm at a loss for words, care to help out a friend?" he asked with genuine helplessness.

"I can't make promises," he answered to which the prince replied with an "Ohh...," it felt disappointed.

"No need to sound lost, I can assure you that I'm working on resolving the situation in mine own way. The people will forget about this incident soon enough, the guards are to do something for that to happen. Pressure the news outlets to change the people's opinion – may be inventing a story about someone who was saved by the so-called protectors. You're the prince, use that weight to coverup the failure that is the law system." The words harsh but true.

"I see, thanks for the suggestion. I'll see what I can do, see you later," the phone hung up. Akhtar was lost in thought, the mind had traveled into another realm.

Chapter 157: Silver Tongue

"Back to business," the voice ominous. The weather outside seemed to be mesmerized by Staxius. The downpour was now accompanied by lightning. Each thunderbolt sounded like an explosion, it made

Akhtar cower further, the heart could not be stopped. The pressure from the man who stood behind and with the thunder who seemed on his side – none could remain calm.

“S-so w-what d-do you want?” out of fear, the businessman asked.

“Information,” he took a pause, “-tell me who is responsible for the attack today. Tell me where are the dark-guild members hiding and any information related to them. God’s ale, there must be quite a market here.”

“F-fine,” it was either get killed by Staxius or the underground organization. “There’s a noble living on the outskirts of the capital. All the wealth was acquired by the trade of god’s ale and slavery that was done away from the Emperor’s eyes. Many influential people were hooked on said drink; it didn’t have as much impact on the psyche. Rather than becoming mindless slaves, they needed people who consciously sought after the product. From what I heard, the one used in Hidros and one here differs.” With each sentence, he gulped and tried to stay composed. “T-that’s about all I know.”

“I see,” Staxius rotated the chair, Akhtar’s forehead stopped at the tip of the gun. “-Care to tell me why they want you dead?” the face hidden by darkness; the light cut out. The storm outside, with each flash, lit the face partially. The red eyes burned with the intent to kill.

Powerless, “I borrowed money to buy God’s ale and give it to the idols. I thought if they grew independent on that stuff, I’ll have more control over the stars that live here,” the face pale, sweat dripped, the feet shook. The truth now laid bare naked, Staxius took a step back. Akhtar closed his eyes in fear. *Ancient Magic: Teleportation,* a single snap later, he disappeared.

A few minutes went by, the scared little eyes opened slowly. “Am I safe?” he asked, the man was nowhere to be found. To that, the body eased, the pants were wet. “I better not mess with Aceline and her crew ever again,” the next plan had been to give her God’s ale. Luckily, the small encounter with her guard had put a barrier between both.

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“I thought you were going to kill him,” Adete sat with her back resting on his neck. They teleported back to the hotel. “Killing him would be a bad thing. Akhtar may be an idiot, but he has power over many of the idols and companies here. If he were to die, Aceline’s long-awaited tour might get canceled. I don’t want to cause her any trouble; things sure are interesting. An unknown noble that controls the god’s ale distribution – we need to check that out soon.”

The further he searched, the closer Staxius got to the dark-guild. Making contact with Karlson proved to be more advantageous than before. The rumors of the Red Seals getting exterminated by a single man who went by the nickname of Shadow; went around all the boss’s table. It piqued interest, many wanted to know the identity. A whim that most could not fulfill. Being secretive was the first and foremost rule that every underground thug had to abide by. From the lowest to the highest in that hierarchy, none knew who was friend or foe – to the different factions that were present.

Unknowingly, Staxius entered the God’s ale cartel faction, a place where not much death happened. Only trade and extortion; one that made the most out of the bunch. Karlson happened to be the second in command of said operation, the first being the nameless noble.

“Where have you been?” the door opened. “A night stroll?” casually, he walked in with clothes drenched. “Sure, whatever – just go take a bath or something. We’ve got a hefty day tomorrow; it’s photoshoot time,” Scott’s voice faded in the background, Staxius sat on the toilet.

A few hours went by, all slept. All except Staxius who stood on the balcony and stared off into the distance. The rain had stopped; mist covered most of the scenery. “A being ranked mid-god tier; I can’t even imagine thinking how powerful that is.”

[Unique Skill: Rogue Hero] Faced to face with an angel, the god slayer fought in another realm. “HOW MUCH POWERFUL ARE YOU,” the angel screamed in agony. “Very powerful,” the voice cocky, “-invading realms to become stronger has always been my job. From Scarborough to this semi-divine ranked dimension, you guys are pathetic.”

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An army of angels dressed in white-robos charged for another attack. However, the skill known as Rogue Hero made defeating him impossible. A skill that altered any life-threatening event into one advantageous to the host. Nothing was left in his wake, defeat was imminent. “Another batch dies, let’s head to the other dimension; Kronos isn’t pleased with my performance so far.” Three figures followed behind, Kanad and Kylsha, the last one remained hidden by a shadow.

Back in Iqavea, another day rose. “Lady Aceline, today we have rendezvous with various companies for photo shoots,” the schedule was laid out whilst they walked to the car. “I’ve already memorized all, no need to worry.” The door opened, “-still, tis my job,” it drove.

This time, the destination was on the outer edge of the entertainment district. A building named HLC; a manufacturer of camera-related products. She was to advertise many things in their studio, from perfume to shampoo – the day only began.

