

Death Magic 421

Chapter 421: Conclusion

The subtle shaking of the ground, the air of desertion, the aura of uneasiness. A day for celebration turned to a cacophonous continuum of sequences many thought to be unreal.

Across the bridge, the headquarters of the AHA hosted a strange figure. A lady accompanied by Director Leo. Long and ever-stretching, the hallway tipped to go under. From bright and joyful to dull and stern, the color-scheme added to the mystic.

“Oh dear Cleo,” said the Director with upmost affection, “-why was it you wanted to see our secret room so much?”

“Leo, my dear Leo,” replied she caressing the shorter man’s cheek, “-I want to know everything about you,” her chest soon stuck to his shoulders, “-after all, I’m willing to give you all of me, what about you?”

“I will do as you wish,” infatuated by her fierceness, the unrivaled exotic beauty, her uniqueness in both physical and psychological worked wonders. The ever-stretching corridor came to a stop with a metallic door that stood stoically before an array of black windows. Faint beeps whispered across as if the gossip of a ghost.

[Authorized personnel only]

“Wow,” exclaimed she with genuine curiosity and dashed to have a closer look, “-it’s how I imagined it.”

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“Glad you liked it,” said Leo standing smugly, “-I sadly can’t take you any further.”

“Why not?” back at his side, the man felt a sense of pride and superiority. He had something the lady wanted – the flustered face rendered her even more attractive.

“It’s a matter of security,” said he with puffed out chest, “-matter of fact, there are only a few people who can come here. There’s me, the vice director, and some...” frozen on the last words, “-I apologize, it’s me and the vice-director only.”

“Awe,” she pouted, “-you’re such a tease. Tell me, tell me, how do you actually go in?”

“Using my eye,” pulling down the darkened skin around his eyes, “-and fingers too.”

“Is that right?”

“Yes,” he laughed, “-come on now, let’s head back. It’s almost time for the ceremony.”

“Wait for me,” *SMACK.* Knocked unconscious, the man fell at a slow pace for he was fat. The cumbarsomeness of the said fall had her frown. The flesh vibrated and move along his back. ‘Obese little shit,’ thought she, “-éclair, are you there?”

“Yes, Lady Cleopatra, how can I help?”

“I’ve got access to the server room. The man is a bit too heavy for a lady as I to carry, plus, I wish not to sully my hands any further. Can I have a little bit of help?”

“Lady Cleopatra, if you would only check thy handbag. There should be a tool to aid in removing the man’s identification.”

“Are you saying I gouge out the eyeballs?” the tone cut across in astonishment.

“No,” said the butler calmly, “-you need only position it above the eye. The machine will take care of the rest. As for the finger, you’ll need to cut it.”

“Seriously,” sighed she, “-I’ve come from an age far ancient than this. Simpler times where being poisoned or assassinated was the only worry.”

“Lady Cleopatra, are you going to complain?”

“I understand,” rolling her eyes reluctantly: [Access Granted].

Countless metallic shafts of unknown rose before her. Not obvious from the outside; the spherical shape made spotting the middle easier. “What do I do?” asked she coming to a tube-like interface.

“Plug in the device and leave. I’ve stall security, transport should be waiting outside.”

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BEEP. Quiet repetition of a sound similar to twinkling increased. It felt menacing in a way, the intervals grew shorter of which had the lady leave. Left in her wake was a man deprived of his eyeball and fingers, both laid next to the door.

“Lady Cleopatra, have you seen the director?” asked a worker in a panic. The lounge filled with others who held the same feeling.

“No, I have not, I went to the washroom,” said to defuse the situation, “-what’s the matter?”

“There’s been an incident,” the frightened face gave to the television. Breaking news of what transpired in the City had the people in chaos. The stadium underwent a disorderly evacuation. Executives were taken off the stage. Some excited fans were trampled and gravely injured as result.

“Why are they in such a panic, aren’t the heroes present?” asked Cleopatra seeing it felt wrong.

“No, that’s not it,” voiced the receptionist, “-look here,” lifting her phone, *The Truth of Asuna Muld and the AHA. Written by the Jester.* “A copy of the file was sent to everyone at the concert. The Arcanum flooded with an angered mob of fans who once worshiped Luna. The evacuation is nothing more than a riot. They’re headed here,” the fear palpable, a tension one could slice with a knife.

“Lady Cleopatra, you need to leave, NOW!” ordered éclair.

A car pulled to the entrance; “-I’ll take my leave.” She left in haste; the workers were suspicious of her action. Security was called to no avail, the timing was perfect, éclair drove her to safety. Giving chase wasn’t an option, even if they knew she was responsible, the angered mob came ever so close.

“Congratulation on completing the mission, lady Cleopatra. I’m sure Master will be very pleased.”

"I hope he is," said she resting against the passenger window, "-I worked for god knows how long to get in that man's good graces. I shudder to think what another day with him would have been like. The lustful gaze he gave makes me shiver."

"Were you not Queen of Eduipt, surely her majesty is comfortable with men?"

"éclair," returned she coldly, "-I was queen and had my harem. I had men wrapped about my fingers, yes, I loved each of them very much. I find it quite offensive the way my relation was portrayed. I'm not a lady of pleasure; don't get it twisted. I'll only give myself to the one I love, not any stranger."

"I apologize, my lady, those weren't what I intended."

"It's fine," smiled she, "-I apologize for my tone, it's unbecoming to pour my worries onto another."

Thus continued the car along the less populated roads. Across the jungle of concrete to the end of town. They came upon a clearing in the land, a small playground devoid of people. The city was long behind. Stepping out of the car; spirals of smoke rose to the murky grey-sky where it merged with the same colored clouds.

"You're here," came a strict voice.

"I wish I was not," replied Cleopatra uninterested by who spoke.

"Same here," said another.

"Goddess Intherna and Goddess Gophy," said the lady bored of the pillars of smoke, "-what happened to Operation Malk?"

"Queen Cleopatra, we ask the same, how was thy mission?"

"A walk in the park," said Cleopatra barely able to stand, "-what about you?"

"Easy," coughed an injured Intherna.

"The wounds are proof of our battle," winked Gophy in an even dastardlier state.

Each glared another, a silent battle of endurance. The dampness of the coming rain had the stance relax.

"Haha," unable to continue the seamlessly hate-filled conversation, the trio cracked. The pressure relieved, a plan completed – they rested with back against the opened car. "I'm glad it's over."

"I agree, Intherna, it must have been tough playing the villain for so long."

"Are you worried about me, dear Cleopatra?" asked she with a slight tilt of the head.

"Oh shut it," sighed she regretting having asked.

"Don't start you two," interjected Gophy.

"To be honest," spoke Intherna, "-It wasn't that hard. I enjoyed being the villain, allowed me to let loose. I do feel for the few people who died to the greater picture."

"Saving so many countless life, it gave a new perspective," voiced Gophy.

“The goddess of destruction saving lives and the daughter of Rah being the villain, thy roles were the extremes of what the name suggests.”

“I guess...What about seducing the lustful Director?”

“Just glad it didn’t go past the point of hugging. Any more contact with him and I’d have cut his head or poisoned the meal.”

“Calm down,” said both goddesses in tandem.

“The question now is whether he is happy.”

“The Death Reaper,” mumbled the queen, “-I wonder what Lixbin sees in him.”

“Did you say Lixbin?” asked Gophy with a frown.

“N-no...”

“Are you sure?” her brows knitted.

