

## Death Magic 311

### Chapter 311: Dreqai

'I feel good today,' woke in a good mood, Staxius leaned over to kiss Xula. The lady slept as peacefully as the snow falling for winter. Warm parched lips caressing her cheeks made her shuffle with her hand swinging wildly. Barely dodging an unconscious slap, he stood and tiptoed to Lizzie. An uncanny resemblance to her mother; the same posture, the same aura. Her cries at night grew more obnoxious – caring for the babe at night didn't trouble the least for he was a vampire. Dedicated, the heart that felt a little grew to be stronger. The experience of losing Lizzie the first time had served to only reinforce the mind and soul. The separation from Daemonum Gladio was a direct product. The weapon had remained dormant for too long. Through adversity whilst sparring against the goddess – the difference in power grew obvious. The weakness was always taking the world on alone; though it would have been for the best; a decision was made. Opposed to subjecting his companions to hardship, Staxius's mind was set on one thing – to create an immortal army. One that death could not stop; loyal subjects for when he took a seat on the throne.

"Rosetta," locking the door behind, the maid appeared from out of nowhere. Normally presumed that she'd teleported, the head-maid always stood on standby in a shadow down the corridor, thus the feeling of teleportation.

"What is it that you wish?" she asked with a bow.

"I'll be leaving later in the day, could you have my clothes and arms readied?" accustomed to the ways of the palace; most of his job was handled by servants.

"With pleasure, what is the desired form of attire?" she asked as they paced down the hall towards the dining hall.

"Formal and striking, I wish to make an impression," sat, butlers laid down breakfast. "-have Tharis polished and Orenmir sharpened." On that, the head-maid scurried backward and headed to the king's changing chamber.

"Majesty," called another sharp voice, "-we have an issue concerning a baron forcing children into labor," bright red-lipstick, Serene was as glamorous as ever. Transgressing upon royalty having a meal would have been severely punished, however, since King and Queen worked as one, many rules were changed to better fit the problem at hand.

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"Is that so," he took a bite and studied a hovering interface, "-that's Lord Romandie from Castle Hart to the south-west is it not?"

"Yes, he's in charge of the lighthouse as well as the farm. What are your orders?"

"Tis quite a quandary, Lord Romandie is rather influential to bring business and money to the castle often. We've no right to infringe on what he does with his property, enslave the people as he may – it is not forbidden. Weak will always be led around by the strong," the meal ended, "-still," he stood, "-do send over a spy. Monitor his every moves," said in a whisper, "-make it known that we're watching. Forcing children into labor isn't something her Majesty would let pass. You very well know her

disposition on such matters. We need not cause unnecessary unrest; Lord Romandie isn't that big a threat. A slap on the wrist should suffice. Don't bring this to the Queen's attention. Only do so when it has been resolved," patting her back, he moved over to where Youst stood.

Impressed, Serene gave a curtsy, '-The Blood King has taken to his responsibility quite well, grandfather. We're in good hands, I feel the hairs standing straight on my back – quite impressive.'

"Orders Majesty?" he asked as they walked to the changing room.

"Send messengers to all the guild representatives. We've got guests coming in on the 6th. Princess Eira will be accompanied by her class for an exchange program. I'll get into greater details from when I return," door shut, he entered the room. There, an elegant suit awaited, Rosetta stood with head bowed and arms resting.

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"I'll take it from here," he spoke loudly, "-check on her Majesty and the princess, they should wake at any moment."

Heavy stomps of guards marching cut the silence that had veiled the airfield. Staxius arrived at the sight of the TU-03 getting readied for take-off. Parked close to the office, "-morning boss," saluted the guards. A cafeteria stood on the ground floor, a place for all to eat and converse. Now at his office, Cake waved following a smile.

"All is ready?" he asked and took seat behind the desk.

"Yes," holding onto a tablet, her fingers moved tirelessly – a switch, and the office went dark. From what he grew up experiencing, technology advanced quickly. Primitive at most of the cities and towns of Hidros, Staxius was the only one who had taken a liking to the new machines made by the collective mind of researchers.

"It's confirmed that GateSix will be attending Dragoon. Sources say that guests are few extremely fickle personalities. Not admirable nor amiable, it's best to not get involved. They're also after GateSix's project; it might turn into a bidding war."

"That's why," the door opened, "-we're here," dressed formally, Courtney and Yves entered with smirks.

"Representing Phantom?" asked Staxius with a half-interested glare.

"Not exactly," they exchanged glances, "-we'll be on standby if ever a fight breaks out. Not that we're disrespecting Shadow's power, it would be better if subordinates fought opposed to the leader. A bigger impression if the intent is understood."

"Do as you wish," the dim room lit, "-Shadow will handle the fighting whilst Yves plans our escape. Quite a powerful duo, what about Elliot?" glanced to Cake, she coughed.

"Elliot is currently on a mission," her eyes never met his, "-the detail isn't of any interest, rest assured."

"Well then, let's not waste time," he led the way out, "-will there be transport waiting for us at Drejai?"

“No,” voiced Cake, “-arrangements have been made for TU-03 to transport Void and a bike.” No further need of explanation, he jumped into Void. Yves sat on the passenger side for the car could not be driven by anyone else. As for Courtney, she joyfully jumped onto the bike with a jet-black leather jacket. Circled around the runway with the plane’s cargo bay opened, the trio drove inside, climbed up, then sat in the passenger area. Following a clang, the engines came to life, “-we’re taking off,” said the pilot.

Four hours later, the plane landed in Dreqai, at an airport named Alie. On touch down, the plane taxied over to a hangar. \*Tsst,\* the cargo bay opened. “Welcome to Alie, one of the five great cities of Dreqai,” hands pressed together, a man bowed. Dark skin complexity with a mustache and a friendly aura.

“The pleasure is ours,” said Staxius who carefully marched towards the mysterious man.

“No need to be alarmed,” head tilted with a smile, “-I’m a member of the Dark-Guild,” after which a badge was shown. “I’ve come to welcome Shadow to the land of culture,” spoken true, the heat outside held a differing aura. One of innocent mischief, the buildings were of a yellowish color – not many trees; a mix between desert and civilization. Resting at the bottom of a mountain, the Airport was crowded with tourists. In the distance spanned a massive mountain range on which buildings, houses, and much more. At the summit, a mere dot to the normal sight, Staxius spotted a dome in which rested a telescope.

“Intriguing,” voiced the man, “-that’s one of the four telescopes we have. Our land and culture revolve around the stars, which is to say that we worship Goddess Syhton,” wind carrying sand would often brush against the metallic hangar with a tick.

“Interesting,” smiled Staxius, “-what about Apostle Sharon?”

“Lady Sharon has her own temple further west. A rainforest with picturesque scenery. A few month’s drive and a 6-hour flight from here. The TU-03 would make the distance in around 2 hours, our planes aren’t that fast. The weather also doesn’t help – heavy winds and sand, they affect engines regularly. It’s not uncommon to see an engine blow out mid-flight because of the land – we’ve lost many visitors that way.”

“Quite vast, how’s the rule, isn’t it hard?”

“Not really, the continent as you know is larger than the Empire. It’s separated into five separate provinces, the same as Hidros. Instead of a duke, the rulers are Royalty. King’s and Queen’s of the same family. The Main Royal family is notorious for its inbreeding. Keeping the bloodline pure, is the supposed premise for in legend, the first king had been blessed by Goddess Syhton. In that, his blood was pure – thus the continuation of the inbreeding. Same bloodline deferring monarch, that’s the hierarchy in Dreqai.”

“I do apologize for the late introduction,” Staxius held out a hand for he had been fascinated by the new land, “-I’m Shadow of Phantom.”

“I’m Diaz, informant, and spy working for Godfather Libra.”

“Nice to meet you, Diaz,” gestured, Yves and Courtney introduced themselves.

“Let’s continue the chat at Dragoon, the meeting place is just after the mountain range.” Inside Void, they drove forth. The streets were narrow and filled with people; cars and vehicles were rare; most had

shriveled bodies. No demi-humans nor nonhumans, here it was only humans that worked and lived. A winding street led up high to the telescope, tedious and painful, stopping to let people cross, it slowly fueled frustration. Two hours later, they arrived at the peak, “-why don’t we take a break,” voiced Diaz who rode with Courtney. Pulled into a lot that overlooked the entire area, sand till the eye could see. The mountain air felt light – breathing was hard.

“Are we close yet?” asked Staxius who smoked and lent on the railing. Further, a drop of several kilometers.

“We’ve arrived actually,” he pointed to a tunnel that went underneath the telescope. “There’s a laboratory inside the mountain, it’s where all the researchers are gathered.” Somber, the entrance went unnoticed until Diaz pointed it out.

“Very secretive,” smiled Staxius.

“Shall we continue?” asked Yves.

“Let’s go,” jumped Courtney, the bike roared to life. The duo was on alert; not speaking nor partaking in conversation. Eyes and minds fixed on one thing, the protection of Shadow and extermination of any who tried to attack. Approached, the dark tunnel lit with lights, a road seemed to come out of nowhere. At first glance, it seemed to go straight. \*Click,\* tapping a card on the concrete wall, a concealed entrance came to life. Smugly, Diaz winked for Yves’s reactions was palpable.

The tunnel spiraled downwards until they closed in on yet another gate. This time handled by a guard with a stern face and a powerful aura. Spoken in a differing language, \*Fantom in vin assiT exposition Dragoon.\*<sup>1</sup> The guards nodded and allowed the cars to drive through.

Parked alongside many luxurious cars, a few guests had arrived. Right of the gate stretched a white staircase leading into a very brightly lit room. ‘The time is here,’ thought Staxius, each step resounded, the murmurs from upstairs grew loud.

“Welcome to Dragoon,” said Diaz as a huge hall stretched with crowds of people around various instruments. The place was divided with wooden walls so that’d scholars would not interfere with one another. It was only the tip of the iceberg for the hall spanned to the left and right. An area for land-based weapons, one for air, and even one for the sea. By attire, the guests were of military background, uniforms, and a lot of badges on their front pocket. None paid attention to one another, they were preoccupied with consulting their assistants as opposed to the creators. Most scientists were left standing and waiting for their research to be acknowledged. A single constant made them the same, tis was their eyes. The gazes filled with the intent of getting stronger, the intent to kill, and the intent to conquer.

“GateSix,” voiced Staxius as he spotted their at the far back of the hall. From what Cake said, many had come for them. The emptiness told another story, a lonesome figure stood with a white coat and a bottle in hand. None had gathered around; perplexed, he walked without hesitation.

Chapter 312: Dragoon

Two metallic gates with the number six in a bold red font plastered on the wall. An empty table on which rested a few empty bottles of alcohol. All around, cartons and a singular used chair. The user, a man who continually peered through the bottle of whiskey he held.

'Is that what remains of the famed GateSix?' wondered Staxius who took a long stare. People around were curious by the famed Company.

"It's a shame that GateSix turned out this way," whispers came from the next booth, "-the leader has turned to a life of drinking. His last project was supposed to revolutionize the world of aerial combat. What remains is nothing but a shell and an incomplete diagram. The theory behind how he wishes the engine to be built hasn't even been created yet. What a fall from grace," they said without heed. Each time the words flew to the man's ear, he'd look up with a look of despair fueled by anger, then stare back down.

"Master Shadow," in came Diaz with the rest, "-I see that you've found GateSix," they stood in line and watched.

"What remains of it," interjected Courtney.

'There is no way this man is the leader of GateSix,' the more he thought, the more it grew to be impossible. 'There must be something he's hiding, else, why would inventors show up without an invention. Tis not a mockery, the world of knowledge is profound and unbound by emotions, what matters is wit.'

"Boss, we should check the other inventions out," voiced Yves.

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"You do it," sharply, "-Yves, I'm giving you around 500,000 gold to spend. Find whatever weapons, the vehicle you'd like; strike a deal, and get the items. I'll figure something out with GateSix."

"Are you sure?" perplexed, he stepped back with the breathing erratic, "-that amount of money is ungodly."

"Courtney, take care of him," smiled Shadow, "-go have fun browsing the weapons."

"Come on, Diaz," holding his collar, Courtney led both to browse around Dragoon.

'Carton boxes, empty bottles, and a drunkard. The has something to do with this riddle,' walked into the booth; the eyes closed. 'Strange pattern,' uneven lines of mana flowed through the booth. In the center was were it disrupted into a dome shape, almost as if a protection spell. Continuing to investigate, a laser pointer was spotted on the floor next to the drunkard. 'What does it all mean?' stood facing the , the mind worked.

"Glare the abyss long enough and it will stare back," said the drunk with a hiccup.