“Another giant building,” Staxius mumbled. “I guess,” Scott replied without much care. “Time to head to work,” she led the way. Since yesterday, many bystanders became more aware of her presence, especially after that speech about the law.

Half of the day was spent in a single room with lights and cameras everywhere. She changed from outfits to outfits without bothering to take a break. Poses after poses, Staxius could not but sit idly by and watch. “Pretty boring isn’t it,” Scott walked over and sat, he held two cans of soft-drinks. “Not really, just look at her; the face is radiating with light and bliss. Aceline does enjoy her job,” a faint smile could be seen on his as well. Seeing someone enjoy their work that much could have made the laziest person into a hard worker.

On the outskirts of the capital, Prince Ernis sat with a book in hand. The suggestion given the night prior went around inside the mind. A way to pressure the media in showing the protectors in a new light. Ideas ran low, trying to find a way to resolve the situation proved tougher than anticipated. ‘There is only one option; closure,’ manipulating the media wasn’t the most honorable thing to do. Only an interview with the one responsible for such an uprising. “A prince interviewing the savior of Star Tower,” it had a good ring to it.

“Lucy,” without time wasted, he rushed upstairs. “How may I help?” she sat before a computer and checked on her part-time business. “I’ve decided to interview Staxius on this whole situation. I may not

be a journalist, however, that doesn't matter. I'm the Prince, and tis my job to keep the faith of the people in our grasp." the voice confident, Lucy could not but agree.

Driing, Scott's phone rang. "Hello?" he answered.

"Hello Scott, this is Lucy from the Imperial family. I've got a request on behalf of Prince Ernis."

"Go ahead,"

"Can Staxius make it to the imperial mansion later this afternoon?" hearing his name, the manager handed over the phone.

"Staxius speaking, what is it?"

The whole situation was explained. He needed to sit down and chat with Ernis for a while. Questions about how life was in Hidros. A more in-depth explanation to follow up on the Star Tower incident.

"I guess Ernis took my advice to heart. I agree, however, I won't be able to make it today," he looked at Scott who gave the green light. "On second thought, I've just got permission. See you in about two hours," the phone hung.

"Are you sure about this?" Staxius asked the manager who seemed to not be worried. "How will you make it in two hours?"

"I'm quite fast," they waited for Aceline to take a break.

Everything was explained, her protection would not be at any risk. Since the shoot was nearly over in two hours – the car would head straight back to the hotel. No other jobs were scheduled, it gave him more than enough time to go back and forth. Even so, fulfilling his job was a priority. Aceline returned to the hotel after two hours, Staxius remained close by. Leaving the client out in the open wasn't smart nor was it respectful.

"I shall be off," the door closed behind, Aceline and her manager were in the safety of the hotel.

The time now was about three in the afternoon. Sat outside on a bench with the left eye closed, the All-seeing eye was used. To use teleportation, a clear image of the place one needed to go was necessary. Paired with Nox's curse, teleporting virtually anywhere was made possible. It took around thirty minutes, the sight jumped from person to person. It went on and on, from shop keepers to teenagers, the path till the imperial mansion proved to be a tedious one.

"Finally," with breathing erratic, he saw through Lucy's eyes. "Thanks for taking some of the burdens," the voice casual. "No need to worry, I'm here to help," Adete sat on his shoulder.

"Lucy, it's been two hours." Ernis walked around her room. "Given that they probably don't have a car; the trip here might take more than six hours," the distance was a factor he never paid heed to. "You've always made it there in four or less. Having fast cars and traveling by helicopter isn't a privilege many are given," the voice serious, Lucy brought the prince's mind to reality.

"I apologize; I guess we should have headed to the capital instead." A noise came from below, a room got readied for the small chat. The butlers and maids were well versed in different fields. It didn't take long for all to work.

Snap, “greetings,” Staxius teleported inside. “WHAT THE,” Ernis jumped back, Lucy dashed with a lightning bolt spell ready to unleash. “Is that how you say hello,” he blocked her hands with a single finger. “Staxius,” her guard lowered, “-what a pleasant surprise,” the breathing relaxed. “WAIT HOW DID YOU GET HERE,” her eyes opened wide. “Teleportation,” he winked.

“Show-off,” she stepped back.

“Alright, shall we begin this so-called interview,” the voice impatient, Ernis escorted him downstairs. The room was light brown, the ceiling covered with paintings made by a talent none could find anywhere. Walls hidden by bookshelves, portraits, musical instruments; the harmony of the various apparatus used to create art were spotted here and there.

“Very elegant,” he walked. The floor was covered by a red carpet, embroidered with golden-colored edges in a floral manner. “Do take a seat over here.” Behind him, bookshelves, and in front, a camera.

“I think we should start,” the prince took a seat right behind Staxius, they faced the camera diagonally. “Do begin,” the voice changed from casual to formal and polite.

“Care to tell us how life is in Hidros?” the prince seemed curious; the interview began. Each answer given was clear and dignified. Staxius made sure to not exaggerate, honesty was the best policy. Minutes turned to hours; the interview changed into a casual chat between two nobles.

“Lastly, care to clarify your statement concerning public service?” the voice now sharper than before.