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“Ladies, please be ready, transport is arriving soon,” came through the speakers. The menacing sound of air being cut rose from the back. The outline of a helicopter. “Time to go home.”

‘It’s a success.’ Sat Staxius far, far away from the growing riot. The small table held a hovering screen – on it, information relating to the AHA. éclair infiltrated their servers and was in process of transferring all the information. Minutes turned to hours, soon, the sound of a helicopter landing broke the impromptu nap.

Knock, knock,

“Welcome home,” the door opened.

“Thanks,” said they half-asleep.

“Go on, get some rest,” offered he closing the door behind.

“Don’t mind us,” soon turn into a flicker of light, they went inside his shadow. A place where rest and mana were abundant.

“What about you, Cleopatra, are you not going to rest?”

“I’d prefer to sleep on the bed, is that ok?” leaned off the wall, her fingers sloppily tried to take off the high-heels.

“Suit yourself,” said he with a smile. Changed to the other foot,”-good night.”

The one most important in this mission was Cleopatra. Operation Malk began to promote Meldorino. The operation soon changed to being a decoy for another mission. One kept hidden from everyone except Staxius and éclair. Cleopatra, who went missing for a few months; headed to the AHA. Only a place and time was handed to her. Director Leo, as told by Emi, enjoyed roaming around the shady town of Tale during the weekends. He was given priority on any ‘products’ the company brought. Tis was

there he met with the Queen. Using her wits and charm, she managed to pass off as the bankrupt owner of a motel. Attracted by her face; Leo made sure he knew who she was.

While she worked at getting his trust, the Jester and Hero Luna battled throughout the continent.

Few villains came as one to follow the Jester's idealism, effectively becoming his pawn. The alliance only served to increased Luna's reputation. The people fell in love, and so did the owners of the AHA. As for the proof the jester sent before he died; it contained revealing information of the AHA's abuse. The story of Asuna Muld, the real uncensored story with proof. Tis was a gift from what éclair uncovered whilst looking into the Emi Muko scandal. One thing led to another and there it was, the damning proof to ignite the growing incompetence of the Association.

Staxius did as he told to the Emperor. He lit the fire of a coming inferno. The people knew the truth, or so what they thought. In no way would a man who refused to believe in the AHA's heroes be a liar. From day one, he showed a sense of integrity, despite the insanity, he showed he knew what he spoke of. The charm brought a sense of certainty, a confidence that the words were true on some basis. His death added even more credibility, the last words were those of a man in pain, a pain who wanted justice, a man who gave his all to save his sister. In no way could the association move freely, answers needed to be given.

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'I've halted their movement. If éclair's search finds links of Cimier or the Patek, it would confirm a few hypotheses on the ring leaders. It should at least give a clear target to go after. Intherna, Gophy, and Cleopatra accomplished more than I expected. They deserve a well-needed moment of respite. The rest is on my shoulders. Phantom needs to win the coming conflict. I need a firm foot in Alphaia else there's no way I can take down those at the top.' Wondering what was to come next; the phone suddenly rang.

Lady Shino Pierre Gaso Calling...

Chapter 422: The Fall

"Lady Gaso, to what do I owe this honor?"

"Mr. Haggard, I've some important information."

"If lady Gaso herself took to calling an unknown personally, I shudder to know the reason."

"Please Mr. Haggard, there's no need to be so off-putting. I called on assumption that we were acquaintances."

"And acquaintances we are, I find it rather mind-blowing for thee to call. Anyway, please my lady, do continue and forgive my rather decrepit tone."

"I say this as I'm not certain. Rumors are going around that the people from Meldorino know of Luna's true identity. It's a shame she died earlier today, but, it didn't stop the news from perpetuating. The reason for the call is other than the hero. Mr. Haggard, you've caught the attention of a few people in the Patek Dynasty. Members who are not that high-ranking..."

"And their wishes. I get the picture, they asked you to be the mediator between me and them. What a waste of time, they could have contacted my assistants."

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"Thing is, Mr. Haggard, you're elusive, there's no clear path in contacting you."

"And my elusiveness doesn't seem to bother thee."

"Have thee forgotten my name? Nevertheless, they want to have a meeting at thy convenience. I'm sure their secretive nature is reason enough. Mr. Haggard, I leave you on this – Meldorino's turned into a potential rival for other luxury brands. Good luck; Patek's aren't the only ones who wield power in Alpha. If thee are to fight, best do it as a team, not alone."

"Thank you for the heads up, Lady Gaso. I'll keep the words close as I move forward. Besides," the tone changed, "-whatever happens in the underworld, stays in the underworld. I know all about your connection with the Dark-Guild. Lady Gaso, a close ally to Godfather Stanley of the assassination Sect."

"Oh, Shadow," said she with a chuckle, "-leader of Phantom, an ally to Godfather Renaud, we sure are bound to face one another."

"If tis bloodshed..."

"Let me interject," said she sharply, "-I'll make this clear. In no way will I get involved in the fights or bloodshed. My purpose is to only make the Gaso Group stronger; we're people who live as the law says, not thugs who kill on sight."

"Are you insinuating that I know naught but death?"

"Mr. Haggard, I never said anything of sorts. Granted, the fable of Shadow, the mysterious man who annihilated gang after gang and went toe-to-toe against Godfather Stanley's elite assassins, is impressive. In no way will I be scared or back down for I've not done thee wrong."

"Lady Gaso," said he coldly, "-tis as thee said. Cross my path and death will be what awaits in the end. We may not be friends, but we are acquaintances. As long as the Gaso Groups does what it does, we'll never be enemies. If the time comes where Godfather Stanley's protection isn't sufficient, Phantom will be glad to help."

"So blatant," she laughed, "-asking for I to change sides this late in the game. Thee are truly amusing."

"Glad to hear so," the call ended.

'The Patek are shooting in the dark. Why would they want to speak to me? It's unnatural, something's amiss. Lady Gaso called personally. She could have sent a messenger or use some indirect way, but her actions were cut and clear. It's a warning, the Patek's are up to something, and it doesn't spell good for Meldorino.'

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"éclair, how long for the data to be sorted?"

"Another 12 hours, master. Have some rest, the information will be ready when thee wake."

“As you wish.” Day turned to night, and the night was a conflicting event of interest. Riots to the North-East were rampant. The AHA did naught but cower in their headquarters. The situation grew so bad even heroes turned coat and joined the revolution.

Live-broadcast of the event played on television. Sat in his office at the mansion, Emperor Sultria’s mind grew wary. ‘I’ll cause a revolution. Justice for Asuna Muld.’ The words spoken by Staxius, he made good on the promise.

“Imperial Majesty,” opened the doors by informants, “-the riots are getting worse. Public safety is at their wit’s end.”

“I know,” came a listless response, “-the truth got out,” leaned back on the chair. “The Jester’s last word said Asuna Muld was his sister. It’s not hard to see why the man would want revenge. The condemning proof too, the AHA has a lot of explaining to do.”

“Forgive my asking; what brought about such a revolution. The death of Luna, Jester, the whole incident feels too good to be true.”

“Yet, tis what fate chose. Karma will strike one day or the other, the faint flame of retribution burns ever so gentler. Now go, it’s time for politics. Have a press conference readied, the Empire is going to refute the actions of the AHA.”

“As thee wishes,” closed with a loud echo, Sultria sat with a smirk. ‘Thank you, father-in-law, it’s the perfect opportunity to break the Hero association. The continent doesn’t need people who live to fill their coffers. We need actual heroes to help in the war against monsters.’