'Glare the abyss,' paused, '-should it not be stare, why did he use glare. Glare as in stare or glare as in light?' A , carton boxes, a drunk man, and a laser pointer. 'A drunk knows he has a home but doesn't know the way back,' a quote from a philosophical book he read long ago. 'The boxes represent the disorder of the man's thought, the constant peering at the table through the bottle is an example of looking at the world through a small window. You know not the real truth.' Facing the man, '-the laser,

what does it do,' clicked, it pointed a blueish light opposed to red. 'Staring the world through a bottle, it gets distorted, to find the truth, one must step out of prejudice and think outside the box.' Returning the pointer to where it belonged, Staxius stepped outside and went further away.

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'The further you are, the clearer the picture becomes,' several meters past what a normal human could see, '-simple yet effective,' he laughed. Those who walked gave a few side-glances. "Convergence of Mana," he returned to the booth, "-localized on a single spot, the mana in the air can serve as a portal to many uses. The most prominent being the gathering of strength, the methodology used by Witches to summon Elemental Spirits. The laser pointer is the inductor as it has energy, the catalyst must be the empty bottles.' Pressed, the laser bounced and headed towards the ceiling where a balloon exploded dropping papers saying congratulations. 'That's the research,' the head shook, '-GateSix was experimenting on how to gather Mana from the atmosphere. The Divergence of Mana, a concept I've written as a plausible hypothesis. Looks like someone else had the same idea.'

"Who would have thought," spoke the lab-coat wearing man, "-I had set the room so that'd any who had a small inclination to Alchemy and mana would figure out what our last project was. Never did I think that someone already knew about the Convergence of Mana."

"As a mere hypothesis," they faced one another, "-was the riddle really about forcing a man to look from the different point of view. I fail to see how anyone would have figured to take the laser and point towards the table; even if it happened – would you have handed over the research?"

"Tis was primitive," sighed the man, "-and this is way too hot," pulling back the hair, long-short curly hair burst forth. Round glasses, the mildly pimpled forehead of which her complexion was light brown. Sharp nose, grey eyes, and a perpetual look of fatigue. "I'm Rhee, lead researcher for GateSix, well was," she scratched her head, "-nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you," he held out a handshake, "-I'm Shadow of Phantom," a friendly smile. "Back to the subject at hand, was Convergence of Mana the only thing you had in store for Dragoon?"

"I'm afraid yes," she turned and walked further inside, "-since the company went under, our papers, equipment, and prototypes were stolen without remorse. GateSix lost everything apart from this little discovery – we had so much in store for the future, sadly, it ended. I do apologize for not having anything else to offer."

"The look on thine face," voiced strongly, she turned to see what was the matter, "-what is the plan going forward, are you going to stop pursuing knowledge?"

"Of course not, no legit scientist would stop," she sighed, "-no money means no research and without anything to offer, GateSix might as well be a sci-fi storyteller."

"What about starting over?"

"Not a problem, give us 200,000 Gold and we'll have everything back," she laughed, "-that amount of money is hard to come by even for us. We only had around 50,000 to develop the Antis-2."

"How about 500,000 Gold," he voiced in a whisper, "-in the condition that GateSix becomes the property of Phantom. All you make, all you find, will be under my control; weapons, research on magic

or the next step in Mana Convergence,” \*Snap,\* a blue light from the table flew over to his hand. “There’s Mana Dispersal as well, I don’t have to say how important it is. You know the worth already,” he paused with arms crossed.

“Mana Dispersal,” she stepped back, “-that was what I thought after seeing the point of convergence being inconsistent. Who are you actually?” she asked, “-there but a few crazy people out in the world. Those who experiment with the very law of nature; are you one of them?”

“You say that as if you’re innocent,” the forehead crinkled, “-and I noticed that you didn’t flinch when I said half a million gold.”

“You’re joking, aren’t you?”

“I’m afraid not,” he smiled, “-I’ll buy you and your researchers for half a million gold. All that money will be yours to control, I’ll throw in an additional 100,000 Gold for any changes you wish to make.” Shaken, it took a few minutes for the lady to process the information.

“What is the end goal?” something fishy must have lived underneath for none would have offered such an amount, tis was what she thought.

“To gather minds all over the world and create a group of intellect who will put the Cobalt unit to shame,” a confident gaze, “-join me as Phantom starts to spread its hands around the globe. The monopolization of arms, profit in war,” he smiled.

“No way am I going to give up the chance in being part of the group who takes those pompous bastards down. Shadow, GateSix agrees to join Phantom under one condition.”

“What is it?”

“The condition is that you allow my researchers and I to bring along our families. I’ve two small kids, the husband ran away.”

“Is that so,” taking out a contract, “-I’ll accept your condition. Sign here, here, and here,” with a smile, the lady accepted.

“Welcome to Phantom. Do ask the researchers to make way to the Airport for we’re taking off later tonight. You’ll be staying in Hidros, your kids will have good places to study for it will be in the capital of Rosespire. With the amount of money I’m about to spend, you should find a comfortable house.”

“A-a-are you serious?” her bafflement increased, “-now, you telling me to leave without preparations?”

“Listen,” the voice grew deep, “-GateSix belongs to Phantom, the contract is signed. I’m not forcing you into labor for my gain – this deal benefits thee more than I. Rosespire is a good place to start over.”

“I didn’t mean anything; it was too sudden that’s all.”

“Can I count on you to be ready for take-off?”

“Give me five hours and we’ll be ready.”

“Then it’s a deal, I’ll see you at the airport,” exchanging phone numbers, GateSix closed their booth to vanish into nothingness.

'We've just spent 1.1 million on a single trip,' he facepalmed, '-let's hope the investments will be fruitful in the future. I've got the Alchemist Sect and GateSix under my wing; we should be set to start researching weapons. I wonder what kind of products will emerge from such a fusion of minds.' Walking up and down the hall, many of the inventions were weapons, mostly guns that were far lower quality than Antis-2. A serious gap in knowhow.

Heavy and powerful land vehicles, small replicas of tanks who have yet to make their appearance in war. Guns meant nothing to their armor; the same idea with differing versions. The major weapons manufacturers were proud of their work. Each cost around 60,000 Gold depending on the model. No sign of the Cobalt unit's weapon division yet. In the distance, Yves could be seen jumping around as a kid.

At the sea section, ships – small models all spread in a row. Not many people were interested in said means of transport. A particular model caught his eye. A ship that promised to carry tanks as well as fighter-planes across the sea. The idea seemed enticing, though the scientists in charge were less than competent. They presented the idea with no way nor technology to make it happen.

Lastly came the air section, small airships ranged. Beautiful and deadly, all used rotors as engines. All except one, made by the Cobalt unit. The first engine to use fuel and magic; the output was twice the rate of any normal craft. Impressed, he stood and stared as the inventors explained it further. The intricacies were complex, most of the information bounced off the buyer's heads. In that respect, Staxius understood what they said – the use of heavy words to confuse and bore the buyer. The inventors were putting on a show. What really counted was how powerful it was; a plane fitted with the engine, displayed on the screen, showcased its prowess.

'The Cobalt unit is powerful, what they hold is years off what the current world has. That engine is scary, put on a new model of plane, it could out fly and take out the other fighter planes. If war is to break out, the holder of said plane will most definitely be the victor,' grinning, he turned and joined back with the trio. Yves had gone on a spending spree; the man ordered a few fighter jets and a few tanks. 30,000 Gold remained off half a million.

Next came the auction; the place where special vehicles would be sold. Limited in the same way as the Xerxes series cars or Knightfall, a chance at grasping what many wanted.

### Chapter 313: XR-T

Sat in the fifth row of what seemed to be a theater; the light grew dim as dusk settled in. Many strangers o' men sat with focused faces. Some perpetually tensed from barking orders – typical for a general or any supervisor in the military. Stood atop a stage with a hovering screen; a man dressed in formal black tuxedo waited patiently. Booklets on what the auction would host were distributed; from planes to weapons, it contained a multiple of items. Smaller in comparison to earlier, the number of people wishing to participate diminished.

"Anything strikes interest?" asked Diaz who carefully examined the booklet.

"Nothing yet," said Staxius with the pages turning seamlessly.

"How about this," pointed Yves, "-the XR-T0, first fighter plane equipped with the Cobalt Unit's engine."



"It looks amazing if that's what you're referring to," interjected Courtney. Indeed, was she right, none had ever seen such a design before, sleek and sharp, the nose screamed of speed. The wings; triangles glued onto the body with it bearing weapons.

\*Notice: The XR-T0 is the only prototype made by the Cobalt Unit. Despite its innovative look, the plane hasn't the technology to fly.\*

"Tis a piece of jewelry," said Staxius in a monotonous tone. "We'll stick around." Promptly after saying so, the auctioneer took to the stage and began. The way it worked was that he'd shout prices. The buyers would hold a board, the further the price increased, the more hands dropped. This would continue until someone remained.

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"Ladies and gentlemen," a short break later, "-an innovative piece of technology combining our world's cumulative knowledge in magic, science, mechanics, and engineering. I present the XR-T0," half-hearted applause echoed, the screen displayed the model of the plane. Not a welcomed reaction, on edge, the auctioneer began the bids.

"Starting at 98,000 Gold," six hands raised, including Staxius's.

"What are you doing?" asked Yves, "-I thought we blew our budget already."

Ignoring the man, he continued to bid. "100,000 Gold," none backed out.

"105,000 Gold," no change, this continued till the price reached, "-130,000 Gold," there, two hands dropped leaving three in the war. "150,000," a jump in price on which another fell. What remained was Staxius and another old man. The latter was the leader of Elon's Conglomerate. One of the world's leading research groups and creators of the holographic display. "175,000 Gold," an ungodly amount already, the crowd seemed amazed by how the two-man remained nonchalant. "225,000 Gold," shaken, the Old man seemed to want to back out and did so after the price was settled at 250,000 Gold. For a mere showpiece without any real combat capabilities; the XR-T0 did its job of gathering funds. "Sold for 250,000 Gold to Staxius Haggard of Phantom." Content, he smirked at the old man who seemed distraught. In said manner the night continued; questions were asked of why he chose to buy such a useless piece of equipment. What many didn't realize was that the XR-T0 was a prototype fitted with all the research and advancement the Cobalt Unit had made over the last few years; including the engine.

Stuck at 22,00, the auction ended with many fatigued. Throughout the whole event, the leader of Elon's kept on eyeing Staxius with a look of anger. 'Time to head home,' stood Staxius as the hall emptied.

"Excuse us, sir," in came four men dressed in grey suits, "-our leader would like to speak to you," they voiced formally with hands behind their back.

"What is the matter?" asked Courtney who reached for the sword, Yves had planned an escape as he held onto a smoke grenade.

"It's as we said," spoken yet again, "-Lord Elon wishes to meet with Phantom's leader."

"Then it shall be done," stepped forward, he smiled. \*Stay on guard and have Yves ready for an escape – let me entertain that old man,\* spoken through telepathy, Courtney nodded. "Care to lead the way?"

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"Please," they walked straight to the front row where sat the man with a walking stick.

"Staxius Haggard from Phantom was it," he stood without using the stick. A dotted bald head, white mustache, a formal robe hailing from the East. Given his age, an aura of control emanated, one that was based on years of being hailed as one of the richest men on the planet.

"You asked for me?" spoken in a less than interested tone, Staxius held his own and didn't break eye contact.

"Yes, I wished to see the face of the man who outbid me without flinching."

"Flinching wasn't required, I had the means to go for double the price," he smiled, "-and I presume you did too, Lord Elon. Though I can see that you didn't wish to give the Cobalt Unit any more money."

"Astute as well," the gaze remained stern, "-quite a man of intellect, aren't you, Mr. Haggard."

"Coming from a man of more power, I'll take it as a compliment."

"I've come to know that GateSix has been bought and contracted under Phantom, I wonder why my research group changed side," he glared at a blond lady in a short skirt, "-if money was the issue then why did they go bankrupt I wonder?" a suspicious gaze turned into a glare. Startled, the lady could but try and look for an answer on the tablet.

"Maybe it was a scheme of a rivaling company. Knowledge is power and I think that you understand said fact the best."

"You're right, Mr. Haggard," an uninterested sigh followed.

"I do apologize," giving a nod, "-my team and I have to return. Tis was a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Do give Renaud my regards." Parting with those few inconsequential words, Phantom made its way out of the dome-shaped hall.

"Alison," turned old man Elon, "-I want you to have a background check on who that boy was. He might be the wind that grows into a typhoon." Amazed, he walked aided by the stick, '-give my Regards to Renaud. So, it is true, that boy is the man they refer to as Shadow. He knew who I was; and he knew why I backed out of the auction. Very, very interesting,' laughter echoed down the hall.

"Who was that?" asked Yves as they entered Void.

"Neither a friend nor a foe, let's just say that he has helped us many times before. A mystery of a man, the richest and most powerful man on the planet. I've got a feeling that this isn't the last we'll hear of him."