“I stand by my words,” Staxius’s stance changed, it grew into one more formal. “Since I hail from Hidros, I haven’t a clue about how public service works. Honestly, I was appalled by how the media handled the situation. They twisted the news and headlines to make the guards seem as if incompetent. I know that my words earlier might have lit the flame of distrust. I truly believe that people should endeavor to fight for justice rather than compel people into following the law. The reason Hidros never needed such a system was that children are taught the meaning of justice. Adventurers are there to protect the people, mages, and others helped in doing the very same thing. I might have grown on a warzone and our continent is always fighting amidst itself – but that doesn’t discredit the small kids that run around the street playing Hero. The people of Iqavea are blessed in that sense. No longer do they have to worry about fighting for justice, there are people qualified to do so. I wasn’t angry about their lack of strength but the lack of resolve. I’m grateful for the guards, they made my job as Aceline’s bodyguard easier. No longer do I have to be on the lookout at all times, seeing their black and brown uniform sets mine heart at ease. Even so, I don’t regret living on Hidros – tis the place where I belong, a place where happiness isn’t attained easily. Despite the struggle of everyday life, everyone endeavors to bring a smile on their friend’s faces. I hope that monsters and war never ravage this peaceful land of Iqavea. Trust in the ones who made this atmosphere of peace possible.”

“I’m at a lost for words, Staxius Haggard – you truly love Hidros don’t you?” the prince could be seen with a tear running down his cheek.

“Till I die,” the camera shut off.

“That should settle matters of the public – let’s just hope I phrase that whole thing correctly. It should calm down the citizens and return their faith and trust in the public service,” the tone returned to casual and friendly, he sat with a smile; the interview ended.

“Thanks for everything,” they shook hands. “That silver tongue of yours never ceases to amaze,” Lucy walked in.

Chapter 158: No Mercy

A few hours had gone by in the company of Ernis. From listening to the young man speak fondly about the book describing Totrya, Staxius sat with arms crossed. Maids would often drop by to deliver pastries and drinks.

Since yesterday, the weather had been saddened. The sun refused to shine, the greyish sky loomed overhead. “Prince Ernis,” Staxius interrupted his highness. “Yes, how may I be of help,” he took a sip of tea.

“Do you have any idea about the involvement of a certain organization that shrouds itself in darkness?” the sentence was phrased in such a way; Ernis quickly caught onto the intent.

“I have a slight idea, rumors run wild around the capital. I may sit in the imperial mansion every day,” the cup was placed on the table, “-but I’ve got my fair share of ears and eyes dotted around the continent,” not wanting to reveal more information, he stopped and studied the guest.

“Should have expected as much,” in turn, the other now drank. A quick signal using the eyes from Staxius; Ernis ordered the assistants to leave the men alone.

“What is this all about?” the conversation grew tenser; the aura around the room felt heavy. “I would not dare to disrupt thy life, highness, but I apologize in advance. I’m due a favor,” the voice and face pointed at the interview. He made sure to take the pressure off the public service – something worth more than a few gold coins.

“I see,” the eyes befell the floor, he looked lost and disappointed. “Ernis,” Staxius spoke loudly, it snapped the boy out of a mindless state. “Excuse me, but I didn’t expect this from you out of all people,” emotional blackmail – consciously or subconsciously; the prince was trying to manipulate and turn himself into the victim.

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“Dearest Prince,” without hesitation, Staxius stood. “Things like that don’t work on me. I did explicitly say to not trust people without reason. I’m the worst person you can ever meet; I won’t think twice of using you if I need to reach my goals. I might have grown softer over the years, but I haven’t forgotten. So, tell me, what is your decision; will you give me what is due or will you ignore this request of mine. Bear in mind, there are other ways I can extract information,” he now knelt and placed his hands onto the prince’s knee.

“Are you just going to assault the Imperial Prince? Have you forgotten that thy feet stand on soil ruled by the emperor? It would not take a single second for you and your crew to be sent in jail. I’m in line to becoming emperor you know, I’ve seen my fair share of plots and conspiracy where my life has been at risk,” he leaned closer and whispered, “-I’ve got a talent of getting whatever I want, without exception.” What both discussed was whether information about the dark guilds should be given to Staxius. Something Ernis didn’t want to say nor take part in.

Unimpressed by the prince's threat, Staxius smiled. "I won't repeat what you said, I'm only asking for a favor; nothing compelled or forced. People sure are interesting," without moving an inch, he grabbed onto the prince's collar. "-threatening me is good and all, but never bring anyone who is under my protection in something they don't have a part in," the tone cold and serious.

"I knew it," he breathed out, "-Staxius Haggard, you only resolve things using violence. That is just bullying, and it's shameful at most," the prince held his own.

"Heh," he chuckled and let go. "Why are you laughing?" Ernis remained baffled.

"You think that I only use my strength to get what I want?" he sighed in disappointment. "You could not be more wrong. I dislike standing out, using my powers does just that. It brings attention to oneself and that prospect doesn't feel that nice," he walked over to the door, "-I much rather do things in an underhanded fashion, hidden from view; and away from spies." *Death Element: Unleash Aura,*

Nausea, lightheadedness, the inability to think, everything was felt at once. The overwhelming feeling of fear and dread, Staxius used magic – a few muffled sounds were heard outside the room. "What are you up too?" barely conscious, the prince asked; he grabbed onto the chair in a desperate attempt to not fall.