In a flash, the date went from the 8th to the 11th. The riot turned to civil war. More and more people rushed onto the scene. The city of Arkta became a nest for crows. The Mayor, by string-pulling, was forced into disowning the AHA. Subrea, Whuotan, Dostein, Scaica, Skouso, Uglor, and Legrury – the seven-province making the whole of Alphaia, turned against the AHA. Their leaders expressed their discordance to such a scummy way of maintaining a group meant for the ‘good’ of the people.

Knock, knock,

“Who is it?” asked Staxius opening the door.

“You have to help them,” said a desperate voice.

“Help who?”

“My sisters,” said the figure with messy hair, a foul breath, and a night-gown.

“Did you run away from Scott?” asked he a little amused by the image of Scott chasing her in pajamas.

“That doesn’t matter. Please, Majesty, you have to help them!” begged Emi pressing her hands as if a prayer.

“No.”

“PLEASE, I’LL DO ANYTHING,” she pled.

“Anything, are you sure?” asked he with a less than pleasant stare.

“YES, ANYTHING.”

“Well then,” *Ancient Magic: Teleportation.*

“There,” two ladies fell to their knees.

“HOW DID YOU?” her sisters returned without a second’s notice.

“Doesn’t matter,” smiled he, “-take them downstairs – I’m sure Scott can handle it from here.”

“BUT WHAT DID YOU DO?”

“Shut up,” the door slammed.

‘Two seconds for a rescue, quite amusing. I wanted to go there in the company of an army and lay siege to their castle. I suppose dreams will be dreams, I can’t lay siege in modern society. The All-seeing eye sure is powerful. Having so much power doesn’t feel right anymore. I can easily go anywhere in the world – my mana capacity is ever-growing. The All-Seeing eyes are fully evolved, they’ve reached their peak as a tool. I can pin-point to any location and instantly sense how many people, what they’re doing, and their thoughts in a second. The toll it has on the body is close to a mosquito bite. Maybe I’m growing senile. Subconsciously putting limits on my powers – maybe it’s in order to not make me go insane. Long are the days of constant pain. The symbols of power are nothing but tattoos on my body. The Ancient writings over my chest and limbs seem to grow dimmer with each day. The curses are being blessed by the Power of Time. It seems to have a will of its own. In every sense of the word, I’m the Wielder of Time now, the power that the God slayer inherited.’

“Master, Emperor Sultria is going to start the press conference,” said éclair.

“Turn on the television,” ordered he taking a drink out of the fridge.

“All rise for his Imperial Majesty,” said an announcer lowering his head over the screen.

“Settle down,” said the Emperor with a cold tone. “Let me express my gratitude for thee to have made it here on such short notice. As most of you know, the AHA has been essential in helping our people, the Sultrian, who has limitless power to find the path of kindness. Those at the top must help the unfortunate – villains, monsters, criminals; our idyllic continent is still under the clutches of evil. Looking for a world without evil is insanity. Yet, tis said insanity which allows us to move forth. We look, we seek, we yearn for a better tomorrow. The people of Alpha spoke, our comrades spoke – the truth, one of which I knew not, was ousted by a villain. The Jester, brother of Asuna Muld; chose the path of anarchy because of our failure to give justice. He chose to change the world in his way – I don’t praise his actions for people have died in said endeavor. It did give us a very well needed moment of silence. What is it we seek as people, what do we want? To have other Asuna Muld be defiled by those with power and driven to death. Or do we want retribution, I ask thee, people of Alpha, WHAT WILL IT BE? If more cases like Asuna happens, others will follow the path of Jester. They will bring their own anarchism and destroy the lives of the innocent. THAT,” he shouted,“-is something we must avoid at all cost. Hear me all, I, Sultria VI, Emperor of Alpha, decree that the AHA must atone for their actions. The Imperial family will back any faction who wishes to fight them. This is a culling, a very much needed restart for our society. I say it again, in no way do I wish for people to die. We need not sully our hands, those who’ve betrayed our trust deserve more than death, they need to atone and pay for their sins.”

‘Now that’s a speech if I heard one,’ thought Staxius lounged on the couch. ‘Breaking apart the faction seems the normal course of action. Those pulling strings can’t do anything. We’ve won the battle. The AHA is done for. No apology is going to quell the people’s thirst for revenge. Rekindling the passion for Asuna using Gophy, returned her memories to the people. They understood how much good savior was needed. One that could help the people out of the goodness of her heart.

“éclair, have Scott ready the Feline Force. We’re going to hammer the last nail in their coffins.”

“Understood, master.”

Without time wasted, accompanied by the manager, the trio stood at Staxius’s doorstep.

“Come on in,” said he with a smile.

“What’s this about?” whispered Scott.

“Revenge,” winked he, “-the Feline-Force was at the forefront of the AHA’s. Let the world know, didn’t you hear the Emperor’s speech earlier?”

“Yes, I did,” sighed he, “-are you sure it’s a wise idea?”

“The Emperor has announced the AHA to be evil. There’s no cause for concern. What they say, even if it’s lies, will be taken as truth. People will believe anything as long as it aligns with their ideals. The world may well be flat if it allied with the purpose of another.”

“How though?”

“The Emi Muko incident,” said Staxius, “-her situation is the same as Asuna Muld. We only need to sprinkle alcohol on fire.”

“Majesty, the news reporters are here,” voiced éclair.

“Have them sent up.” On that, an impromptu interview with many credible news outlets came to have the scoop. Another victim to add to the AHA’s responsibility. One by one, questions were asked and answers were given. Staxius made sure the Feline-force be portrayed as another victim with an exception, Emi Muko. The story of the one who still shoots for the stars. The truth was reported, the abuse, and her thoughts on having wanted to die so many times. Then, as in any good heart-warming story, her will to live showed in the eyes. Her way of speaking, her wanting to start anew. The passion and dedication all but cleaned her reputation.

‘The fall of one and the rise of another, tis the reality. I’m only getting started.’

Chapter 423: Investigation

Following the interview, the uncut version of what Emi retold of her experiences added to the downfall of the association.

“VICE DIRECTOR,” stood lifelessly in the middle of the conference room, the man who had planned to do much more fell in disarray. What he had built over the years crumbled. The walls felt as if straw and the destruction outside was of a starving tempest. Out of the Six executives, only two remained. Lady Six

and the leader, Mr. Zero. The other associates cut their losses and severed any links to the shady organization.

"Yes, Lady Six," said he with no ambition.

"The AHA is done for. Mr. Zero, I only came to give my sincere regards as to what is to come. The Emperor's message is clear, this association was doomed the moment the Dynasty got involved. I've said it countless times, being rich doesn't mean one is almighty."

"LADY SIX, YOU BETTER SHUT UP," yelled a differing voice from screen 'Zero'.

"The bratty heir is here," laughed she, "-tell thy grandfather that the Patek's will fall one day or the other. Thee have brought about too much suffering."

"Vice-director, cut her connection this instant, I order you!"

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"Shut up," screamed the man in disbelief, "-it's because of you we're in this mess. I said this so many time before, DON'T MESS WITH WHAT ISN'T IN THY CONTROL. You're nothing but a spoiled brat."

"Vice Director," the screen 'zero' changed in tone, "-you best keep thy tongue quiet."

"..." facially tense, he felt nothing more than the pure anger of wanting to punch the one at the top.

"Lady Six," said Zero.

"..." silence, the connection cut.