Now night, the drive back to the airport was calm and peaceful. The streets were less crowded for all were inside their houses. The starry sky was clearer than out in Hidros. It explained why the telescope was built.

"Boss, I'm intrigued as to why you spend so much on that prototype fighter?" asked Yves as the drive neared its end after an hour.

“For research, I’ve gathered a team of talented scholars. Phantom is on its way to making weapons; we could kick start the Antis-2 project again. All the guns which GateSix had manufactured are legally ours. We own them, from their body to mind, they’re mine to rule over.”

“I see,” he smiled, gates opened allowing Void and Cake to enter the airport. A few twists and turns they arrived at the hangar where a truck parked. It had been used to carry items; on it sat four men, five ladies, and children. The most prominent one being Rhee.

“Punctual,” smiled Rhee as the car pulled into the hangar. They who sat half-asleep were awoken by the engine, Void drove slowly till it lined with the plane’s back.

“You made it,” got off Staxius, “-this is GateSix I presume?” walked over, Courtney and Yves stood behind.

“Come on everyone,” she called forth her companions, from right to left, she introduced the members, “-first is Jake, Jason, Hannah, Laurin, Delisa, and me. We make up GateSix.”

Examined the crew, Jake gave a handshake, a slender figure, long hair, a big nose, and light-brown complexion, he seemed to be in the late thirties. Jason was plump, not overweight, just well-fed, curly hair, small eyes, and a tiny nose with a round face, he seemed to be in his late twenties. Hannah bore black hair, pale white skin, and sharp facial features, the youngest in the group aged twenty-two. Laurin had red hair, her face seemed to be tired, a mother of two. Delisa held light brown hair with a perky nose, she resembled an elf in some weird way, a mother of one.

“Good, and the people behind?” asked Staxius.

“I’m June; Jake’s girlfriend,” introduced the remaining lady.

“I’m Denver Styles; Laurin’s husband, a doctor,” murky brown colored hair with glasses and a fatigued face. Beside him stood two children, a boy, and a girl who shyly hid.

“I’m Jonas Ren; Delisa’s Husband, an engineer,” freckled nose and black hair, he had facial features that would mistake him for a lady. Held in a cradle, a two-month-old babe.

“What about you two?” pointed at twins who stood atop the truck, “-Carle and Claire,” they said without much thought.

“Teenagers I presume?” turned Staxius to Rhee.

“Yes, going through the rebellious phase,” she laughed of which the kids heard and clicked their tongue.

“Well,” stood strongly, “-as you know, I now own GateSix. The money has been transferred over to Rhee’s balance, around 600,000 Gold.” Hearing that amount, the teenagers screamed what, with the others stared one another blankly.

“Silence please,” shouted Courtney with a scary stare.

“You heard it right, I’ve paid a fortune to acquire not only GateSix but you as well. Let’s say that I own every single member of GateSix. Slavery might be shunned upon, however, tis not illegal. Therefore, I’ll do what I please. There’s no need for concern, you’ll get 200 Gold each month. Also, for every innovation or good work that is done, there will be a raise. Slavery is a crude term, still, it’s fitting,

GateSix will be working tirelessly. I expect results – you’re all smart individuals, think long and hard, the contract has been signed. A new life is about to start, you’ll be living in Hidros, at the capital of Rosespire. More details will be given after we land. Make yourself at home on the plane. I presume your baggage has been loaded?”

“Yes,” they said in tandem.

“Head on inside,” offered, the people walked slowly at a steady pace. What was said created doubt and fear, a tactic to scare the people into cooperating. With such a heavy price tag on their head, subconsciously, the drive and determination to prove their worth left its mark. Last to enter, Rhee smiled at the prospect of starting a new life.

“Carle and Claire,” teleported on the truck, “-your mother has been calling out for the last few seconds,” menacingly, “-I hate disobedient brats more than anything. I’m sure you heard what I said, I own you all. Therefore, if you don’t start behaving, I’ll throw thee all to the military camp, they should straighten you out.”

“Get off your high horse, mister, I don’t care what you do,” shrugged the sister who kept staring her phone.

‘Courtney, take Rhee inside the plane and make sure she doesn’t see what is about to happen,’ spoken through telepathy, the mother entered with a smile as Yves distracted her.

“So, what if you’re rich and powerful, we do what we want,” added the brother who did the same.

“How nice has it been to live in a place without conflict,” smiled Staxius, \*Blood-Arts: Crimson Threads,\* two droplets of blood pierced straight into the devices.

“WHAT THE HELL,” they stared with anger.

“Don’t forget your place, little brats, I don’t care if your Rhee’s kids. You mean nothing to me, and useless trash will be burnt,” to which, fire burst forth, “-It’s not that I don’t understand how you feel. Hidros is a place where you could die at any minute. If you don’t start to obey from this moment forth, the cold spike against thine neck might be the last of what you see of this world.”

Chapter 314: Supreme God

\*Gulp,\* no word nothing, utter silence, a sign of them conceding. With breaths held, Staxius lessened his aura. Out in the distance, Rhee could be seen waving with a smile. “Trust me, kids,” he spoke as they got off with sulked faces, “-Rosespire might be a hard place to live at night. Still, it’s better than fighting monsters. You’ll be fine as long as you obey what your mother says.”

Two scared nods later, they climbed the stairs and into the plane they sat. Phones broken had given an opportunity to chat with their mother.

“That was a very long rest,” a familiar voice came from behind.

“Adete!”

“Vampire,” she held her arms and dashed for a hug, from temple to temple, she embraced his forehead. Her feet kept on swinging and hitting his nose.

“Where have you been?”

“I was swallowed by the godly aura, my physical body gave. None the matter, I’m here now, care to explain what has happened?” Inside and readied for take-off, he gave a summary of what had transpired. The newly recruited GateSix was blissful. Not wanting to get involved yet, a barrier of which was his stern face was created. Sat beside Courtney, the supposed siblings rested one another’s head. Peacefully they slept till a new day came forth.

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Screeching awoke the duo, the plane landed with it being empty. A van was called forth by Cake; the members of GateSix were given temporary residence in an apartment inside the capital. The building was owned by a Boss of the Dark-Guild, pulling a few favors got a good price and some advantages such as the top floor being free of any potential visitors.

“Alright brother,” awoke Courtney, “-I’m off to Pandora, I’ll see you tomorrow or so,” she stretched. “Get some rest, I feel as if something big is about to happen soon,” now near the stair, she waved and vanished.

‘Guess it’s time to move. Eira and her class will be arriving tomorrow. The guild should have prepared. A final check will serve to ease my mind a little,’ held onto the seat to stand, ‘-what is happening?’ flickers, two worlds fighting against one another. ‘Not again,’ he sighed after which a bright light blinded him into covering the face.

“Hello again, Partner,” said in a joyous tone, the room grew clear as it was Creation’s lair. The upside-down clock made it painfully obvious. No sensation to the skin, a vacuum in which he could neither speak nor hear. \*Snap,\* a bubble formed outwards of Creation, “-that should be better?” he asked this time using the figure of a man.

“Yes, I can speak if that is what you’re wondering,” feet on the floor, Orenmir and Tharis were present. “Don’t forget about me,” came a muffled voice from the back.

“Courtney?” he asked as the twin laid face down on the floor.

“Leave her be for now,” voiced Creation, “-I’ve got a new mission,” he smiled.

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“Am I to kill another god in Draebala?” the thought made the heart shudder – the fight prior had cut it too close.

“No,” he smiled, “-you’re to fight the Supreme God’s attendant. A high-tier god by the name of Gophy, Goddess of Chaos. You’re to go to the Supreme Realm at once. Be on your best behavior,” unable to ask a question, Staxius teleported to a new realm. A separate dimension where time was one hour equaled to one minute on Hidros.

Stood a floating bridge, a massive castle hovered under which rested a gigantic City of beauty unknown to him. “Welcome to Cliollis, the dominion of Zeus, God of death. His Majesty has been awaiting thy arrival,” a butler dressed in a white robe and a golden laurel spoke courteously. A white castle of which held an impressive stature. It reached high as if touching the sky with its towers. Streams of pure clear

water ran down its side and fell downward. The latter landed in a lake that served to hydrate the citizens. Many white statues of figures of non-humans and humans alike stood at regular intervals. The bridge moved to lock itself with the castle isle. Faced with a massive staircase reaching into the castle, he walked. Ladies dressed in the same white robe with wings and holding pots of water came forth to greet. No sound, only nods, and bows.

“The castle is very much impressive,” said Staxius as they walked.

“Tis the Highcalere Palace,” replied the butler with a smile, his eyes lit with utmost pride and fondness for said place.

“Highcalere Palace, very much fitting for how sublime it looks. I must apologize that words fail to express its beauty. How I wonder what name the city above which it hovers is named?”

“Tis named Flirie, a rare flower of unspoken beauty which blooms each time a goddess gives birth. Its property is to have the power to give life to any dead, human or divine.”

“What of this Flirie city, surely there must be more about the city itself?”

“Well, the city was created after the Supreme god Zeus made the Eipea Empire.”

“Sorry to interrupt,” dressed in dark red armor, a man with sharp facial features with three feathers on his head walked. The aura released was overpowering, ‘-that’s a mere inconsequential faction of is power,’ thought Staxius as the man approached.

“Lord Lixbin,” knelt the butler, “-tis a pleasure to see a high-tier god make the trip to the castle.”

“Raise thine head,” smiled the man, “-I had to come to pay my respect as we’ve got a new guest in our presence.”

“I’ll excuse myself,” said the butler who scurried off with the angels accompanying.

‘Fear, I sensed it, Lixbin isn’t well-received here.’ Nonchalant, “-Staxius Haggard, God of Death.”

“Well met, Lord Haggard, I’m Lixbin, God of Darkness,” closer than normal, he stared up and down.

“There’s a strange scent coming off you,” the eyes locked onto Staxius’s cheek, “-Nike’s wings, Kronos’s sickle, and Death Reaper’s scythe,” he paused with a suspicious look. “Three symbols of powers,” gently stroking his goatee, the man thought with a crinkled forehead.

“Is it that rare?” asked Staxius.

“Yes,” voiced Lixbin, “-only High-tier gods are allowed a symbol of power. For you to have three, that must have been quite an achievement, considering the holder of the symbol has to be dead.” The walk stopped shy of a fountain that sprayed golden colored water, flowers swayed, the stair to the castle stood a few footsteps away. “Lord Kronos was a friend of my mentor, Nikes owed him favor and lastly, the scythe was mine to inherit.”

“Oh,” said in a peaceful manner, “-forgive my rudeness, it slipped how much conniving the previous God of Death was.”

“Lord Lixbin,” matching his gaze, “-since I’ve answered your question, it’d be nice to have said favor repaid.”

“You’ve inherited that about him too,” a smiled portraited, “-go on, ask what you wish.”

“I want to know the origin of the Eipea Empire.”

“That mild a thing,” he pointed to the far left, “-that lady over there, named Sophe, would have given thee said information for she’s the court librarian.”

Taking a step back, he cleared his throat to speak, “-After Kronos was dethroned, Zeus proposed that instead of ruling over different dimensions, any god who was interested in joining the Eipea Empire; ruled by the supreme god, would have an opportunity of creating their kingdom. Thus, making a new world all to themselves. The idea took some time to flourish, but once some of the more powerful gods such as Gophy and I joined. Everyone followed suit hoping to insight fear into the demon’s heart. Who would pass the offer of joining a strong Empire. Quite a long time has passed ever since – the Empire holds stronger today. Once founded, the newfound peace that Kronos imposed was put into jeopardy as the new gods, launched a full-on assault against the demon and any other entities that could rival them. Seeing the strength of the Eipea Empire, all the demons united and fled deeper into the underworld dimension, they founded a new nation; Aapith. They didn’t have any overseer, instead, a council of high-ranking demons would make the decisions. Both the Eipea Empire and Aapith nation gathered their armies and had an all-out war. It ended in a deadlock, tis was when it was decided that both demons and gods would try and get along. The majority accepted, some refused, and were sent to Draebala, the dimension previously owned by Kronos. It became a war-zone. Anyone is allowed to go there to blow off some steam or for the thrill of killing, no war meant no fun. Draebala was an exception to that rule. In fear of a faction getting more members and tipping the power balance, Draebala also became a testing ground for any low to mid-tier gods and demons. They would fight each other in hopes of getting accepted into either the Eipea Empire or Aapith. This is the current state in which the gods co-exists with demons and other beings. Quite a boring prospect, fighting there has lost its fun. Though you’ve already experienced it first hand since you killed Intherna; a potential recruit for Eipea.”

A few minutes later, the conversation ended with Lixbin excusing himself. ‘Doesn’t seem as complicated as I had thought.’