Snap, the spell stopped, "-there were a few people who jumped into our private conversation without invitation." He returned inside as if nothing happened.

"We can now speak without trying to fool one another," Staxius smiled, the aura lessened. "Thanks, I didn't think that would work," the prince's voice changed. "It took a few moments for them to notice us speaking about the dark-guilds. So, who are they?" That whole conversation was a ploy to lure out ones who remained in the shadows.

"I don't know myself; they were employed by his majesty. Maybe spies or assassins, who knows – I've got Lucy; my life isn't at risk," he added with a touch of relief.

"Come with me," without having time to explain, Staxius took Ernis and teleported outside the mansion. Far away to a beach he spotted earlier whilst using the All-seeing eyes. Though it had been grey so far, the sunset could be seen just to the left. Subtle but visible.

"I give up at this point," he sat down on the cold and wet sand. "Staxius, you're truly an enigma, aren't you. That show we put on earlier for our guest, it weirdly felt real." He looked up at the man responsible. "It was true. I care not if I have to use people to get what I want. I'm not a good person; I'll do anything to help out a friend or someone who is under my protection," he crouched and smiled. "Don't worry, I'll never bring you harm, Ernis; you're a good guy," the hardened hands patted the prince's head softly.

"You promise?" the voice felt bizarre. That was the tone of someone who hid another secret. "Yes, reach out at any time – I'll be there without you having the time to blink."

"Thank you," at that moment, the usual soothing voice felt feminine. *Cough,* he quickly got back to reality and answered the question from before. "The dark-guild, from what I've gathered so far use God's Ale as their main source of income. As opposed to robbery and other unsightly activities – trying to stay under the radar has been their goal for a very long time. Even if I wanted to stop them; lack of

evidence is a problem. I would not go as far as say that it's impossible to touch them. In politics and strength, they hold more power than I could imagine. I'm pretty sure the Emperor has probably met with their leader at one point and so have the other nations. Why do you think our continent is so rich? Gold from that trade is essential. All that was long ago, back when Iqavea was at war and struggling to survive. A band of mercenaries came together and carried out assassinations and theft on behalf of anyone who would have the money. I know not any more details; records have been erased – these stories are probably fake as well. All these ties into today's politics; people are corrupt. On the surface, we're a good-willed nation, but deep inside; hell would not even come close," the temperature dropped massively.

"Ernis, the corrupt people you say exist in every country. Hidros is filled with them; trust me on that – our current ruler was once a master in that craft. Though her ways have changed from what I hear," The eyes seemed lost in thought.

"Staxius, mind if I ask a question?" the prince stood; time had come to return to the mansion. "Go ahead," dusk set in, the light turned into darkness.

"Why are you so keen on finding the dark guilds, do you wish to put a stop to their organization?" an idea that Ernis could get behind; to exterminate the source of all evil once and for all.

"Come on your highness," he laughed yet again, "-let's just say that that organization and I have a common line of thinking. I'm not going around to carry out the job of the public service or to fulfill some noble goal. In no way am I getting involved with the whole saving the country business." *Ancient Magic: Teleportation,*

In a blue mist, they returned home. "Ernis, I think that this is enough for today. Both our debts have been cleared, even though the information provided wasn't of any help – I appreciate the trust." Both stood in the previous interview room.

"I apologize to have taken so much of your time already, thanks Staxius, dear friend," he smiled, both shook hands.

"PRINCE ERNIS, WHERE ARE YOU?" Lucy's scream echoed down the hallway, the door opened and Staxius vanished. "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?" she asked, the one responsible winked and teleported out. "Staxius..." she gritted. "Calm down Lucy, we've got that interview to edit and send to the media," he tried to make her forget about what transpired.

'I sure have been speaking to a lot of people since I arrived in Iqavea,' he now stood on a pitch-black runway. A few lights lit, massive engines roared, a plane was about to take off. 'Here I thought I'd sit idly by and watch over Aceline.' He sighed and rushed close to the hanger.

This shady looking base was found by sheer luck. Not being able to control the All-seeing eyes had its advantages. By accident, he stumbled on the runway where God's ale was delivered. 'What's my end goal here,' as black as the night, he faded into the background. Both eyes closed, Staxius used shadow-step to move around inside without making a noise. Guards and other personnel worked, they behaved in a way that resembled slaves back in Hidros.

He now stood atop a container inside said hangar. 'Finding out who is responsible for the trade; I didn't spend all those days studying that drug for nothing. I need to become their supplier and earn money

that way. Adventuring is noble and all but its tedious. There isn't a need for me to be the good guy; Xula might come to hate me for this but I don't care. The results justify the means. I could always ask Arda for money, but that doesn't sit right with me. The people are in more need of said commodities.' The plane took off, cargo from earlier was being loaded into the truck. Their driver seemed dead on the inside, an empty shell.

The eyes closed; auras of dim intensity were seen all around. The clear symptom displayed by people dependent on the drug. 'Ernis might have tried to aid, but what he told was of little help.' In that moment of confusion, the same as the time Achilles was summoned, Percyvell's face popped into mind. 'Necromancy,' he sighed, the answer simple and easy.