"She's gone to hide like the coward she is. Vice-Director, I realize there's no way to save the AHA. We need to cut our losses and disband. This whole thing reeks of a conspiracy. As from this moment, thee are fired, go, and never turn back. The Patek will take care of the rest."

"What do you mean?" the silent hall whispered a coming tragedy. Countless footsteps stomped their way around the hall -it encircled one by one. "Mr. Zero, please don't tell me..."

"Yes, it is," he laughed, "-those who are weak and undeserving of our grace must pay with their lives." The curtain parted for the last act had come. The stomping came as people with guns barged into the room. No mercy, no chance to react, not a say, nothing, what he saw was the smiling face of Zero. "-Kill him," echoed loud and clear, a massacre was ordered.

Date: 12th of May. *Breaking News: The AHA's downfall.*

"Early morning of today, Public safety got a distress call from an employee of the association. Those who worked at the AHA were killed in cold blood. We haven't the exact numbers of how many died, but we know one thing for sure – its cruelty."

Inside the building, after the entrance and into the inner-building; corpses laid atop one another.

"This is awful," said Chad holding his nose.

"Yeah," added Larson emptily, the rest of the force moved to recover the deceased. "What brought about this carnage?"

"I know not sir," voiced Chad making his walk across the bloodied floor.

"Why would someone kill the employees who were most definitely clueless to the happenings of the AHA. The more this event plays out, the more confusing it becomes."

"Sir."

"What is it?" asked Larson coming to a squatting Chad.

"Look here," he pointed to a lady desperately clenching onto an object.

"Go on then," nodded he with arms crossed.

Cold and murky to the touch, the assistant tried hard to not have the sight of blood bring fear. "Here, I got it."

"Is that tape?"

"I presume so," frowned Chad, "-it's possible she was trying to run away from the security room."

"And what brings you to that conclusion?" asked Larson with an attentive face.

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"Look at how she died and the injuries. It's most likely she was shot in the back. It explains why she fell face first. As for where she came, the tape is specially made for cameras," to which he pointed up, "-the whole building has surveillance."

"Let's check the security room then," smiled Larson, "-the deduction was primitive but accurate. Congratulation on using thy brain, Chad, here I thought you only knew how to preach about idealisms."

"Please, sir, there's no need to strain thyself in being kind."

"As expected," broken screens, trashed interfaces; guards shot with their blood on the various buttons. "Its reason enough," said Larson, "-it was intentional. Someone ordered people to attack the AHA. The culprit took advantage of the riot to wipe out any evidence."

"Yeah, there's no tapes available," said Chad head deep into where the data would be kept.

"Obviously," said he holding the bloodied tape, "-she knew of the coming bloodshed. A guard who saw the death on the other floors tried to flee with the proof. She would have gotten away if not for the physical altercation."

"What do you mean?"

"Look at the door," besides being made of metal, nothing stood out. "Look at the impact, the scratch marks."

"Scratch marks, really sir?" the stance slumped.

"Yeah I know," breathing deep, "-you can argue the scratches are from previous wear and tear," to the corner, in a dark area where light didn't penetrate, a rod faintly glimmered. "Look at it," held into better

light, “-a defensive baton used by guards. Why would this be on the floor if not for someone trying to fight.”

“I mean, they could have heard the men coming and tried to fight back.”

“Then, why is there only one baton and not the other guards. Reason says a squad would have allied to fend off the enemies. The door is heavy, I’m sure they could have locked it in case of danger, then why did they not do so.”

“Ok, then what about the altercation, how did you come to that conclusion?”

“Simple,” returned to the door, “-the assailant missed the lady and hit the shelf here.” And indeed, to the right of the door, rose a bent metal shelf used for storing items. “He missed, hit the shelf, lost grip of the baton that flew to the other side, and gave chase after the lady.”

“Where’s the man then?”

“Don’t you get it?” he laughed; “-he was an inside man.”

“Wouldn’t he have the tape?”

“Yes, that is if he was alive...”

“Are you just inventing stories now?”

“No, the man is dead. I’m sure you’ll find the body amidst the others.”

“Y-yeahhh.” Unconvinced, the duo continued to walk around the office. They discussed further and further until the server room.

“Our last piece of evidence,” smiled he.

“What a mess,” holding his nose, the stench of burning rubber and metal had turned the clean hall into a mess of molten trash. Skipping over rubbles here and there, nothing could be recovered.

“It spells it out. It’s an inside job – people from the top ordered for the slaughter of their employees. It’s a good move since many of them were in on the affair.”

“The server-room is destroyed; we can’t find damning evidence against the AHA. Whatever, as if it matters, the damage is done, the Association is a thing of the past.”

“Who are we going to hold culprit?” asked Chad angered by what he pieced together. The action, the process, and the repercussion.

“No one,” sighed Larson, “-it’s the same as before. The people responsible are the mighty of high-society. Even if we had evidence, there’s nothing we could do.” Backtracking their steps to the reception – as Larson told, a guard without a baton was found dead not too far from the security room.

“Mr. Larson, Mr. Chad, there’s someone on the phone,” came an officer wearing gloves.

“Alright,” said he over the whole ordeal. “Chad, go help in recovering the bodies, we’re done here. Who knows, you might find some jewelry as a freebie.”

“I’m not stealing from the dead.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” pushing the door open, countless people stood shy of the entrance. A barricade with officers as overwatch held any reporters from getting close. ‘Look at them,’ glared in disgust, ‘- people died and they think nothing more than to get the first interview.’ Down the side of the building into the empty parking lot, “Hello, Larson speaking.”

“Officer Larson,” said a deep menacing voice.

“Yes, it’s me, what do you need?”

“Have you had a good look at the damage caused?”

“Is this a prank call, I’m hanging up.”

“Wait,” said it adamantly, “-does thee not want to know what the servers held? Does thee not want to see footage of the shooting?”

“Who is this?”

“An acquaintance.”

“I don’t recognize your voice.”

“Of course, you won’t for we met at Tale. The slaying of 200 men, does that jog thy memory?”

“Mr. Crow.”

“Crow?”

“Yes, since you’re not going to reveal your identity...”

“Mr. Crow sounds good enough.”

“Why now, I did as I was told, I’m staying away from what we found. Is there something else you want to threaten me for?”

“No, rather, I’d like to recompense thee with a gift. Mr. Larson, I’m neither friend nor foe, consider me a man who wishes to break the upper echelon. To do that, I’ll require assistance from you and your men. Unit 08; I have information that may prove detrimental to a certain party. Do with it as you wish. I’m sure the people who died were killed without ever having a chance to prove themselves. Do what is right, I trust you know what is best.” The phone hung with countless files, videos, and audio snippets being uploaded.

‘T-this is...’ he fell to the ground shocked by what was showed. ‘It all points to the Patek Dynasty. They are responsible for the slaughter. The video says it all – Mr. Zero aka Rowley Aldis Patek, the former head of the Dynasty. Father of the current head; Mishline Guiz Patek. This information alone is enough to have me killed. There’re even the videos of the heir indulging into the unconsented bonding of flesh,’ he shook in fright, ‘-I can’t! if this gets out the Patek’s will be after my family. I can’t, I can’t show anyone this proof.’ Larson sat with knees to his head. There was nothing he could do.

“Majesty,” spoke éclair, “-was it wise to give the detective such condemning evidence?”

“Yeah, whatever he does with it doesn’t affect us. The Patek was behind the AHA and their actions can be revealed to the public. The question now is how Cimier is involved. The shooting, éclair, can you scan each of their faces and trace their background?”