“Lord Death,” in came the same butler as Lixbin vanished, “-the gods require thy presence at once.” Step by step, climbing the stairs felt as if going to heaven. The higher one got, the brighter it grew. The last step came exposing a grand entrance with a checkered marble floor, pillars of which held intricate designs. The center hosted a big statue of Zeus which seemed to glow. Tapestries were on the walls; many depicted the heroic deeds said god had accomplished.

“Over here,” said the butler who walked farther inside. Halls after halls, doors after doors till a spiral staircase. The climb continued for another few minutes. “We’re here,” said the butler who stood shy of an ebony door. \*Click,\* opened without help, it revealed an angelic sight. The throne of supreme god that faced outwards onto an open sky. Unbound by walls and ceiling, out in the middle of the day – the winds were peaceful. On each side hosted seats, it seemed more of a coliseum than the throne room. Bound by chains at the feet of a throne, a lady with a skull on her head who was dressed in shabby clothes. Despite her long eyelashes, golden colored eyes, jet-black hair – neither seemed enchanted by

the beauty she exuded. Instead, her head was on the floor held by the foot of a man who was dressed in golden attire bearing blonde hair and a thunder symbol on his right cheek.

Unbothered, a few people sat with emotionless gazes on the seats. Lixbin was one of them, he had folded his arms with a pretentious smirk.

“Lord Death,” called the man who bore the thunder mark, “-I do apologize for this unsightly sight,” to which he kicked the lady and walked over. “Welcome to Highcalere Palace,” spoken as if an old friend, he reached out for a handshake. “I’ve been awaiting thee,” he smiled with an innocent face.

“Staxius Haggard, God of Death,” he accepted the handshake.

“Zeus, Supreme God,” smiled, the man accepted and led the way to the throne. “I’m sorry you had to make it here on so short notice,” stood few steps away from the lady in rags, “-I had to get a hold of someone who had the right to kill even a god,” he knelt and took her hair, “-this one needs to suffer a thousand deaths. A traitorous goddess who doesn’t wish to have my offspring,” followed by a spat, he kicked again in her stomach of which she yelped.

‘Rejected,’ thought Staxius who stared the surrounding, ‘-if he wants her to have his offspring, the lady must be strong. I don’t see anyone trying to help, there might be an opportunity here if I play my cards right.’

“Surely, majesty,” spoken politely with a tone that seemed to agree with his demand, “-have you no other option? A man of thine stature has to have more taste in flowers than this,” he threw a disgusted gaze at the unconscious lady.

“Is that what you think?” turned with a stern face, a dense aura emanated, it nearly forced him onto his knee, “-I dare say you’re quite the character,” the aura dropped. “Standing firm after I blasted thee with my aura, quite admirable,” turned to the lady,

\*I call upon the power of thunder, heed mine call,\* the weather changed, \*-come and struck those I deem unworthy of mine presence; Divine Bolt.\*

#### Chapter 315: Full power

Struck heavy and hard, the shockwave of the jolt threw most onto their feet. Static electricity flashed from here to there, the skin felt as if it were to fry any moment. Roasted in black with steam coming off, the charred body of said lady in chains. Paired with a cough, her body regenerated with the rags burnt. Naked, she tried to cover what little dignity remained, though failed to do so as fatigue settled.

“What a poor sight for the Goddess of Chaos,” voiced one of the gods. “This charade has gone for more than is welcomed,” the crowd gave a nod of dismissal to teleport away. Left, Lixbin remained to watch as the scene unfolded further.

“Gophy,” sighed Zeus, “-you were so beautiful, readied to have taken my heir – we could have created the strongest being to ever live,” he shook his head, the confidence showed was of utter assurance that he was right. “Sadly,” he turned away in disgust, “-you’ll be executed.” For killing a god of rank High-tier, one needed to bear the title of God-slayer. If that wasn’t possible, the sickle of Kronos would also serve the same purpose. Not only was the sickle the only weapon that could slay a god, but many others were also created during the war between gods and demons. Hidden and lost, not even gods knew where



they hid. Lastly, the god of death, unbound, could kill any god he wished given that he was powerful enough. "I'll leave it in thine hands," turned to Staxius, "-I trust you'll do what is needed. Kill her, torture her, do whatever you want, I need not a shell of a high-tier goddess," followed by retainers, the Supreme god left the throne room.

Ever so shyly up above, the sky cleared from whence the bolt struck the ground. Shyly, rays of light fluttered onto the throne room, Gophy rested with her head onto the floor. The charred body turned to its normal form.

"Well then," stood with his arm around Staxius's shoulder, Lixbin spoke, "-Gophy remains as a high-tier goddess. Zeus might have cast her off from his protection, that doesn't mean that she necessarily needs to die. You're astute, I can see the intrigued gaze so sharply, the same as Lord Death. Heed this warning, gods are far from righteous. One day or the other, your world might turn into a warzone. Ancient dragons have been awakened, I felt it before. The prophecy of the Xenosious might come true once more, the awakening of all who had perished will bring about the eternal night. Before you ask, I say this as I've sensed the same evil inside me, inside you. Far from right, thou doth what it must survive," reached to a pat on his back, "-I'll watch as thee grow, Lord Haggard. Prove that Lord Death was right to entrust you with what can be the fate of not just humanity but the multiverse and whole of creation. There will be a lot of sacrifices, trust me on that," enveloped by a veil of dark smoke, the figure vanished leaving Staxius and Gophy alone.

'Fate of the entire multiverse. All the dimensions and possibly creation itself. Quite a burden for someone who's purpose is to destroy. What I've seen today is that gods aren't as virtuous as people think them to be. No morals nor prior motivation,' staring downward, the breeze made the lady shiver.

"Here," knelt, he took off the suit jacket to cover her. \*Come forth Void Flame.\* Spark turned into a raging inferno; the flame rose all around in a pentagram with Gophy in the middle. Legs crossed, Staxius sat beside the goddess.

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"Warmth," mumbled, her hands twitched.

"You're awake," said Staxius in an uninterested voice for he played around with mana that hovered all around.

"Yes," she rose to see a jacket wrapped around her as she faced a man who sat. "Who might you be?" still fatigued, her voice could barely sound as she was normally.

"Death," he turned with a cold glare, "-one could say I've come to kill thee," cutting his fingers opened, \*Blood-Arts: Crimson Thread,\* as small as a hair and as sharp as a blade, the thread stood inches away from her neck.

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"You were sent by Zeus?" she asked with her fingers gently touching the wire, the slight push cut her fingers. Sucked up, the blood she bled traveled along the wire and into a halo above his head.

"Yes," he stood, "-Goddess of Chaos Gophy," reached out a hand, "-I offer you a second chance," a box with a screaming skull materialized, "-this is the Box of Soul. If I were to go all out in your current state

given than thou art superior to me in every way, I'd still win. Even if we were to fight with you at full strength, I'd only come back stronger each time I was mortally wounded whilst you'd lose – any battle with a stronger foe I face is battle of attrition, one that I will never lose.”

“There is not the need to elaborate further on how strong thou art, the god of Death. Every being in existence, powerful or not, have one thing in common, and that is eventual death. As a destroyer, the Death Reaper is unrivaled – tales of their power have been passed down for millennia. Xenosious is but a mere fraction of the damage an angered ruler of death can wreak.”

“I see you know far more than I do,” from cold to a warm smile, “-Goddess Gophy,” he reached out yet again, “-care to join me in a new life?”

“What is it that you mean of a new life?”

“I offer you the chance to start over in another world. One away from the gods and demons, a place where I live, my home on a continent named Hidros.”

“I presume I'll be a puppet?” her gaze switched from worried to relieved.

“No,” he smiled, “-thy soul would be transferred over to a less powerful but immortal body.”

“I'm already immortal, what is it that you truly wish?”

“I was told that one day all as we know it might come in danger. I wish to assemble an army of gods, demons, and any who will aid in an eventual fight against the unknown. Titans are coming to life and so have the ancient dragons buried in my realm.”

“Surely you must know about the heir of Kronos?”

“Scifer, I know of him full well. That boy, he who has inherited the will of Kronos has ailed me so long. Monsters were brought forth of his doing – I've learned of the truth. The God Slayer, an exception to the hierarchy of the gods. He has the potential of becoming the Supreme God.”

“That much is true,” she smiled, “-he has the ability to steal any god's skill and talent. Except for the Death Reaper. Fated rivals I'd say,” she coughed.

“What will it be, Lady Gophy, do you wish at another chance at life or must I follow what Zeus has asked. Sending thee to Elysium now would be cruel. Shamed and shunned for not wanting to produce an heir. The Goddess of Chaos isn't surely one who'd back down despite her adversary being the Supreme God?”

“I've shivers,” she took his hand and stood, “-a god of death that has more than slaughter in his mind. I wonder what you have in store.”

“I'll make sure that thou art given a body as beautiful as I've witnessed today.” Raged forth, the flame of the pentagram lit, stepped back, \*Unbound by the laws of Heaven to Hell; unshackle mine power, from Nevermore, I call upon the power of the Annihilation-Gate.\* A thumped echoed as golden veins burst forth his eyes and into his body – the gate of Nevermore opened.

\*Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, from when thou were born and till thine rest, I, the god of death, hold in mine hands strings that bind thee. Heed mine call, I order thy chains to be severed: Tactus Interitus.\*

A spell used very, very long ago. One that grew to have too much backlash each time he snapped someone's life thread. A grin remained as her body dropped the instant he snapped.

\*I command thee whomst I've defeated, I curse thee, soul, to be bound to mine; Box of Soul – Soulfeld.\*  
A torrent of energy ruptured forth upwards onto the sky. Disfigured figures of which seemed to cry spiraled around the beam. Gust, lightning, the throne room began to shatter. Killing a goddess who had built up power over millennia; a high-tier one at that; all her pent-up resentment and frustration were let loose as mana. The castle shook, the pillars shattered, gods rushed up the stairs and stood in awe.

"Lord Death," came forth Zeus with an angered face, "-I know that I had ordered for her to be killed, however," he stared the beam, "-thou must have known that she's a goddess of Chaos. On the day she dies all around would be turned to ashes."

"There's no need for concern," smiled Staxius, "-thou had ordered for her to kill. If containment of her power falls under said order, then I shall do so immediately."

"Please see to it," a smile that screamed of anger led Staxius to act. 'I spoke of a big game, containing her power is going to be impossible,' deep breaths in, '-time to use all my power.'

Hands pressed, \*Pinnacle of power and strength, the last stage of a men's life, the stage where all is turned to dust and forgotten. Elapsed over the ages, come forth o' power of mine who has remained bound, unleash thee at thine full potential: Nevermore – Death Gate.\*

\*Death Element: Hand of God,\* chanted in the ancient tongue, a heavy feeling of dread oozed. Two gigantic pair of hands with the symbol of death on the palm interlocked with the beam. Pushed back, Staxius tried hard to grasp the power. \*Dong, Dong, Dong,\* the bells of reckoning rung after which he died, with the body falling forward, "Awaken!"

Conscious with a firmer stance, he gritted, from red to bright golden, the eye color changed. Hair levitated, clothes tore from left to right, '-still strong,' Nike's Symbol toggled subconsciously. Her wings flew outwards and lashed onto the forehead – the output amplified ten-fold. The intense release of power for both Gophy's dead body and Staxius's forced the other gods onto their knee. Only Lixbin and Zeus seemed unbothered.

\*Heed mine call,\* managed to get a breath of air, \* I, Staxius Haggard, call upon thy strength. Stop all who dare oppose mine own will, Death Element: Magical Barrier, Pentagram Variant, Hell's Gate.\*  
Around the pillar rose a pentagram that reeked of death; screeching souls ran up and down the beam. They seemed to grasp similar to how the God-hand held the tower of mana. Shook at her power, if they would have fought, the realization of how badly he'd have died came to mind. The more the beam tried to expand, the more power Staxius emanated.

A sky that was meant to have been blue with the sun radiating turned into pitch darkness. From blue to red, the sun replaced by a bloodied moon – the wind felt murderous. Blue and golden to white then to dark, Gophy's energy expanded and fought against Staxius. Amplified to the point of his body glowing bright gold, the shadow of a hooded figure grasping a scythe hovered behind his back. "WRATH," it whispered and swung. Golden turned to black, Nike's wings shattered to form and merge with the

Scythe. A loud resonant boom traveled across the floor; the eyelashes burnt with the void flame with the eyes white in color.

\*Return to whence thy came, weakling,\* pressed together, the beam retracted and imploded, a white light shot upwards to clear the sky from Staxius's mana. Twirling around above his palm, the last of Gophy's mana. Turned to stare Zeus; the latter took a step back. What stood before wasn't anything he had seen. A hooded figure of twice Staxius's size hovered, the eyes burnt white, all the veins were pitch-black. Part of the arms broke; a minor injury that healed instantly.