A full sweep of the area later, he spotted the person with the brightest aura out of the dimly lit ones. "Sorry not sorry," he teleported, grabbed the person and teleported back out. "who is this..." the victim still breathed, a middle-aged man. The mind seemed to have retained a bit of its memory. "please... save me," the voice slow and begging for help, he fell, the eyes stared at the sky. A faint light of hope glimmered. "Be my savior..." the mouth mumbled painfully. Someone forced into labor for not being able to pay back the money borrowed.

"Sorry old man," Staxius took out Tharis. "I've got kids and a family..." the man continued to pray for help and salvation. "None of my business," the eyes emotionless, *BANG,* he pulled the trigger.

"Even if you could have been saved, I'm not the person you should seek salvation from," the gun was fired without hesitating. The middle-aged man died instantly; the face held a smile. "Tis time to go to work."

Chapter 159: Release

In the background, the monstrous plane took-off. Wind generated by the engines could be mistaken for a storm. Out on a field, hidden with the aid of the moonless night; Staxius breathed. The hands were ready to work. On the ground, a man that could have been saved using a bit of wisdom.

"Your death shan't be in vain," emotionless, the right hand stabbed straight through the man's stomach. The body was still warm, it felt weirdly comforting in the cold night. The consciousness slowly seeped into the realm of the unknown. Mana was injected; a combination of notes from Parcyvell and knowledge acquired whilst in Clarity; the mana was channeled into the brain of the victim. It subtly moved; Staxius kept him artificially alive, despite having killed the latter a few seconds prior.

'To kill and to revive, tis are the ways to control a person's thought,' Staxius wondered; the mind focused onto complex procedures. Mana was being moved with precisions unlike anything till finally; the corpse could now speak without stopping.

"Tell me the truth about the Dark-guild," a simple and direct question.

"They are an evil organization that took me away from my family," the mouth moved sloppily – it was hard to decipher the words but not impossible.

"What secrets do they hide?" he asked yet again, the question that made no sense sometimes.

"The Dark Guild is filled with secrets; none know their present nor past. Death is what awaits for any unlucky fellow who wishes to infiltrate the organization without an invitation."

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“How did you end up working for them?”

“I was abducted from my family to repay a debt. I was tortured before getting a dose of the elixir from the gods.”

“Who is their leader,” the only question that mattered; the fingers crossed for the body to have an answer.

“A man who wears a mask and always hides in the office. Only a few chosen people are allowed in that room.”

“What room, where does he live?”

“On the outskirts of Vlaiwia – far away from the airfield; a place secluded where the public service has no reach. The enormous property is hidden from view by the forest.”

“How is security,”

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“Pretty tight – I’ve never been sent there but the guards are rumored to be exiled mages from the Order, another organization that has much to be questioned about.” On the last word, the body fell – no longer could have necromancy kept the man alive.

‘Thanks for all the information,’ from crouched on the ground, Staxius stood. The hands conjured a fireball, “-may you find peace in the afterlife; man, who helped in my private investigation,” the body lit ablaze. It took but a few seconds for it all turned to dust.

Faint flashes in the distance were spotted, small bullet landed in the general area were Staxius stood. ‘That fire must have alerted them, my mistake,’ without thinking twice, teleportation was used.

“Welcome back,” he teleported inside her room by accident. Scott played the piano,”-welcome back,” the voice melodious. “Thanks,” unwilling to speak – Staxius went to sleep.

“He definitely used teleportation...” Aceline added with a curious voice. “Guess so,” the piano continued to play.

A new day rose, the visit had now reached the fourth day. Another day that compromised of video and photoshoots, Staxius accompanied them both. The quest to finding out more about the dark guild was set aside. Aceline came first, today would be photoshoots within the capital, out in the public – close to danger and a few people who may be deranged.

Back in Hidros, the days went by monotonously. The adventuring guilds had their hands filled with various reports of monsters appearing. Kniq was busy helping out the other guilds. A sort of small alliance to help in the betterment of the people. Totrya grew more active, many beasts that had Tier-8 ranking were reported. Thus, a small band of chosen ones was sent to guard the province.

“My head, it hurts,” the place where things changed rapidly was Claireville Academy. Ever since the fight against a student and her father, the instructor known as Sophie Mirabelle had been having vivid dreams. Each time she tried to remember; a pain would shoot down her entire body.

“Good morning instructor,” a familiar face always greeted her. The name was Eira, a girl who was as pretty as an angel, the ice-princess. Her popularity skyrocketed ever since the two-versus-two. In a rematch against Goliath right after said tournament- she got her revenge and bested that boy to reclaim her honor. The Final Lightning Strike stance taught by her father was used, a move that nearly killed her opponent.

“Good morning Eira Haggard,” she smiled, but her eyes twitched. Josiah always stayed closer to Eira; he noticed the changes in his niece. A phone call was given earlier, the Order had asked Sophie to head to the capital. There was something of utmost importance that all the mages above S-rank should be present for.

Having asked the students to train on their own, she walked beside her uncle. The same path she took years earlier, “-this feels somewhat reminiscent,” the voice nostalgic. She had been in a deep depression for a very long time, no actual reason was ever given to her. The doctor only prescribed medicine; it was good to say she went crazy from confusion.