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“Yes, it will take a few hours.”

“Then get to it, track their location, family, people relating to them. I want to know where they gather. They were dressed like Cimier, but I doubt it’s them. Decoys or the Patek’s private militia group.”

“Master, their weapons, the shooters were using Magnic-S variant.”

“The silenced pistol,” thought he behind a desk, “-they’re customers of Phantom. Run a search on who ordered that particular model in the past year. They bought from us, should have the search lessened.”

“Will it not go against our neutrality?”

“éclair, I only asked for who we sold it to. Besides, they would never buy directly – the buyer is most likely a mediator.”

“It’s a possibility, alright master, I shall get to work.”

Out towards the Sultria’s estate, “-look what you did brother,” said a less than impressed Amber. “The speech you made killed those who worked at that building. How are you going to take responsibility?” Stood she as big as a mountain. Her stance close, the distance between his desk and her felt as if the earth and moon.

“Big sister Amber,” stared he coldly, “-I did what I had to do. If they died, there’s no arguing said fact.”

“So, is the emperor going to sit on his laurels and do naught?” asked she vengefully throwing her arms in unison.

“Let me ask this, where were you during the incident?”

“N-nowhere,” her eyes twitched, the stance broke a little.

“And where is nowhere supposed to be? I need answers sister,” he pressed onto the matter.

“At the capital working towards making the company grow. Do you have a problem with that?”

“No,” said he sternly, “-thing is, sister, I heard from one of my informants that a man referred to you as Lady Six. Is there maybe something your hiding?”

“This discussion is over,” the door slammed.

Chapter 424: Assassination

Between the search conducted by éclair and Staxius’s analysis of current events; the date scrolled without worry. 24 hours gone in what seemed to be 2 hours – the journeys in search of information led him all over the continent. Most of which were inconsequential.

On the 15th of May; the continent was still in mourning for those who died. The AHA's Downfall was a sad and immoral event. Death counts, as reported by the officials were in the forties. Families cried and wept, lovers fell into despair, children lost fathers, mothers, and some even became orphans. Emperor Sultria VI was quick to jump on national television. He explained in greater detail all the while being very sympathetic to the ones hurt. Manipulation at the highest degree, 'those who did hurt to our people shall have the hurt returned ten-fold.' A normal thing to say when things seemed to be this bad, false promises of revenge and all. 'My words are not in vain; I promise to find the culprit and have them brought to justice.' A bold promise to which bolder actions needed to accomplish said task. The easiest thing to do would have been blaming the situation on a villain. Said thought did creep around the mind until the idea of Justice grew important. The matter at hand was far greater than keeping appearances.

'What a fool,' the scenery changed from rural to urban. From the rocky peaks of Marrowy to the concrete jungle of Melmark – the railway from above was as if the lines ants made when walking. Orderly and without anyone trying to outpace another. The building in question; 40 floors high with a view over the main-plaza close to the middle of Melmark. Behind said building stood others, they were of lower but larger size. A squad of monologue figures without limbs and arms – an army of torsos. The impression; eerie.

"Master, we've reached the given location," said éclair in the loud hovering helicopter.

"Good," sipping the last bit of whiskey, "-is there a place to land?"

"Yes sir," said the pilot, "-the backwater from the wind makes her harder to land."

"Must be the higher buildings," commented Staxius.

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"No need to worry sir, I'll have her land without trouble." As confident as one possibly could, he made good on the word. The metal bird landed without much trouble. It was said as if to promote how good of a pilot he was.

"Here we are, sir."

"Good work, be on stand-by," peering through the black-tinted glass, the waiting party didn't seem amused.

"éclair, give me the name of everyone who stands there."

"Yes sir."

A black and grey colored box for glasses rested on the back. The insides of the bird were one of luxury, a model made for transportation only. It explained why the back held seating for 4 arranged in a two-by-two manner. At the center, a table; for lack of a better word, hovered. On it was where the box rested. Engraved with C.Reinhard; it opened to show a thin clear round golden-rimmed glasses. 'The visual interface for éclair is here.' Carefully, he placed the frame atop his nose. The face and persona changed instantly, he resembled more of an idol, a fashion-star, than a scholar, which was the intent. The long white-crimson hair matched with the glasses, the eyes which peered out; crimson and stoic, were amplified. By the Alphian standard, not to under mind one else, Staxius fit their criteria for what was viewed as being handsome. In what felt like an hour; the door slide menacingly. The rotors were long

silent. The white-chopper striped with gold, yet another addition to Phantom's inventory of crafts. The particular model was a clone of the U93-1, named U93-2. Slimmer, faster, less obnoxious than its predecessor, and equipped with the AFR, a massive improvement on the first model. Phantom's laid upon the door.

"Mr. Haggard?" came a man rubbing his hand.

"Yes," returned he glancing at the various individual.

"Master, I've linked myself to the glasses. You should have a live-feed." By that, he meant, anyone Staxius stared would have their information revealed in detail.

'Very convenient,' thought he being escorted to the higher floors. Inside, the layout was similar to any high-end office building. The people gave courteous smiles to those who dressed the part. *Ding,* and up they went.

Half-way across, on floor 20, the lift opened to an empty corridor.

"This way."

Le Court's Restaurant, the faint mumble of people chatting, the vague aroma of food – one could hear the sizzling with enough attention. 'Interesting.'

"There's no information available on the restaurant, master. It's secretive and I assume, for high-end people."

"Please, follow us," a step inside showed a bar on which rested expensive drinks. The counter, inlaid with multiple drawings, was reminiscent of the style used at the Kreston churches. For being secretive, whilst walking beside a few tables, the people were very much expensively dressed. It was the definition of what one would imagine as being 'upper-class'.

"éclair, scan all those people, I smell foul play."

A double-door with guards arrived at the end of the walk across the floor. The curtains were shut; no way to see out and admire the greatness of being high. Instead, the décor opted for an introvert, almost seclusive approach. 'Didn't lady Gaso said they were low in the pecking order?'

"We're here," said the guide who paused.

"I suppose we part ways here," nodding blankly, he entered the closed area.

Pillars wrapped with beautiful living flowers; a round chandelier in the middle, a private bar to the side. The table on which two people were sat, rested at the center after a few steps into the room. For some reason, it was built on a lower level than the rest of the room and barricaded by a pentagram of steps. Opposite the bar, cutting across the table, curtains were finally parted to allow the light of day.

"Mr. Haggard," stood the both.

"Mr. Elix and Mr. Endo," they exchanged handshakes.

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Not that they would say it openly, him knowing the name had them on edge. Especially since no prior information was given.

“Would you like to order anything?” asked Elix with the gelled back hair, square glasses, and silver earrings. The face was sharp and very angular.

“What does the chef recommend,” smiled Staxius.

“I’ll call on him,” nodded Endo with his more fleshy and chubbier face.

A man in a white outfit came to give multiple explanations on the food. Quick to take in the information, Staxius ordered the ‘special’. As for drinks, “-Mr. Elix, forgive me if I’m wrong, isn’t that God’s ale?”

“Oh yes,” smiled he smugly, “-the highest grade. 20,000 Exa per bottle. Legality doesn’t affect us who are above the common folks.”

“Impressive,” said Staxius uninterested, ‘-you got scammed, it’s nothing more than blended alcohol.’

“Would you like some?” asked Endo holding an obnoxious smirk.