"Goddess of Chaos Gophy has been killed," voiced monotonously, the weather behind changed to match his aura.

#### Chapter 316: Box of Alche

"About time," fired Zeus distraught by an amazing show of power, "-thou hath stopped what misfortune she would have brought upon mine castle if ever her mana was allowed to go rampant."

Shaken, gods stood from being knelt, retainers, on the other hand, were passed out unconscious on the ground. Many were mystified by how powerful the god of death was. A tale only told in legend, first had it been that they experienced what was said. Shuffled out, the place grew devoid of life. Lixbin remained, he watched as Staxius's aura and body returned to normal. In fear of being viewed as lesser than the god of Death, Zeus began a monologue of blaming the Reaper for slaying a god without care to the surrounding. Most of the words fell on deaf ears for it was too late, the amount of mana sucked out of the atmosphere was considerable. The air felt lighter, the same as being atop a mountain, thin and hard to breathe.

"Off with your destructive nature, Lord Death," ordered Zeus on which a white light surged to teleport the man away.

'Never have I seen the Supreme God shudder before. That was Lord Haggard at a rank of Low-tier god containing the powers of one far superior. It might be wise to get in his good graces soon – the politics of the gods is as much a hassle in the divine realm as is in the mortal realm. May luck be upon you, God of Death, you've my blessings going forward,' smiled Lixbin.

\*Puke,\* inside Creation's lair, without a moment to stop nor rest, the power grew out of control. Vomiting on the white floor, a mixture of blood and dark aura that had turned physical. Courtney remained close behind for she wasn't able to follow Staxius. Patting his back, she tried to ease the pain.

'My head feels like it's going to explode,' rolled onto his back, "-the stars sure are clearer here."

"Each time a gate is opened, you're dowsed with unimaginable pain. That's the price you pay for such power – a direct exchange, the more you draw out, the more intense the pain gets," knelt Creation with his palm on Staxius's forehead. What said was true for the fist constantly clenched, the heart rate spiked, the head grew heavy.

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"No need to be so caring," he voiced with a smile, "-I'm used to this pain," a push later, he sat upright with violent coughs. "You're the cruel one," wiping his mouth, "-sending me to kill a high-tier goddess knowing full well I'd never reach her level in a thousand years," mustering what strength was left,

\*Shackle mine strength: Nevermore – Full Restraint.\* A dark shadow stretched outwards of his back to encompass his body.

“I tried to contact Lord Death,” paused, Creation stood, “-he’s unavailable, I know not what he’s up too.” Warmly gazing Staxius, “-there’s no room for complaint. I saw what you did, seizing the opportunity, you’ve acquired the soul of Gophy and fragment of her power. Revived, she may regain her latent powers.”

“Have you known of my plan?” the pain shot back and forth yet he kept strong to converse. Feeble, the agony subsided in little increments.

“Ever since Intherna, I’ve known about the wish to create an immortal army,” he smiled, “-I’ve desired the same for so long. The day of the apocalypse will come soon. Though it eludes me when; I’m sure gathering an army is wise.”

“How about a deal,” coughed again, “-we’re partners right?” stumbled up, a hand was held out, one of friendship.

“We could say so,” Creation accepted the gesture, “-Creator and Destroyer, two sides of the same coin. I’ve doubted thee ever since awakening with the Death Element. Now, it pleases me to say that the man you turned out to be is ideal; not greedy nor obnoxiously humble as fabled heroes. A realist who thinks about probability, various routes, and grasp at all opportunities – a man of unrivaled intelligence. The god of death is indeed powerful,” he smirked, “-power alone can only take you so far. What I’ve seen is that you use wit over thine strength; resorting to whatever is quickest to resolve troublesome fights. Limiting the damage, and taking care of what is important,” from a handshake, he reached for an embrace, “-I’m glad to have you as a friend, Staxius.” Joined, a warmth lit around an amber color. Creation had acknowledged Destruction, and so did Destruction. One of the same, never had it been that the two grew close. Egos and differing ideals always butted heads.

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“Elina,” mumbled Creation as the light hovered over and turned into a flower bud.

“Elina?” perplexed, Staxius stared the bud that hovered with majestic colors of differing hues.

“Yes,” voiced Creation, “-the birth of a new angel, a product of us acknowledging one another.” Blossomed, yellow hair ending in white, eyes the color of honey, long eyelashes, petite wings, and the body of a three-year-old. She awoke with laughter.

Held with the love of a mother, Creation’s face changed to one of a caring lady. “You were about to ask something of me,” she voiced.

“Yes,” holding his head, “-I need materials, a substance that is suitable for creating vessels of godly entities, from organs to skin, all must be humans who are my puppets.”

“Is that all?” she asked with a fierce tone, one of which resembled the attitude of a bear protecting her cubs. No response came, only a nod.

“As you wish,” manifested in a green light, an ornamented box locked with a key. “I give you the Box of Alche, a relic I forged many decades ago. It has the power to create unlimited resources for the user

provides enough mana. The latter should not be a problem – do with it as you wish, consider it today's payment. The Arcane Library should have the knowledge of what element to use for an immortal body."

"Box of Alche, isn't that a bit too much?"

"Want it or not?" preoccupied with Elina, Creation wanted only to care for her.

"Yes please," he smiled.

"Then off to Hidros," turned with the toddler, "-say bye, bye to uncle Staxius," she waved.

"Bai, bai," she mumbled in an angelic voice.

"Uncle Staxius," laughed Courtney. "Boss, Boss," raged down the plane, Staxius awoke to Cake shaking him furiously.

"What is it?" he asked with the mind still dazed. Time passed had been around four minutes. The sun outside rose for it was dawn, GateSix were already on their way to the apartment.

"You passed out," she said with a serious tone.

"I'm alright now," a lie to which he stood and walked nonchalantly, "-should we have an inventory on what was purchased?" A unanimous yes from Yves and Courtney echoed, Adete slept atop his head once more.

Warm air oozed off the radiator, hot cup of coffees laid on the table with steams gently raising. Yves and Cake sat opposed Staxius. Courtney had returned to Pandora a few hours prior.

"We purchased two heavily armed and armored tanks named TSR-4 at 55,000 Gold each. They far outclass any other tanks in respect of long range-battles. The range is close to three kilometers. Next, the addition of three fighter-planes named Delta-F at 120,000 Gold each. Faster and more agile than any other on the market, this model was built for Dragoon only. A test-project for a newly formed group of researchers, most were reluctant to buy due to their new reputation. I took a gamble and decided to invest, thus we've the only three in the world. It came with a contract that states any future weapons or vehicles they develop will be shown to us first. From there on, there's the possibility of gaining the rights for said weapons. As for the last 30,000 Gold, we used it to stock up on arms and bullets. An overhaul of our communication system, tis now encrypted. Pair that with the addition of the XR-T0 at the price of 250,000 gold and the ownership of GateSix for 600,000 Gold, the total is around: 1.1 million spent in one day."

"I've heard of a lesser kingdom being worth less than we've spent today," grinned Staxius.

"Yeah, the fact remains that we don't respect money in the least," laughed Yves, Cake joined in.

"As long as it makes us stronger, I care not how much it costs. When will the weapons be delivered?"

"For the tanks, in a month or so. As for the planes, later this week with the arms coming as soon as tomorrow."

"Excellent," stood Staxius, "-have our men be equipped. I've business to attend to at Arda, Courtney should be able to take over the production of God's ale and Angel's dust. These past few days have been

fun,” giving a handshake, “-do send Elliot on missions, Cake. Take care of that boy, look for some pilots for the new planes. Before I leave, could you call a meeting with the Alchemist Sect and GateSix?”

“Where is it do you wish the meeting to be held?”

“My mansion, in the noble district. Tell them to make it before 14:00. Use the helicopters if its required, I want them to be there on time, only the representative: Clarise, the Master Alchemist, and Rhee.”

“As you wish,” said Cake as he left the room.

‘The box of Alche,’ thought whilst driving, the scenery moved faster than normal. ‘A box that has the ability to give the user whatever he wishes for given that equal mana is exchanged. Isn’t it basically having the same power as Creation himself? If what he says is true about the box; I might have found the ultimate item. Making anything I wish, there’s more to it I hope, else if it falls into someone else’s hand, it could bring havoc.’

A flick of a switch later, the gate of the mansion opened. Well-maintained grass and trees for a gardener was employed. Parked, he got off and took a deep breath. A year had passed ever since Lizzie’s death; time went by so quickly it frightened him. “What is done, is done,” turned, he walked to the library on the first floor. Surrounded by bookshelves with a roundtable in the middle, heavily adorned with ornaments laid the box of Alche.

‘How does it work,’ time was 11:00. ‘Opening the lid doesn’t do anything, ancient writings, a few diagrams of spells are inlaid inside. Maybe,’ eyes shut; the box closed – a touch of mana was induced. Immediately, the box reacted by repulsing his hand with a jolt. ‘What if I think about something,’ what came to mind was gold. Inducing mana again did naught. ‘Frustrating,’ he thought and leaned back. The time was noon.

[Divinity: Second Boon – Arcane Library] Dropped into an endless body of water, consciousness dove. ‘What truly makes something gold, what is it’s composition,’ questions asked, what he sought was its structure. Pure and untouched, the search began. Blue ribbons, yellow ribbons, all swam as if fishes; not far off – a red ribbon. ‘Got you,’ he woke with heavy breaths, ‘-I know the answer.’ Induced yet again, the mind sharply and clearly visualized what he wanted – once firm, the Box glowed. Glued, the latter forcefully sucked out his mana; not much to cause any difference, it clicked.

Opened by itself, gold ingots spewed as if it had a bad stomach. From shining, it turned dim as the ingots produced were 10 in total. ‘I guess it’s not going to work, a cooldown period.’ [Skill: Appraisal] index on the ingot, [Quality: Legendary]

“It’s not overpowered,” he breathed a sigh, “-there’s a limit to what the box can make. The more mana given the better the quality, it doesn’t have to do with quantity. It should suffice to serve my purpose in making immortal puppets for the souls to rest.’ Fatigued, he stood and stared at the clock, ‘-13:50. They should be here soon,’ sprawled out the room, he dashed onto the balcony. Erratic, the body wanted to move sharply and jump, a repercussion for the body thought a fight was about to take place. Gazing upon the lovely green yard, a helicopter was seen over the horizon.

Chapter 317: Midnight

Lush greenery perturbed by the wind from helicopter blades, the grass cried for it was a tornado. Meters away from touch down, the tall figure of a man stood atop a balcony. Overwhelmed by being picked up in a helicopter, Clarise, Flein, and Rhee got off with the vehicle now silent. The noble district and a massive mansion to boot, the trio made their way accompanied by a guard who stood with pitch dark glasses and a gun.

“Welcome to my mansion,” said Staxius who now waited on the ground floor. A nod to the guard signaled the man to stand down, of which he stood near the door. “I hope that the journey was pleasant,” courteously, he led the way into the lounge where the curtains were drawn. Amber and warm, a fireplace lit with a snap burnt smoothly. Every so often, the wood would crack, amidst said atmosphere with no maids nor butlers, Staxius brought drinks of which were Whiskey and tea to name a few. Flein took fondly to the strong blend as for Clarise, she preferred the aroma of the tea. Rhee chose to partake in tasting the alcoholic beverage.

Seated around a rustic feeling table, Staxius was at the head whilst Clarise and Flein were on his right and Rhee opposite. Twirling around the whiskey, Staxius took a few whiffs before drinking as to appreciate the taste further. To complement the room and fireplace, soulful piano pieces of a renowned composer played seamlessly. Taking a sip, he crunched on the drink to have a better feel of its strength. A burning sensation of the inner cheek till he swallowed. The aftertaste presided as if the last survivor of a brutal war, fueled by anger and swallow, a mellow feeling of rest.

“Shall we get to the matter at hand?” breaking the ice, Rhee’s visage after she took a sip was one of discomfort. Hard was it for many to swallow and not make any facial movement whilst drinking – a clear example of a novice. She coughed with her contours seemingly more prominent. Flein on the contrary had a look of delight for he had relished the taste and wished for more. One after the other, the glass kept on being refilled whilst Staxius took the time to appreciate the beverage.

“Please do,” said Flein with a smile.

“Before we begin; there’s something that is needed to be known. Phantom has taken a step into the world of Arms development, rather, I should say, will from this day forth. And it’s today’s discussion.”

“Do tell,” said Clarise with a peaceful stare, the piano served to calm her ordinarily overbearing personality.

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“Alchemist Sect, I’d like you to meet your newest colleague, the head researcher of GateSix,” normally one would have begun with introductions – that said if the day was normal, however, for Staxius, it was further from the truth.

“Please to meet you,” they said to one another. Flein’s ears perked as if a hunter noticing prey, “-did you say GateSix?”