“My dear niece,” they entered the office, Josiah sat behind the desk. His tone changed from casual to firm and serious. “Yes?” Sophie took a seat before him.

“It’s been more than sixteen years, and now approaching seventeen,” her face turned skeptical. “What about it, is this about me having to retire from school?” the voice now angry.

“No, there’s a secret I had to hide due to pressure from some powerful people. It hurts me to say this, but I’ve lied to you for almost two and a half-decade. I find that my time is close to an end; I know not when I might die from old-age. Claireville academy has always been a place where I could relax and spread knowledge about the arcane arts.” He sighed, “approach,” the hands signaled her to move closer.

Release, the index gently poked her forehead, “what did you do?” she sat back down and watched carefully. It seemed as if Josiah wanted to play around, “-is my good uncle doing ok?” at that moment, everything changed. Dizziness overwhelmed the body, a part of her mind unlocked, memories from the past released. Altered memories changed to reality, she remembered. In that instant, so much information proved to be more than one could handle. The mind shut down and she fell unconscious; Sophie Mirabelle had regained her memories.

‘I can do no more harm to my family members. I’ve endeavored to educate Eira and to try and regain my honor for deceiving Staxius so many years ago. My weird vendetta against Tempest has always clouded my mind, old friend – I apologize. I should have taken care of your child rather than forcing the boy into an unforgiving world. I do hope my actions did some good,’ without moving an inch, he turned around – leaving Sophie unconscious on the desk.

Time reached noon, “this ceiling,” a quiet mumble, the eyes gently opened. “Ma’am,” someone sat, the eyes as red as rubies. “Eira...” her consciousness slowly returned to reality. The television broadcasted news about Aceline’s visit to the capital. Most importantly; a certain incident involving Star Tower. The

interview with Prince Ernis was also shown, the words from Staxius resounded across the entire continent. It touched many hearts, friends, and strangers, all could not but smile at that sight. He spoke of Hidros, the motherland, as a place he was proud of belonging too.

“There we have it, people,” the reporter came onto the screen, “-our young idol and her bodyguard have been making Hidros proud so far. Let’s wish them Goodluck,” even the one reporting on said news smiled.

“S-Staxius H-Haggard,” she sat upright, the eyes glued on the television set. “MY HEAD,” she yelled. “I’ll go get the doctor,” Eira ran out of the room. “No wait...” the voice faded into the distance; the student rushed out as fast as lightning.

‘This is bizarre, I’m now a married woman who bore a child. What has happened over the last few years – my memories are all jumbled up. But I know one thing; I forgot about someone I vowed to protect,’ in that instant, a picture of Staxius flashed onto the screen. Only audio from the interview was heard, not till a picture of the idol and her crew were send back home.

“I don’t care anymore,” using wind-magic; she escaped through the window.

“UNCLE,” the door slammed, “enter,” it swung open. “You’ve regained your memories?” he sounded calm; Sophie’s eyes lit with fire.

“You framed my brother so long ago, don’t you have any shame. Why did you release my memories; was it to make you feel less guilty?” what about the years I had to live in that fake world. What about my life, you ruined it for the sake of a kingdom that could care less about us,” the fierceness in her tone returned, the calm and peaceful Sophie went away. The old red-haired sorceress came back.

“No apology can ever help to fix that pain, dearest niece,” a ticket was thrown on the table. “The Order has asked to see you, in Vlaiwia – the place where your beloved step-brother lives, go and meet him. It has been far too long, I’m the sole reason you had to separate from him. I’ m the reason you went crazy, I’m the reason for all the suffering cause – please; let me teach Eira Haggard. My life is yours for the taking afterward,” the voice set on dying – the man gave up hope.

“I may be mad, but I’ll never kill you, uncle. Even if I lived a fake life, I made a family – my child is one of my most prized possession,” a tear ran down her cheeks.

“Go and see your child and brother, both reside in Iqavea don’t they?” he smiled. The plane was set to take off in one hour; Rosespire and Claireville academy were far off. “Instructor,” Eira called, she had run around the school in search of her.

“Hey Eira, I apologize but I really need to go to the airport,” the reason clear. She looked around frantically for transport. “Teacher, if it’s a ride you want then wait no further,” Red-fury roared – both sat and drove off.

“Just how rich are you?” Sophie asked, the tone curious. “Well, I don’t know – father is the one who gifted me this car,” Eira replied with a smile.

“Your father is Staxius Haggard?” she asked, the tone weirdly excited.

“That is correct, I’ve got the best dad one could ever hope for,” the voice filled with bliss; the journey continued.

Stood near a lamppost, Staxius watched calmly. Aceline’s shoot came to an end; a rough day so far. Fans tried desperately to ruin the shoot, they forgot that the idol had to work. Using Unleash Aura, the unwanted fans were made sick, ambulances were called.

The words from the night prior remained close to heart, the man spoke about the Order as if they were partly bad people. Indeed, was it weird, how could an association of mages have so much power over different kingdoms. Even now, in a world where the need for battlemages didn’t exist.