“No, I’d prefer to have Whiskey,” to which a waitress approached.

“Do you have Whiskey from Airy-Sel?”

“Airy-Sel,” inquired the bartender astonished. “I apologize for the outburst,” walked to stand at the table, “-Mr. Haggard, it’s rare to see anyone know the name Airy-Sel.”

“One must know those who are worthy of praise. The small brewery based in Sel has taken my pallet strongly. I very much enjoy each sip of their blend.”

“We sadly do not have Airy-Sel. Though, I’m happy to see influential people enjoying our blend.”

“Are you perhaps, Einstol?”

“How did you figure?”

“A hunch,” smiled Staxius ignoring the other two. A conversation with the bartender felt more interesting. “So, you are the maker of Airy-Sel.”

“Yes. I took on the formula from my father and created a new version.”

“Very interesting. What else do you recommend?”

“Derivu.”

“Another unfamed brand.”

On that, orders for food and drinks were given. What remained was the conversation.

“Mr. Haggard, as you know, we’re from the Patek Dynasty.”

“And?”

“We’ve come to make an offer.”

"About what?"

"An offer to purchase Meldorino."

"Denied," returned he, "-the company is now privately owned. Only I have a say in when people are to buy."

"May I ask the reason why?" inquired Endo.

"Would you sell off thy child for profit? I suppose you would, people from the Patek's have less than admirable reputation."

"Mr. Haggard, you best not overstep the boundaries."

"Could we stop this fa?ade already, what is the reason thee called?"

They stopped eating; the aura sunk into one of danger. "Suppose trickery isn't going to work with you," sighed Endo.

"Look at that, Assassins from Patek, what a lovely sight," said so to mock they who had badly acted.

"You've walked straight into our trap, so much for being smart," winked Endo spouting countless tentacles from his back. It sharpened to catch the reflection of the outside sun.

"Mr. Haggard," winked Elix, "-we're not mere assassins," guns came to his palm, "-we're the angels of death."

Whoosh, the walls cracked, "-angels of death?" snickered he savoring each bite.

Two figures crashed to leave an impact, "-w-who a-are y-you?" the words barely formed; they were strangled with utmost rage.

"How dare you point weapons at our master," gritted Intherna, "-Gophy, are you going to kill them or should I?"

"May I have another drink poured?" asked Staxius nonchalantly to the bartender.

"R-right away," scared beyond belief, the man went to fetch the drinks. The hands trembled but he made sure to not spill any stray droplets. The waitresses stood in a corner cowering at the sight.

"Y-You'll p-pay f-for this." *Boup,* the heavy sound of they falling ended as he sipped the last drink. "We're finished here," to which the ladies returned.

"Einstol, tell the leader that the meal was succulent. Next time, do a better job of disguising the assassination."

"How as the meal, sir?" asked the pilot starting the engine.

"Breathtaking I'd say," the metal-bird headed to Tale.

'They must be desperate to try having me assassinated.'

Warning: Unidentified Projectile detected.

AFR: Toggled, the turret turned to shoot the incoming projectile. The culprit stood with a rocket-launcher. "Master, we have trouble."

"Is that so?" the door slid.

"Sir, please hold on tightly, I'll get us out of here."

"No you won't," laughed he, "-they sent more than assassins," carelessly staring back, a squad of fighters stood on the 20th floor. "Give me a second," he leaped, wings sprouted, a single flap followed by him landing inside. The floor cracked on impact, and the people who fired a few moments ago laid beheaded in their own blood. "Adete, come out and feast."

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The invitees earlier were nothing more than fighters in hiding. A search of their identity revealed so. Sat with one foot on the counter and the other on a stool, he watched as Adete devoured those who dared to strike.

Calling Lady Gaso...

"Hello?"

"Greetings Lady Gaso," said he joyfully.

"Mr. Haggard, what do I owe this pleasure?"

"The rumors you heard about the Patek's wanting to speak. I attended said meeting. I don't suppose you know why they chose to attack. The elaborated plan to kill was nothing but the worst acting I've ever seen. Care to give me information on who was responsible?"

"Listen, I told what I heard through the grapevine. I'm not responsible."

"Well then," the phone hung. What laid before was a large hole and a hovering helicopter. The pilot was visibly scared of what was to come.

Thus, the assassination attempt ended in a slaughter. No bodies were found, the explosion was reported to the Public service. The emptiness and lack of evidence had shivers down the back. Especially Larson, the evidence was a hefty weight on his shoulders.

"Master, I've received an encrypted message for 02."

"What does it say?"

"Cimier are going to have a meeting with the Jefferson's in two days. Phantom's involvement in Tale has had them act fast. They don't want to be left behind. Only mediators will be attending the event."

"Good. Take us to Tale, there's planning to do."

Chapter 425: Battle

"Is everything ready for tomorrow?" whispered a shady voice as the 16th May's sunny day divulged into the night.

“Yeah, I think so,” returned another shadier with a hint of desolation. “Didn’t the boss say we’re ready for anything? Those guys who settled at the edge of town have some of us worried.”

“Are the rumors that bad?” asked the first.

“I heard that the buildings around the mansion were taken by force. The people were sent to god knows where.”

“Man, they really must be ballsy,” exclaimed the first.

“Why do you think so?”

“They right up and came to Tale. Good thing the actual deal is taking place somewhere else.”

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“Shut up, don’t speak loudly, the walls have ears.”

“My bad, let’s get to work.”

The further the sun sank, the harsher became the night. In said harshness stood the leaders of various platoons. It hadn’t been long since Phantom’s sudden arrival. Lady Lerado, the leader, viewed as the Queen of this particular chess game, sat and relaxed in luxury. There wasn’t a need for further action on her part. Word on the street, perpetuated by the Black Unit, was that she had brought in help from Godfather Renaud.

Kendy’s platoon remained on stand-by for the whole time. As for the Black Unit, they were assigned a covert operation. One of which details were known to only Boss.

“Are you sure it’s here?”

“Yes, the information lead to this location,” said éclair rather confidently. Hovered above the province of Skouso; the coming dusk made for easier movement. Skouso was primarily known for being rural and somewhat old-school. Here, not to say there wasn’t any development, was primarily based on agriculture and mariculture. They were very important as the food came from their harvest. The whole continent depended on their fertile lands. Going east from the province, one would come across the port. One of many around the continent. Here, any and everyone could gain entry. Argument could be said that narcotics and arms could be imported via said route. Neither good nor bad, the situation of Skouso differed from the rest. Their livelihood depended on the sea, and the sea was a lady who never blinked when taking a life. Fishing and other boats were allowed entry, as for the rest, they were sent to Scaica.

‘The exemption of being searched is given to a few boats. Inspection by the Anti-Narco unit is frequent. It’s a shame, the well-established idea is naught but child’s play. The AN-U in charge of Skouso is corrupt. Paid in full by Cimier, I presume. It might go deeper since one of the five conglomerates make their home here.’

Salty came the scent of waves crashing against the man-made reef of docks. The bigger the boat, the more stable it seemed, the harshness of the waves was only apparent on small boats. Among those who were exempted from being searched, most were from a certain organization. Their , simplistic as it might have been, held the letter ‘K’ and ‘R’ with the Trader’s insignia as the backdrop.

'How are they related?' thought Staxius stood atop a warehouse. Time on the wrist showed 20:00. The workers went back and forth unloading merchandise from trucks. Forklifts, though seemed to be toys, lifted weights twice their weight. It wasn't rare to see people with inhuman strength carry the loads barehanded.