“Yes, formally of GateSix,” laughed Rhee, “-we’re members of Phantom, thus a new name should be more adequate,” to which she faced Staxius with a nod.

“You mean to tell me that, the GateSix, rumored to have been closest to matching the Cobalt unit, has joined Phantom?”



"I'd not take rumors for what they are worth. It's true we did develop many weapons and formulized many theories – our research was taken away; guess one could say GateSix is but a shell of what its formal glory."

"You meant it," interjected Clarise who peered towards the leader, "-you meant when big words of taking down the Cobalt Unit was spoken," placing her glass on the table, she stood to bow, "-I'm ashamed to have doubted you, sir."

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"There's no need for formalities," the face seemed relaxed, "-now that I presume introductions have been made, here's the deal. I have purchased various weapons of war. Mainly, tanks and fighter planes, besides arms. I wish not to use said properties, they'll be given to you for reverse engineering. The hope is not to have weapons but the theory and knowhow behind how they were made. We'll gather everything into one pile to make into something far greater."

"The same as if opening the mind of the inventors who created said items," smiled Flein, "-I like the prospect."

"What do you hope for the Alchemist sect to accomplish?" asked Clarise

"What is it that you hope for GateSix to do?" asked Rhee in turn.

"Referring to each individual party is hassling, from today forth, thou shalt be referred to as Midnight, the research group under Phantom."

"Sticking to the Phantom theme," voiced Flein, "-it will be as you wish," pale skin now flushed, the master alchemist had had more than a few drinks.

"Details of what each individual will be decided by Flein and Rhee. I won't bother to cross-checking thy men since thee know best. My duty is to provide money, assistance, and men power, I'll also join in where help is required. For the most part, I wish not to hear complaints," squinted, he referred to the money spent in acquiring them.

"Any particular we must focus on?" asked Rhee.

"Here," a few flyers slid across the table, "-Phantom has acquired three Delta-F and the XR-T0," upon hearing the names being uttered, three jaws dropped simultaneously. "Judging by thy reactions, thee know of the vehicles. Hence the mission, a hangar at the airfield will be converted into a makeshift lab until plans for another building are made. I can vouch for its protection, I do apologize for the place is so far from the capital. Arrangements could be made to allow a few to stay at Rotherham. The town's reputation doesn't seem hopeful. Thus, either make the trip back and forth using the train or see with Cake for anything that would make the process easier."

"I appreciate the concern," interjected Rhee, "-we're used to working far from home. In perspective, what we have now is better living conditions than Dreqai. There is no problem with us."

"As for us," added Flein, "-no need to trouble thyself. Midnight will come to an arrangement as we've got the technology to bounce information back and forth. Leave it in our hands, we'll prove that we're

far superior to the Cobalt Unit,” the same fire of passion burnt. A direct challenge to those who were in power, one that would change the world for the better.

Ended, the trio returned leaving the door open. The helicopter took-off with loudness, alone with a whiskey in hand, the eyes shut. Lessened by the moment, the glass slipped his grip and broke, fatigue and agony jolted back and forth. Each with the force that made ripples, the pain of one getting kicked in the groin multiplied by ten.

“Don’t you want to kill?”

“No blood for so long, I’m thirsty.”

“Wake up, god of death, tragedy awaits.” Figures loomed around the room, hallucinations induced by pain, “-damn it,” he gritted, \*Void Aspect,\* unholstered, Tharis’s barrel rested against his forehead, “-the only way to deal with this,” clenched, \*BANG,\* exploded, the bullet hit the glass-shelves in the bar. Ones on which rested bottles upon bottles. Crashed down, the bar’s flawless décor perturbed and destroyed. Brain matter splattered across the floor, the body fell with blood forming a puddle.

“What’s the matter?” awoke in said puddle, Adete screamed at what laid before her.

The process of regeneration took more than a few hours as the clock would soon strike midnight. Warmth on either side, ‘-this ceiling,’ the sleep broke, ‘-it’s familiar,’ eyes opened, Lizzie slept on his left side whilst Xula was on the right. Xula seemed distraught, her eyes had remnants of having cried a lot, as for the babe, she slept without causing trouble. The wife’s hold was great for she never wanted to let go.

‘I guess I killed myself because of the overwhelming pain,’ he thought with a smile and relaxed breathing, ‘-I do wonder how I came here.’ At ease, the mind wandered into the realm of sleep without further trouble.

The creation of Midnight, Phantom’s research division. A breeze that would soon turn into a raging tempest was birthed. Not only did Phantom make moves around the kingdom. Kreston did so as well, provocations from Queen Gallienne had outstayed its welcome. After the apostle was found, she made rallies and spared no effort in blaming their province. Long past were the days of peace talks, immediate actions had to be taken, tis was her mind. Spies of the Order, namely: Whisper, with efforts of Staxius in contacting Duke Hawkins – a one-way channel was created. From there on, the Duke could expose what happened in the province. Many lives were lost under the name of god. The pope grew to take power from nobility, the Hawkins family held no respect. The military grew, as a result, this was the duke’s revenge for the many years of bloodshed.

Viewed as unbeatable, the pope ordered arms from other countries behind Gallienne’s back. Fighter planes, tanks to name a few, preparations for war were on their way. The issue was brought to Emperor Paradus who shrugged off the matter completely. ‘I’ve no matter dealing in the business of a continent who doesn’t abide by the laws we’ve put in place.’

A reference to the Royal family not wanting to give the emperor any more favors into the continent. Said refusal has gotten them into his unfavorable list of allies. Scheming continued, Kreston grew to be more than an annoyance. The first step Gallienne made was to block access to their Province, no trades,

none were allowed to deal with the fanatics as she called them. The news spread throughout rather rapidly, it reached Ange Hamel who had a burst of anger.

Stomped inside the cathedral, the angel stood with a devilish aura. "Have you heard of Duke Hawkins's treachery?"

"I have already killed his wife and taken the life of his bloodline, what is there more to do?" hands pressed faithfully in the presence of the statue they worship, charred corpse laid on the altar.

"What of the Duke?"

"He's getting readied to be sacrificed," smiled the Pope, "-bring him, servants," strung to a cross, the man was placed next to his dead family. No regret nor pain in the eye, the duke was given a drug before the procedure. A slow-acting poison that had taken the lives of his family. All under the guise of dinner, the Pope's informant knew of the back-stabbing.

"So, what shall he become?"

"We'll use his family to call forth the Archangel of Clarity, the judge of all who presides over life and death."

"You mean to say you are to call forth Erna?"

"Yes," he smiled.

"Thou must know that Erna is known for her bloodied way of dealing with justice. Many o' tales speak of her short-tempered mind. Referred as a dark-angel more than the true justice seeker you pray."

"That's precisely why," he laughed, "-that's why I am to call upon her judgment. She will rectify the mind of those undevoted. Those who wish to pray to a false god, the one known as Syhton. Burn may she for her presence is but an insult to our god."

"If tis power you wish," relaxing his wing, particles of white-dust flowed till it reached the pope. From there on, he prayed and recited many passages until a large screeching came from Hawkins's unconscious body. "The time of awakening is here," clapped, countless devotees who were called forth from the refuge were on their knee, praying as the Pope recited said passages. Ultimately, taking a red-hot blade into the man's chest, his eyes glowed bright blue. Dying to only be reawakened, the shell of a man opened to give birth to the sight of a naked Angel. Bearing her sight on the devotees, a single slash had them beheaded, "-who dares summon me?" she asked with fountains of blood falling to the floor.

"Tis I, a humble servant."

Chapter 318: Ayleth's preparation.

Settlement increased, the town of Garsley grew. More and more people were humbled by the idea of peace and a town of solidarity. An independent guild by the name of Nature; had taken shelter into the Duke's good graces. Julius over the months and years had grown to be the right leader. From a crumbling province to a somewhat self-sustaining town. Guarded by Adelana's friends of a rather secretive group, public safety was ensured. Per his orders, the noble district of Dorchester was renewed to accommodate more nobles. A few barons without land answered to the offer – most were tame without ambition. A thirst for peace fulfilled by the peaceful town of Garsley. Idyllic was the word

describe by many o' traveling bards. Many o' traders and many o' adventurers said the same. Stupefied, the tavern's ale and food, heavy stomach and light mind; perfect for the man of hunt.

For a few months, the fantasy of said place turned for the worst. Naught was malicious for the wedding of a representative was on its way. Lady Ayleth got given the title of Knight by Queen Gallienne. Not only did she alone receive favors for the Silver Guardians were granted title of nobility. None knew too why or how; a message came a few months prior which called an audience. Upon arrival, greeted by well-dressed butlers and treated to a good dinner, the Queen knighted the ladies.

Asked to be kept secret, only the queen knew of the reason, "-as a favor for a friend, could you grant the Silver Guardian a title of nobility? I made a promise ages ago to have them be nobles. Perturbed by Kreston's invasion, said matter had slipped my mind," spoken on the phone, Gallienne raised an eyebrow.

"What good would said act of generosity achieve?"

"The Silver Guardians, not in title, are representatives of a province falling under thy rule. Phrased as commoners ruling over a province, it might catch the eyes and ears of unwanted attention."

"Fair argument, Knight of the crown is the only title I'm able to give. They'll hold power in title only and not land nor money, is that adequate?"

"Should suffice for what thee have in mind." Ended, a conversation that happened before the sudden voyage to Kreston.

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Back and forth ran rampant in the castle, the tavern shut for it was moved outside into the yard under a tent of leather. Wooden tables and stool rested onto the grass pasture which held a bald spot on intervals. Boots prints from the dirt led onto a once stone white path. A mix of dirt complemented by rainfall a few days prior had mud all around. Unbothered, villagers ran up and down said path, some carried decorations, other pieces of clothes, and peculiar items. From Welcome to Castle Garsley to Celebrating Ayleth's wedding, the banner changed.

"Come on Fenrir," echoed down an empty corridor with the throne room behind him who spoke, the lady stared away defiantly. "I'm sorry about stopping you from meeting Staxius's babe, I wanted to go myself," hands rested on the wall, blond hair hung as he stared the floor. "Don't you think it's selfish for it pains me as much as it does you. Staxius is my best friend, a comrade I'll only abandon if death do us part."

"Brother," came Autumn from the other side, "-if death do us part sounds as if you've taken the marital vow," a quip that forced laughter out a pouted Fenrir.

"I get it," her sunken ears rose partly, convinced to move on, her tail swayed. "He's not going to go anywhere soon," sniffled, her wolf gaze regained its pride.

"Why are you all stopping?" asked Undrar who approached with hovering cartons. The sight of Julius and Fenrir told more than enough, "-I'll be on my way, Millicent is looking for you," patting Julius's back, they went on their way.

“LADY FENRIR,” rushed a villager with a bruised forehead, “-MONSTER ATTACKS FROM EAST, THEY’RE AFTER THE TRADERS!” a jolt of energy flowed through the floor as she bolted out the castle. Cracks were seen on where she stood prior.

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“Again,” sighed Julius as he combed back his hair, “-get a hold of Ben the Mason. There’s a job to be done,” parting on said words, the Duke stepped into the throne room where the rest awaited. Ordered, the villager ran out in search of the mason.

Engaged to now be wedded, Lady Ayleth; despite her injuries was asked by a gentleman of the Empire. One who had come as a potential business associate of Julius. They locked eyes and fable-like romance ensued. The actual date was forgotten by both for it was a time of trouble. The would-be groom, heir to a prominent merchant’s family, didn’t care for appearance. Attracted to her shy natured personality, a feeling of wanting to care for her every need rose forth. Engaged without their knowledge, the marriage was planned to be on the 10th of December. Preparations made more than a week in advance, the entire town was in disarray. The chaos of wanting to give the best to the couple as Lady Ayleth had been very caring to troubled mothers of shadier past. Those who were rejected by their family for having partaken in carnal desires.

Further inside the continent, at the heart of Hidros namely: Rosespire, a young man dressed in shirt and tie, headed to work. Sat with a bag, the bus filled with students. Wednesday the 4th – time was for school and work. \*Junior Claireville Academy,\* written across a silver board on a brick wall, foliage of trees inside the compound cast a shadow. ‘The same place Lizzie studied,’ fixing the tie, Avon walked in with an unusual aura. The complete opposite of the joyful, girly mix of a man, changed into a pretty man with well-combed hair and a smart outfit. The face resembled a student more than a teacher, “-good morning sir,” voiced students as they headed to class.