Gun and other means of weapons grew too powerful; only people that could properly deflect said means of assault could be useful in battle. Though it was relatively peaceful. Never had Staxius personally met with a member from the Order. Even if one wanted, there wasn’t hope for that to happen. The place was as secluded as a dungeon, the hierarchy established. Rather than focusing onto that, the attention turned to the Dark-guilds, a place where making his mark was the next step into the quest of opening an adventuring guild in Arda.

In that instant, a weird chill went down his back, “something bad is approaching – I can feel it,” he added in jest. The eyes stared into the sunny sky; Sophie was headed to the airfield, her eyes stared into the sky. ‘Here I come, little brother.’

Chapter 160: Infiltration

“Alright people, it’s time to pack up,” the director spoke loudly. Another few hours went by, the fourth day came to a close. Doing all this promotional stuff was tiring on the idol. At the end of the shoot, Scott had to carry her into the car – she fell asleep whilst undressing. Staxius watched instead, the manager was left to deal with all her devices. From food to errands, Scott did everything with a smile.

“Finally,” he let out a sigh of relief, the car arrived. The trip back to the hotel. It felt eerie to not have the bodyguard speak throughout the day. Adete also remained silent, the duo sat in the front seat. The driver did his job without making a noise. Calm and peaceful, very unsettling for the young manager.

‘The mansion on the outskirts – I need to go and visit that man later tonight.’ The reason for the silent treatment was because after sending all the fans to the hospital. Staxius used the All-seeing eyes to survey that lord’s mansion. It took a few hours to jump from person to person. In the end, the effort paid off, a mental map of the place was made. Most of the guards remained outside; they wielded sniper rifles atop circle towers. Some hid inside the forest itself; the supply of God’s ale arrived earlier in the day. He witnessed the whole unloading process. ‘I wonder if the Order has a hand in the dark-guilds. They are the only people I don’t want anywhere close to me.’ The car drove, the hotel came in view.

Ding, the elevator opened, “Staxius, I can’t help but think that something is bothering you,” a question asked with genuine intention to help.

“Listen to me Scott,” a gentle smile later, “-there’s nothing to be worried about. Aceline is your priority, check on her; she’s been overworking herself. I mean, just look at this,” before them laid a crouched singer. A posture unbecoming a lady. “I guess your right,” with a small grudge, the attention turned to the lady.

Meanwhile, flying over the ocean; Sophie awoke from a nap. Around four hours had gone by since take-off. Another two or more could be expected. A letter rested in her hand, the seal from the Order was stamped on it. *All S-rank mages and above are to convey at headquarters.* Nothing more, nothing less, simple and easy – that was the mindset. Not revealing much information. ‘I can’t wait to meet my daughter again.’ She felt at ease, no longer was the mind clouded by the spell. Sadness and depression went away, the true emotions came out. No longer was she a shell, Sophie was now fully alive.

Many years ago, at the beginning of the war between Kreston and Dorchester. Sophie was impregnated by Silvester Clyfford; older brother of Piers Clyfford who now went by the name Piers Riverty. Since she wanted to fight to gain back her true self, the husband agreed. Sadly, her defeat was brought about by Julius Garnet – a name that would forever etch itself in that war’s history. The man who single-handedly defended Dorchester for months to come. After that defeat, she was sent to the capital. There she was taken into intensive care. The child wasn’t in any danger, the young Julius showed mercy. Despite the rampage and hatred stemmed from her betrayal; the life of a would-be mother could not be taken.

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In the coming year, she gave birth to a lovely daughter named Meriel Clyfford Mirabelle. Since Hidros grew too dangerous to raise a child, the couple settled down in the capital. Being an SSS-ranked mage, Silvester would eventually end up working for the Order. The source of income was well worth someone from the nobility. Though their title had to be lowered from Duke to Marquess, all thanks to Julius. The friend who worked tirelessly in the background even after the death of Staxius.

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At the age of ten, Sophie decided to head back to Hidros. Raising a child proved to be the one thing that prevented her to enter the realm of insanity. Silvester helped in any way he could – the man was someone humble and hardworking. Most of the time allocated was spent in magical research in the Order. Meriel grew to look just the same as Sophie. Her magical element was a combination of Fire, Lightning, Water, and Light. The rarest of the rare, wielding four different types of magic. She was dubbed a prodigy since birth; the training was accomplished by renowned sorcerers in the imperial capital.

After five years of staying in Hidros, the trip back to meet her real family was on the way. Silvester, Sophie, and Meriel; a humble noble family, people that were liked by many.

“Scott, I’ve got business to attend too,” they finished eating dinner and now walked to the hotel. Aceline regained her strength. The interview by the Prince had taken a lot of pressure off the public service. The citizens were relieved to be able to trust their protectors again. Staxius’s plan worked; everything fell back into place. People would often recognize him in the streets to which a casual greeting would be given. Not on a celebrity level, but he grew to be a little famous. Temporary fame for the spotlight was now placed onto the idol. Advertisement, promotional stuff about her new album. The trill leading up to the concert could be felt. Not only was she one of the main people performing but other well-established stars would appear alongside her. The media went crazy trying to get people excited, and excited were they.

“Take care Staxius, I don’t know what you’re doing but be careful,” the singer spoke with a casual smile. “No need to worry,” he disappeared as night befell the capital.