"éclair."

"Yes, master?"

"Do you realize what this means?"

"Yeah, I do."

'I do hope it's not true. If the search brings proof, then I know it's certain.' *All-Seeing Eyes.* Calm to fierce as the crashing waves, he searched around the massive compound. Jumping from people to people, listening to conversations, catching their thoughts – the ideal intel-gathering ability.

"Why are these so heavy?" complained a worker holding a crate. The greyish dirtied floor rendered walking that difficult.

"That's why you need to use a forklift," honked another joyously, "-your powers have their limit."

"I know," the crate dropped. "Can you carry it outside for me?"

"I knew you'd see it my way. What truck?"

"The one for Patek's."

"Ohh, the Patek's. Did you peak inside?" winked he in the machine.

"I don't want to die, what the hell?" cried the man sharply, "-don't make fun of 'em. The last guy disappeared because of a similar comment."

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"My bad."*Brrrr,* it continued the journey.

'Interesting,' the trance-state broke. 'If I'm guessing this correctly,' snuck towards the back where the cargo was being loaded. 'There it is, the Patek's truck.' Bigger and more secure than the rest – a bit overkill. The yellowish carrier came with the crate. Soon to stop and align with the truck, *Blood-Arts: Crimson Threads,* a single flick had the crate topple and break. Sighs of agony echoed as the item broke. Those on the trucks glared with murderous intent, "-quick, cover it up," screamed one of the workers.

'Got it,' smirked Staxius, '-that's their deal.' Sprouting wings, he flapped in towards the continent. "Have a deeper look at Kura's Trading Corporation."

"Yes, master."

The glittering of the star-strutted sky was masked by the ever bright Melmark. Landed atop the hotel – the air felt soothing despite its strength.

“Kura’s Trading Corporation is ranked as the third most powerful conglomerate in Alpha. Their business deals in trading, mainly food and other consumables. They own the majority of the factories specializing in food distribution, manufacturing, and more. There are also markets around the continent. Since master doesn’t shop often, thee might have overlooked the frequency of their buildings. Convenient stores, super-market, hyper-market, you name it, and the Kura’s have it under the name Juro.”

“Run a search if ever the Kura’s had a relation with Patek’s.”

“Yes, there are many connections. A lady from the Kura Clan was married to the Patek Dynasty.”

“Here I thought we’d have inbreeding.”

“Did you say something, master?”

“No, forget about it.”

Clap, clap, clap, came the steps of shoes against a wooden floor. A new day rose outside.

“Thempa, Kendy,” said Staxius closing the door behind.

“Good morning, boss.”

“Good morning,” he unbuttoned the suit jacket and sat in a flawless motion. “Take a seat.”

“Y-yes.”

“Kendy, how are the preparations?”

“My platoon left for Skouso two days ago. They should have set up camp at the location.

“Good,” nodded he in agreement, “-what about the BU?”

“The operation garnered crucial information. I have my men monitoring the meeting point.”

“Well then, gentlemen, I’ll go over the plan one more time,” a toggle had the lights dimmed. “We have intel the Jefferson’s are going to exchange pleasantries with Cimier. Now, I don’t know if the latter will be present or not, the plan will not change. Kendy’s platoon will split into squads and remain on stand-by at these locations. We’re going to lock-down the village of Memat. Being close to the port should limit their movement. Remember, we need to keep the bloodshed to a minimum. I want hostages from the Jefferson’s. Thempa’s unit will be on overwatch, they’ll support it from afar if it goes loud. We’re dealing with the underground, don’t expect mercy. Thee already know of my involvement in the Dark-Guild. I hope it stays that way else...”

“Yes sir.

“Any questions?”

“What is the real purpose of the operation?”

“To see who is an ally and who is not.”

The time came; Thempa and Kendy were taken to the outskirts of Memat. They made a temporary camp barricaded by trucks and armored vehicles. A bonfire made the tranquil night warmer as they

overlooked the village. The operation was scheduled for 23:00. Faint flickering from the homes was the more reason why the rural Skouso felt peaceful. Thus, time continued until the opportune moment.

'Fools,' smiled Staxius, '-the intel acquired by O2 was fake. Cimier sure is cunning. They don't know I have a member far deeper in the circle than they expect. The location doesn't matter; Cimier wants to know whose mole and who is not. If I were to show up at the real location, then, they'd know my spy is in their ranks. Tis the reason why Thempa and Kendy are at Memat. There will be a fight – they'll be ambushed, it's a trap.' Stood outside of the mansion, the emptiness of the courtyard was replaced with the sound of engines. Not regular, but rotors, helicopters without crest nor identification made rounds.

"Here they come," said a lady who stood on the balcony.

"The prediction was right," added another.

"Intherna, Gophy," smiled he, "-go ahead and show them thy power." Turned to lean against the balustrade, the eyes shut to assist the fight at Memat. The destruction of the goddesses was very much pleasing to the ears.

"Help, we're being massacred by t-two u-unknown f-figures."

"Did the ambush fail?" asked a lady with a classy accent.

"Y-yes ma-am, t-the Lerado m-mansion is still being protected by demons."

"I don't care, have all of our men storm the front. We're not going to stay by and let some unknown faction take precedence on my land, my family's land, they're not going to invade our home, we're the Patek's. SHOW THEM HELL."

"Master, I've managed to hack into their channel."

"I heard that – the Patek's are involved."

"Master, we have trouble," interjected Intherna and Gophy.

"What's the matter?" he turned to where they hovered.

"There are demons in their rank, actual revived demons from the age of war. It's going to be a hard fight."

"Keep the damage to a minimum," returned he nonchalantly.

"Are you sure?" *BANG,* a charred corpse slammed beside Staxius.

"Intherna," said he coldly, "-stop playing with the food and get to demon-slaying." With the same flare as a volcanic eruption, the daughter of Rah took to the skies with the demons on her tail. Gophy's more discrete approach had but whimpers echo. Two battles began simultaneously.

Preoccupied with the demons, the goddesses forgot to guard the mansion. The latter was soon surrounded with forces twice as large as the Subjugation Squad. Heads covered with helmets, Antis-2 in their hands, the force marched forth.

“How dare thee enter this property,” thundered the words across. “Does thy wish death?” the power had many feel the tension. No reply came, rather, the men were quick to aim their weapons at he who spoke. Stood openly on the balcony, lasers soon met with the vital organs. “Are the Patek’s wanting a war?” Amidst the questions, a differently dressed man rose his hand.

“You’re invading on private property,” said he.

“And who says so?”

“The Patek’s. We’ve come here to reclaim what is ours. The mansion belongs to us. Give and surrender, tis the only way of survival. Phantom, we know you’ve walked onto Alpha wanting war. The Dark-Guild have become very gutsy to oppose us, the true rulers of the underworld.”

“The Patek’s are rulers of the underworld?” chuckled Staxius, “-do you take me a fool?”

“No,” refuted the other, “-just as Shadow and The kings are one and the same; so are we.”

“Just who are you?” the tone fell into a monotonous state.

“We’re the ones who will be the downfall of the mighty King of Arda. Heed us well – if you don’t agree to leave our land, we’ll make sure all your information is revealed to the public. The Arcanum is a very destructive tool. What will the scandal say about the Royal Family, will Princess Eira’s marriage not be canceled?”

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“Answer me now!”