“Morning,” he replied with a smile. Checking into the office, taking keys to his classroom assigned at the end of the compound, an ex-chemistry laboratory altered to suit the need of a magical classroom. \*Click,\* entered, window with sun beaming through made obvious the dust that rose. The blackboard was filled with spells and diagrams of magic. Around twenty-five tables in rows of five stood facing the board. Learning magic was optional as science had taken major strides in helping society. The first sign to the class was Marie Remington, next came Katherine Goldberg. One by one, the class filled with students of Lizzie’s class. The girl had always wanted to learn magic; not to fight and cause harm, but to heal and help. Woeful of her sudden departure, her classmates felt a sense of duty to carry out her will partly.

“Morning class,” said Avon as the first bell rang.

“Morning sir,” came a unanimous response. Two hours later, the weekly class ended. “Fundamentals of controlling mana,” was written across the board. Harder to say than do, manipulating one’s lifeforce at will to produce magic was difficult. Especially for teenagers being trained so late.

\*Bing,\* in came a message, [Sender: Auic] baffled with a loaf of bread in hand, Avon took a closer look. [Head to Arda: Master has asked for thy presence at once.]

'An Audience with the king,' rose from a windy roof-top, arrangements were made to leave early. Undone, the tie was placed inside his bag as he rushed home using magic. 'This might be my chance to ask for him to fill my spirit with mana. Recovering each day and night is a pain; I want to be able to live as a human and stay with Auic.' Changed, he dashed to the mansion using what remainder mana was left. There, teleporting to Arda was a simple step of walking through a portal.

"Greetings," stepped into a silent and imposing chamber with portals all around. Guards stood with the intent to strike at any given movement. Gulped, he approached the desk from whence the greetings came.

"I'm Avon, I was called to audience with his majesty the king," spoken in a courteous tone, the lady frowned in dismissal.

"A moment," she sighed and picked up a phone, "-there's a strange boy who says to have been asked by his majesty. Never would I have guessed that he enjoys the presence of younger-looking man. To each their own I presume."

"Avon?" in jumped another spirit, cold and deadly with white retinas as her hair flowed with momentum.

"Prophecy," he sighed, "-thank the gods, I was called by King Staxius," explained further, Prophecy shook her head in annoyance.

"Shut up," the explanation ran long, "-follow me already," to which she nodded at the Overseer, the latter clicked her tongue.

"What was about that lady?"

"She's not that welcoming. A lady who hates last-minute plans," teleported inside the courtyard, "-I'll be off. His majesty must be here somewhere, I'll be careful," on that, the spirit changed into a bolt of lightning.

'How like him,' stood with eyes staring up and down, '-forgetting to inform that I was coming.'

"AVON," a voice yelled from the right, "-OVER HERE!" waved a man dressed in expensive attire.

"Master!" changed, the tough gaze swapped for one filled with sparkles, "-I MISSED YOU," he pounced for an embrace.

"Good to have you here," caught, he turned to hold Avon as if a child.

"Majesty?" crinkled, Xula raised an eyebrow paired with an innocent smile, "-how good to see that you take to boys as much as you would your own wife."

"There's no need for concern," voiced Staxius, "-he's no mere boy, Avon is my little brother," to which he received a kiss.

"Pleasure to meet thee again," jumped out his arms, the spirit bowed courteously.

??Oh, I do apologize," memories returned, "-you're the same as Prophecy," upon muttering those words, a cold shadow peered over her shoulders menacingly, "-I'm not like him," she vanished with a

humph. Introduced, they spoke a little till Staxius broke off the conversation to head to the alchemic tower.

“Why did you call for me?”

“I’ve got a present for you,” he smiled, “-come,” opened, they walked up the vexing stairs. ‘I’ve spent a few days thinking about how I’d transfer the goddess’s soul. I dove into the Arcane Library as well, and this is the result I came too.’ Flickered on, a puppet without any unique feature was strung so that it’d float. On the table rested a golden edged box with a scroll inside.

“What’s the meaning of this?” asunder, he knew not how to react.

“It’s a puppet,” taking a flask of red-liquid, the floor was dowsed so it’d make a weird pentagram. “I know of Auic’s wish; she wants for you both to have a normal relationship. To do so, you need to become one with the world, as a spirit, you’re neither human nor soul; stuck between the realm which links the worlds – living a life in thy state would be thoughtless.”

“Is what I think real, are you to transfer my soul into that puppet?”

“More than that,” papers hovered all around the room, “-I’m going to give you a new life. A life as a human,” on which he stopped, “-a tough choice remains,” faced with a stern look, “-becoming human means losing most of your ability as a mage. I can’t guarantee that the magical elements will follow thy psyche.”

“You need not worry,” smiled Avon, “-I’ve decided to live my life as lover to Auic. I wish to be a father just like you – even if I can’t fight, I’m certain that the man I serve will bring about an age of peace. An age where fighting will not be required.”

‘An age of peace,’ giving a smile, ‘-I won’t promise the age of peace coming soon. It’s all in what the future holds.’

“Master?”

“Sorry,” snapped out, “-get in the middle of the symbol with the puppet.” The first attempt at making a spirit be bound to a body that is hoped to change into a human. Out of the eye’s reach, in the corner, cats and dogs slept peacefully, prior attempts began with rats that turned to pets and now Avon.

Chapter 319: Kniq’s Fate

‘Transmuting Avon’s spirit into the puppet,’ stood with opened palms, the procedure began. ‘It will be a hard process.’ Combined knowledge gathered over the many months would all come to play, manipulation of mana – the creation of a new soul and a new body with only a spirit. Eyes closed, the room was perceived as the flow of mana and life essence, waves of energy that moved as if water. Still and untouched until a pebble was dropped to harm the surface.

\*Mana Control: Spatial Control,\* hands pressed; using himself as the catalyst, life force was drawn from the surrounding. The tower shook, apparatuses moved from left to right. \*Death Element: Unleash Aura,\* supplementing the vicinity, specks of white dust manifested to be drawn into the chest of the puppet. With a snap, the Box of Alche hovered into existence – lid opened, a blueish liquid poured on the top as if a waterfall. Landed on the puppet’s head, it trickled with a sluggish manner. Baffled, Avon

could but stare in awe as the red-lines on the ground lit all around. Fire burst forth, ‘-calm down,’ he thought, ‘-turning the vessel into a suitable host is tedious,’ heavily use of Alchemy followed. Enveloped in blue, his hands moved in manners of a conductor; the wave of life embedded itself as if veins on a human body. One by one, the building blocks of life formed tediously. Sucked, the weather around the capital turned for the worse as someone manipulated with the very laws of nature. Unbothered, he continued with surgical precision. The blueish body, devoid of features was soon craved by threads of blood and mana. Inch by inch, converting the gooey substance into organs of a human. Minutes turned to hours, Avon grew enchanted by the precision and face displayed across Staxius.

‘The end at last,’ he thought, ‘-I can see it,’ from once blue and disfigured to an exact copy of how Avon appeared, “-come,” he said with a mystical aura. Entranced, the spirit followed for he knew better.

\*All who live will die, and all who die will be reborn. The soul is a conduit of which I control.\*

With a clap, Avon’s spirit was pulled without remorse into the new vessel. Light of an unknown hue raged forth; it blinded the entire area for miles on to see. \*Transmute and be one with the world,\* hands pressed again, the burst of light imploded without sound nor damage. “Master,” voiced Avon who resided into the puppet, “-you tried,” with a smile, the body fell harshly onto the wooden floor.

“I should have known something like that would have happened,” grabbing the Relic scroll, [Item: Healing Scroll] unrolled over the cold chest, “-you’re not going to die, that’s for sure,” nails sharpened, he dug inside the still unstable body – mana transferred directly paired with the power of the scroll, \*thump,\* it echoed, \*thump,\* removing the

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hand, Staxius crawled to a few feet away. Powerful, each beat shook the body.

Fatigued, the clock showed 18:00. Heavy drainage of mana had Staxius jumping in and out of sleep. Nearly emptied, giving Avon a human body was the hardest out of the bunch. An artificial spirit without a soul could never have been turned into something human. The reality was painfully true, even Avon himself realized the truth. Auic’s smile kept him going for long, a sense of hope, and that all would come to fruition one day. ‘Don’t underestimate me,’ breathed Staxius who peered at an empty box. ‘Souls, human or not, have no difference to the afterlife.’

“I’m awake,” said Avon, “-I can feel the warmth coursing through my body,” sat upright, the eyes opened gently to a whole new feeling, “-what did you do?”

“Something godly,” he laughed, “-I transferred over your conscience and linked it with souls of animals. Tis was how I bypassed the issue of you being artificial. I did spend a whole lot of mana – if a god can’t do that much, then what’s the point of being called one?”

“Right,” he stood to only stumble down again.

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“Take it easy,” shuffled up Staxius in turn, “-do you think it easy to be adjusted into a new body that has weight. Thou were a spirit few hours prior; you’ll have to relearn everything. Should be a simple matter



of practice. I'm sure Auic will be pleased by her present," giving a helping hand, "-welcome to the land of the living, Avon."

"T-thank you," teared up, he reached for a tighter embrace, "-I've longed for this, I wanted to feel what it's like to be cared. A spirit may interact with the world, though the world doesn't interact with the spirit. Try as hard as I might, cold and glum was my life. Now," sniffles were frequent, "-I can feel what it's like to be touched."

"Get thine mind out of the gutter," laughed Staxius, "-you'll have plenty o' time to enjoy what a man yearns for. Auic shall satisfy those needs fondly, she's very well built."

"Please don't make it any more embarrassing," blushed, the face gazed the floor quietly.

"Let's get you back home," walking rather than teleporting; step through a portal, they reached the mansion of which basked in an orangish glow. To the west, the sun headed to sleep laid on the yard facing the sunset; through the foliage of the surrounding trees, Avon and Staxius watched the idyllic scene.

"Master," called Avon, "-from today forth, I guess I won't be able to help if ever combat is involved," hard as he may, only an amber of fire could be conjured. "My magical element has lessened, tis only fire and the lowest class to boot."

"It doesn't really matter," he smiled, "-go on and live thine life with Auic. The happier days are to come. I won't ever forget the day we met; the day I forcefully pulled you out of Void. It has been quite a fun journey," stood with the back facing the sun, "-let's hope our paths cross again in the future."

"Yes, master," stumbled, he managed to stand on a shaky balance. "I'll never forget all was done for an artificial spirit such as I. To have a chance at experiencing life, I thought I'd die after my mana could not be filled again."

"AVON," behind, the gate opened.

"Did you call her?" before speaking, Auic dashed down the yard to jump on her beloved. "-AVON, AVON, AVON," over and over again, she kept on saying his name, "-you're warm," she nuzzled his hair and face. In excitement, she forgot to thank the one responsible.

"Where did he go?" she asked.

"Back to Arda," he smiled, "-Master is still not fond of goodbyes," dusk settled; a promise fulfilled, the couple would soon set off on an adventure of their own. On the 6th of December, the news hit. Avon and Auic would leave behind their past as members of Kniq to elope to the mainland. Supported by Undrar, money was provided by Kniq.

"So, it's true then," dawn came, the guild opened with a crash, "-Avon and Auic have left the continent," spoken through the phone with the other members. Staxius walked into the central guild with a blissful smile. "If it's not the first platinum adventurer," voiced Diane in a smug tone.

"Long time no see," he said with the place being emptied.

"What brings you here?" asked Melisa who cleaned the counter.

“I’ve come to have Kniq be shut-down,” nonchalant, tis was the decision that came from the others, “-our secretary has decided to follow her path with one of my companions. As is, she was the only one capable of handling the guild; not anymore.”

“I see,” stern, “-if that is what you wish,” reached below for a paper, “-here’s the contract of disbanding a guild. Take a good read, once signed and stamped, Kniq will never be opened again. All their gains and property will be transferred to the central guild; this includes the headquarters at Rosenvan.”

“Hold on a moment,” interjected Melisa, “-why not think this through?”

“I appreciate thy concern,” he sighed, “-the object of creating Kniq was to fulfill my goal of opening a guild in Arda. Pandora and everything else served its purpose,’ taking the papers, a heavy stamp followed by signature; the day a guild that had already made a name as being the best; disbanded. Compromised of: Xenos, Viola, Achilles, Avon, Auic, Emma, Emmy, and Deadeyes, they would go down as the strongest team to ever be formed.

Undrar returned to staying with Julius. Achilles and Deadeyes climbed the tower unknown to what happened to Kniq. Their status card had the emblem of the wings that faded into a blackspot. Emma and Emmy officially retired as adventurers. Auic was the glue holding what remained of the guild together – gone, the pillars crumbled onto one another.

“The memories were nice,” done with the paperwork, “-give this advice to any new up and coming guild, strength lies in unity,” throwing the signature wave, he walked down the stairs of a very familiar place.

“Wasn’t that Xenos?” whispered adventurers heading for the guild.

[Announcement: Kniq has disbanded] flashed across the screens, the news came as a shock. Even the top-guilds were baffled, to have such a talented group of individuals just break. It was a loss to the Guild’s fighting strength, no longer could they rely on a team that was assured to win any fight.