“Adete,” he called out, she flew from his front pocket. “What is it?” she yawned. “You’re alive – sorry was just checking up on someone whom I thought died due to my sweat and body odor,” standing out in the sun during the whole day made her dizzy. “I’m not dying just yet,” she pulled out her tongue in a mischievous manner.

Before teleporting to the mansion, he stopped to look at his reflection. The same place he used prior; it grew to be a habit. The teeth weren’t that noticeable yet but definitely bared vampiric characteristics. “They are very sharp,” he commented whilst touching them with his tongue. “Sure, no need to get excited, the changes are yet to come.”

As requested by Adete, time was fully devoted to training the All-seeing eyes. It took a long time. Not, because the host was inept, but because after having learned the basics. The focus changed to trying out every single option and possibilities, experimenting and constructing something new. Mastery of a skill doesn’t mean learning and recreating said action with perfect execution. That was far from the truth, mastery was when one turned said skill into something new and unique.

‘Time to head out,’ *Ancient Magic: Teleportation,*

A blue mist later, the body immediately crouched into a bush. Out of all the possible places, having only seen a few bits and pieces, this location was deemed to be the best option. Not many guards and surrounded by high-vegetations. Only a steel fence stood between him and the rumored noble. Both eyes closed, the auras of many people, ones that lit brightly were sensed all around. Characteristic similar to mages who’ve trained years to build up a significant aura and mana capacity.

‘Killing a few people here might not be the greatest idea. I need to meet with the leader, not kill him.’ The goal was to get acquainted with the Boss. The few days looking around trying to find information led here. If it wasn’t for that massive plane, the last delivery of God’s ale – this place would have remained hidden.

The wind blew, the moonless sky provided darkness as cover. The trees swayed back and forth, they danced. The auras of animals would be seen here and there. The wait for the opportune moment began.

Clang, the front gate opened. People walked out, all carried bags and wore top hats. At that moment, the mansion was vulnerable. A combination of shadow-step and teleportation later, he slipped inside as if a cat. None noticed his presence, the aura had been hidden completely, even trained mages could not detect his mana any longer. Hallways, rooms and artifacts, paintings, statues; all that could reach prices up into the tens of thousands. Calling this place wealthy was an understatement. Piles of gold sat for anyone to take on tables, the guards walked around with stern faces. Outback, gunshots were heard.

The infiltration continued; a mental map sufficed. The main room was located downstairs, in a hallway where a platoon of highly armed soldiers stood. The guns ready to fire at a given instant, the gaze firmly staring the entrance – Staxius saw through their eyes. ‘This will be easier than I thought,’ jumping from person to person; the sight eventually reached the closed room. A cigar lit with nobody around. *Snap,*

CLANG, immediately after teleporting, without delay, a figure rushed with a sword in hand. If the eyes weren’t closed, that strike would have killed him. Instead, Staxius brushed off the blade, the noise it made was it hitting a metallic vase.

“Die,” relentless, that move should have made anyone take a step back. Not for this warrior, the assault continued, Staxius dodged and weaved. The boss didn’t care to look back, the confidence was overwhelming.

“Don’t look down on me,” he whispered, a gentle tap later, the cursed sword unsheathed and parried the cocky swordsman. The sudden drop in temperature made the foe step back and assess the situation. Normally, Staxius would have let the man back off, that relentless assault and feeling of being underestimated lit a fire inside. The instant the swordsman tried to get away, the sword ran straight into the stomach. Out of spite, he swung upwards, it cut the defender cleanly. *Bouup,* the man fell, blood gushed out, the organs left into the open.

“Congratulations Arthur, you’ve defeated another man yet again,” oblivious to what happened, the boss turned around. “Hi,” Staxius replied with a smirk, he stood inches away from the table. The sword cried, the signature aura that emanated from said weapon reached the man who smoked. Physical apparitions of heads screaming could be seen running around the room, it was deafening.

“BOSS ARE YOU OK?” the door opened; the man rushed inside. “Shut up,” annoyed, Staxius turned around, *Decay Touch Aspect.* Bullets were fired, all the so-called soldiers turned to dust. Seeing this place was located underground, no cry for help nor back-up could be called.

“W-who are you?” baffled, the man spoke, the voice had an accent. One of nobility and snobbish, the same as Scott but way worse. Dressed in a nice black suit, a cigar, a nice mustache, and a fair complexion. The eyes were of green color, the face covered by freckles with a medium-sized nose. He looked in his late thirties. The overwhelming aura seeped into the core – he showed a sign of wanting to puke.

A quick flick of the wrist, the blood was cleaned off the sword. It sheathed and hid behind a concealment spell.

“I apologize,” he took a seat, only the blood of the first fighter stained the floor. The rest were turned to dust. “My name is Staxius Haggard, I’ve come to discuss business,” he smiled, the man could not but shudder. This was first, Arthur was one of the most powerful individuals in this vicinity. With a ranking of Tier-6 Emerald, no wonder was the man confident.

“A weird way to start a business talk, but I like it,” the fear from earlier subsided. A thing of wonder had just started. A man of strength unlike any other, the boss’s eyes showed excitement. The boring monotonous daily life disrupted by a single man. One who infiltrated and slew the elite guards in a matter of minutes. One that rather than say, “I’ve come to put an end to your vile activities,” said, “I’ve come to discuss business,” what more could a man want.