Meanwhile, inside a huge somber cave, Achilles expedition team reached floor thirty. A giant humanoid body of lava guarded the gate to the next level. They had made strides toward the top, moved faster than any other team – this climbing party had cleared floor after floor. A good reputation was given for the two members of Kniq. They had been fighting for months.

“Let’s go,” screamed the leader of the expedition as they charged forth. It was a day supposed to be the usual clearing of another floor. Dozens of men grappled themselves around the body of the boss. Turned to the worse, some were squashed with a single swipe. Miscommunication by the surveyance team.

Down below, Achilles had readied her stance, \*Argonaut: Second Wind,\* a wave of energy, one to be her strongest attack, hit against its shell. \*BANG, BANG,\* bullets whistled past her head and into those of lava-slugs. Deadeyes held their back – level Thirty; the highest a team had climbed. Lives were lost on the way up here, still, without fear, they pressed forth until everything crumbled.

“What kind of hell are we in?” asked Achilles alone on the field.

“No idea and I don’t want to stay to find out,” unfortunately, those words were the last muttered by Deadeyes and his team. An ambush of Fire-minotaur had the sniper team killed in an instant. Pushed with comrades dying all over, Achilles received a punch that had her body break through the many

layers of the tower downwards. As if it were fate, on the day Kniq disbanded, the moment the contract was signed, Achilles' expedition crew got wiped.

"Are you ok?" asked novices who took her outside for treatment. Covered in dust, the area around the tower had grown into a town. Fenced off, a few kilometers away, the start of a noisy market could be heard. "She doesn't seem that worse for ware," said one of the dungeon leaders, "-take her to the medic bay." Kniq, the legacy of a group of adventurers bound by a single instinct – survival; would end. The wings that once lit the battlefield with bliss; were unfeathered.

"The room feels on edge," stood inside Kniq's headquarters – the landscape felt fatigued. 'It's best to close the linking portals,' \*click,\* a shiver rushed down his spine. Stared towards the general area of Plaustan, "-sorry friends, all good stories have to come to an end. It was a good journey, thanks for the laugh." Flash images of the time the Remingtons burst forth into the office came too, or the time Aceline came for a visit that turned into a melodramatic scene. \*Unlink,\* with a snap, the portals vanished. \*Ding,\* the elevator opened for the last time, "-let's meet again," he thought as the semi-transparent faces of Kniq who waved back with the sky as the landscape was blocked by the shutting elevator.

Chapter 320: 6th of December

'Long has it been since my last entry. After winning the Inter-magical Tournament, not to mention that I was nearly killed on said day, life grew hectic. The class resumed, today's the 6th of December. The year went by in a blink, I've no idea when or how it happened. Things in the capital seem to be all the better considering Sharon was returned safely. Kreston did grow to be on edge, their borders were shut per her Queen's orders. Out here in Claireville town, les va et vient<sup>1</sup> of the general town folks is tame. Many are speculating that war is to break out between the two kingdoms. A repeat of a seventeen or eighteen years ago, the crusade that destroyed what little remained of Dorchester. Not many speak of those events; raised on the battlefield, I knew full well the truth. That war was nothing but a testing ground for companies to try weapons. Preceding that, mages grew less common as a result. Personally, I feel as if having a war now would undermine everything that the Queen has endeavored to do. Time will tell if belligerent leaders would wish to clash arms or allow room for negotiations. What else... oh, yes; today's the day class 2A is to head to Arda. We'll be learning how to fight monsters and maybe dabble a little into alchemy. Most of the class wish to study the magical arts. I wonder what father will do upon our arrival. Can't wait to see Lizzie again, her rosy cheeks and always clenched fist makes my heart warm,' shut and kept inside a drawer, the room lit with curtains being pulled sharply.

"Do mind yourself," voiced Eira with fatigued expression.

"Leave me alone," sighed Ysmay who's pajamas were on the verge of exposing her chastity.

"Today's the day," locked, the key to her diary was concealed.

"We're headed to Arda, the land of the unknown, the land of mystery," gathering laundry, she made strides in cleaning the room.

"Don't forget these," another pair of undies flew across the room with a flutter.

"Hard to believe that you're the first princess of Arda," returned a sarcastic remark as she folded the garments into a blue-basket of which had its sides cut in a flowery shape.

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"I'm surprised that your overprotective father allowed such a venture."

"Honestly," hands on her hips, Ysmay took a second to breathe, "-I thought I'd ask to see his response. The moment I spoke about the exchange program's hosting, his expression changed to one friendly. It was very weird, remembering that face is as if calling upon a cringy memory, ugh," she shook her head in dismissal.

Struck at 07:00, the bell rang. Empty with the breeze gently caressing the stone-path, the time came to head out. Stood with arms behind their back, Sophie and Josiah held stern faces. Unable to have a peek, the students walked with heads on the floor. Risen behind the duo, the sun made it hard to have a glimpse.

"Good morning students," said in a short interval, the pressure of each syllable had them cowering for said tone was when one had to be punished. "I see that you all have made necessary preparations for the trip to Arda," paced to and fro, Josiah examined each student carefully.

"As you know," in stepped Sophie who sensed the unrest, "-Class 2A, comprised of exemplary students were given chance to partake in an exchange program. Unlike the other classes, you were allowed to choose which guild to attend. Unanimously, Kniq was chosen. I shan't retell what thee know," paused, she glared, "-you're going to represent Hidros. Best be courteous and respectful," eyeing the commoners, "-especially you, Tony, you're a bit of a troublemaker." Called by name, the boy blushed for the others stared with smirks. Continued in the same manner, the Instructor and Director spoke for fifteen minutes.

"I'll be accompanying till Rosespire," voiced Sophie. Opposed to traveling by car or van, the academy had made arrangements for the express-train. Damaged, it took a few months to repair the mysteriously broken railway. Claireville to Rosespire, thereon, taking another train, they'd ride to Rotherham.

Opened, the students walked into the train followed by chatter. Rare was it for people to travel by the express line; the price was a luxury not many could pay. 2 Gold pieces per passenger.

"Oh man," voiced Simone who had curly brown hair and a big nose, "-this is going to be epic," sat near the window, his comrades joined one by one.

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"Say that again," jumped onto the seat, Fletcher laughed, a bald-cut as he belonged to a monastery of the church of Syhton. Father a priest and mother killed by goblins, he vowed to become strong to protect his village.

"You guys have no manners," shaking his head in dismissal, Timothy sat with one foot on the other.

"Don't be such a party-poofer," fired Harold in a soft voice, "-it's a first for us commoners," medium long hair that resembled seaweed. Bearing a darker skin complexion, he hailed from a fishing village far to the south-west.

"Always readied for adventure, aren't you boys," older than the bunch, Tony was over six-feet and a well-built body. Something not many young adults could have, considering that where he hailed was one

of the burnt villages of Dorchester. Escaped to Kreston, he had run far and wide in company of mercenaries till being picked by a rather wealthy merchant. Red hair, pierced ears, and a tattoo on his chest, many referred to him as Dash.

Followed behind, the girls of which all were nobles. Most were antisocial and preferred to keep quiet. Reading a book, studying, Eira, and Ysmay were the only two who spoke to one another. Anastasia during the weeks leading up to the expedition was overflowed with shameless remarks and sarcastic jests. Many of her supposed humor was in showing how big a gap stood before the commoners and nobles. Single-handedly, she turned Kim, who bore black short hair and glasses, against Simone, Christina, with the figure of a well-matured woman, had light brown hair and lighter eye color. Always holding a smile for she was the supposed big-sister of the group. Lastly came Mille, big eyes and small nose and ears closer to elven than human. Not much was known of her past for it was never brought in conversations. Clumsy and always zoning out – aged 13, a girl with superior brainpower. Hand in hand with Kim, who was also another prodigy, they solved countless complicated questions on the subject of Magic.

Seamlessly, the door shut and the train advanced. Sophie did as she told and remained as overwatch. Between the chatter, and loudness of the boys, Eira used headphones to have a moment of peace. Following her example, the other girls took out their gadgets. Two hours later, the train arrived at the main station outside Rosespire. Taking a stairway down, “-wait here a moment,” asked Sophie who scurried to a lady in short dress. Down to the lower platform, the concrete floor was dirtied with a mixture of dust and dirt. Rare was it for people to have cleaned the area meant for commoners. People in rags and sometimes a single piece of clothes walked on and off. Opposed to them, said people were most injured. Some blind, others with no arms, and some even with fresh scars. Held together by a single unit of guards, they gave smiles to the students who stood in shock.

“Cat got your mouth?” asked Tony with a smug tone, “-this is the state of how many live in this continent. Those injuries weren’t from war, no, it came from monsters,” to which Fletcher nodded in agreement.

“Whatever,” rolling her eyes, Anastasia dismissed what she saw. It seemed as if a frivolous attempt at refusing to acknowledge the truth, a life of obliviousness. The lesser one knew the more one would be joyful – a guess at what went on inside her mind.

A few minutes past and Sophie gestured. Hidden by a pillar, the lady to whomst she spoke came into light. Not alone, guards in black suits with white gloves and no visible weaponry glared. Taller and more muscular than Tony, the latter held his breath.

“These are the students I presume?” lowering her sunglasses, the lady walked with glamor towards the bunch, “-introductions are in order,” fully removing her glasses, “-I’m Cake,” paused, “-and yes, that is my real name, from Phantom.” Nodded, the students exchanged glances to one another, ‘who is Phantom?’ many wondered.

“Let me explain,” interjected Sophie, “-Phantom is an arm’s trading company. Owned by Lord Haggard, King of Arda. They shall be the one to escort thee to the airfield.”

“Lady Eira,” voiced Cake as the girl hid behind the crowd, “-why art thou bashful?” she asked with a smile.

"Morning Cake," reluctantly, she walked to the front of the line. "My lady," bowed the guards with fists on their chest.

"Tsk," clicked Anastasia, "- loathsome, if I'd known that this would have been the case, I'd have never participated."

"Don't," whispered Christina.

"Excuse me?" taken aback, Cake stood closer to she who had spoken, "-would you kindly rephrase what was said into something more audible," cold gaze, her aura was fierce.

"I said that I would not have come if Eira's father would provide everything, fucking boastful royalty."

\*Click,\* three guns pointed at her head instantly, shuddered, the girls yelped with the boys unable to move. "-CAKE!" yelled Eira.

"Don't you use that tone with me," fired back Cake, "-thou might be Staxius's progeny, I've been ordered to treat thee all as equal. None will be given favors," ghosted, she stared Anastasia. "You have the option of turning back. If being in the good graces of a king hurts thine pride that much, why not let me make you an offer. Call up your family and we'll negotiate a deal for the expenses. Don't worry, it will be yours alone, the rest will be handled by us," unfolding in public, many stopped to watch the drama. Ashamed, her gaze befell the floor.

"Good," turned to the rest, "-don't think for a second that being Eira's friends or her classmate will affect the exchange program. I'm here as an escort; what awaits will be far harsher than this."

Unable to speak, the second train departed to Rotherham in company of Cake.

"Eira," whispered Tony, "-who is your father?"

"The king of Arda," said monotonously, "-I thought you knew about it."

"Yes, but is he only a king?" asked Fletcher, "-I've seen those guns before. Back at my village, a man dressed in a similar style suit came to confess. What he told us of an organization not known. The underground of the world, they ooze the same feeling."

"I agree," interjected Mille, "-they are super scary." United by fear, the class conversed with one another.

Screeched to a stop, vans awaited. Onboard, the drive took a few minutes till a massive compound came in view. "Where are we headed?" asked Timothy.

"Phantom's Airfield," replied Cake, "-a plane for Arda awaits."

"Why is it that we had to come here, surely any old plane would have work?" asked Simone.

"Quite chatty for students who were held at gunpoint a few hours ago. Nevertheless, Arda's landscape doesn't allow for normal planes to land. It will become clearer soon," steadfast towards the gate, they soon arrived.

Opened to a whole new world, guards did rounds, some fired guns in the shooting area to the right. Guard towers crawled with snipers of which had glared the van and its passengers. Driven past the office, a group awaited with a lady dressed in grey at the center.

“Off you get,” said Cake. Last, to leave, the van drove off without stopping. The vastness of the compound had even the nobles in awe.

“How rich is your dad,” asked behind nervous laughter, the students grouped to not be picked out.

“No idea, let’s just say that he sends me around 200 Gold each week. We never seem to run out.”

“Holy shit, that’s my monthly allowance,” interjected Timothy.

“Considering that she owns one of the Xerxes series cars, I don’t think we should be that impressed,” voiced Tony who seemed to be enchanted.

“There you are,” long white hair flowed. A sword at her hip, Courtney stood strong with Yves and Elliot behind.