“We’re the Patek’s” laughed he, “-and I’m one of the heirs to the family,” the helmet lowered, “-I’m sure Hydra might jog the memories. You who was slain by the beast will be defeated once again by another Hydra. Cut one heir and another two will take his place.”

“How long has this fa?ade been going for?”

“Ever since you met with Mr. Dorino. Majesty, you were careless and overconfident. Tis why you were blind-sided. The Gaso Group and the other conglomerates fall into our jurisdiction, the Patek’s are almighty.”

“What about the AHA?”

“I must admit, it was a very good plan. We never expected the Association to be broken in such a way.”

“What of Memat?”

“Phantom’s forces are being surrounded as we speak; we’ve made sure every militia we have joined that fight. Give it up, Staxius Haggard, the plan is over. Meldorino is back into our company; watchmaking is a great idea. Not to mention the free advertisement. You’ve lost; Hero King of Arda, you’ve lost.”

“Heh...” exhaling deeply, “-I suppose you’re right,” he stared up to see a mountainous figure holding Intherna and Gophy captive.

“The Holy Church of Kreston sends their regards.”

Chapter 426: Protocol Invisi

“The holy church of Kreston sends their regards...” By what seemed to be a lightning bolt, Staxius stood processing the happenings. Meanwhile, out in Memat, the fighting turned from a hunt to being hunted. Kendy’s separate squads were pinned by multiple forces. The gun-fire had the people cower in fear. Thempa could but sit and wait, they tried hard to support to no avail. The ambush was planned; key extract locations were barricaded using magic. Not only did they have to contend with guns, but the super-natural abilities some choose. Examples could be seen in barriers conjured to stop the squads from firing. Only those with the opposing team could fire through said barriers. Distress signals blocked; the whole area went dark.

“Master, there’s no report from Memat. Our forces might be in grave danger, what are your orders?”

‘Orders?’ stood facing the enormous demonic figure with arms as big as buildings – it took part in the forest’s area. ‘What do you mean orders?’ thought Staxius unable to decide what to do next. ‘Eira’s marriage is at stake. They’ve stolen Meldorino. I was played for a fool, Lady Gaso and the conglomerate were in on the plan. No one had a chance at revolution, I was a fool to overestimate what I was capable of. Patek’s are too intertwined with the Empire. If I make a move now, my secret is bound to be exposed to the public. I have to come up with something right away, there’s no time left.’

“King Haggard,” said the man once again, “-what will it be? Do you surrender or do you wish to be defeated?”

‘Once a vase or glass is broken, there’s no fixing it to how it was. If I went back in time, I could alter the pass and change the outcome to fit my need – the cost would be the alteration of the timeline. There’s no telling what it could bring; the risk is too big to take. I have to figure a way out of this situation.’

“King Staxius, are you going to decide or shall we do so?”

“Decide?” said smugly, he leaped from the balcony. “Listen,” stood with an arm over the man’s shoulder, “-I could fight my way out, but I feel there’s more at stake than you wish to go into?”

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“H-how did h-he?” the mindless faces of guards spoke but one thing, confusion. In the time it took to blink, the King landed to be at a striking range of the heir.

“Get away from the young master!”

“Shut it,” glared Staxius, “-I’m speaking to thy leader, best be quiet,” *Blood-Arts: Crimson Threads.*

“MY ARM!” came the grueling scream of a man in pain.

“So, Heir to the Patek’s, or one of the heirs. I’m not opposed to fighting. The slaying of 200 AN-U soldiers must be a recent memory considering the Patek’s hired them to put an end to the Lerado.”

“How did you...” he snapped back.

“There’s no need to get agitated,” smiled the King holding firm onto the man’s shoulder. ‘It’s only an educated guess, there’s no need to get angry.’ Emotional control, the true skill mastered over the decades on the mortal plane.

“The issue remains,” smiled the heir, “-we’re the ones on the winning side.”

“No, that isn’t true,” winked he taking a step back, “-Patek might know my secret, they may know my involvement and they may hold power over Alpha.”

“All that says is that you’ve lost, majesty, give it up,” a needlessly prolonged sigh followed. It was the same as asking a child to do a chore. The reaction would be the same with a few variations.

“On the contrary, dearest heir, have thee forgotten who I represent? Not the dark-guild, no... they hold authority with a few exceptions. What I hold is something you rely upon unknowingly,” a glance at the weapons showed his intent. “Those are mighty fine weapons; I’d say guns that are decades ahead of any other arm’s maker. The Cobalt Unit fails to compare to Phantom. Patek’s maybe the ruler of Alpha, however, I rule Phantom, and Phantom rules the world. Without us, without our backing, even if a country has mages or not – people will depend on our weapons. We decide who wins and who loses. The world is built on chaos and bloodshed.”

“What does it matter, we have your weapons,” shrugged he.

“Do you think we would give out the best product? The level of advancement we’ve made is surreal. Have you ever stopped and wondered what that reason is?” pacing from left to right, he spoke in such a way the guards dropped their arms to listen. “Antis-2 is the best rifle despite its datedness. Don’t you think we would have weapons of our own, things we keep secret? The latter is very much known to the elusive Patek.”

“What then, are you just going to make threats?”

“No, far from that,” he paused.

“Master, the Subjugation Platoon are requesting orders to activate Protocol Invisi.”

“Wasn’t communication blocked a few moments ago?”

“Childsplay, master, don’t insult my ever-evolving mind to the peasants.”

“Big words, I like it.”

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“What are you speaking alone for?” asked the heir as if to mock.

“Activate Protocol Invisi. Have Kendy change the strategy to utter annihilation. I don’t care about collateral damage, show them the power of Phantom.”

“That smug expression pisses me off,” cried the heir, “-King of Arda, I’m ordering for thy men to be killed at Memat. This conversation has long outstayed its welcome.”

Beep, “hello... anyone... STATUS REPORT?” shouting of a madman put the growling from the demon to shame.

“éclair, you heard about what he told us earlier right?”

“Yes, majesty, every word.”

“And, do you have access to their servers?”

“They sure were cocky,” laughed the spirit, “-master, I have everything on their organization. The protection for such a rich family was shameful.”

“Oh please, there’s no need to laugh at them,” said Staxius enjoying the unfolding scene, ‘éclair is my ace. The evolving world will never be beaten by my butler. Tis the same as using a legendary sword to cut an apple – I’m proud of how the project turned out.”

“Shall I let him through?”

“Yes.”

“FINALLY,” yelled the heir with sweaty hair over the face, “-I was getting worried. What’s the status report, is the King’s forces dead already?” What came was nothing but silence.

Out in Memat, just as the opposition closed in on their location. Kendy had no other option than to fight, and fight they did. Covering fire, erecting makeshift barricades on the streets inside the village. The overwhelming pressure demanded a desperate move. Protocol Invisi; introduced on the 20th January XX93 during the War. A bodysuit designed by Staxius that held the ability to go invisible. The single item was crucial in winning the battle led by Elliot. From that day forth, the suit underwent constant upgrades and development. Since it dealt with magic, part of the study was a collaboration between Arda and Phantom.

The suit became one with the user. An initiation process for all those entering the ranks of Phantom. They knew of the suit’s design, but could never speak of it. A spell of amnesia conveniently had that information be null. It allowed them to live normal lives.

“Platoon Leader, we’re being pinned from each corner,” whistled bullets left and right.

“Are we going to die?” said another smirking.

“No way in hell are we going to let those people win.”

Crouched behind a broken window that gave onto the blocked road, ‘-come on boss, we need this!’ It was then a message came as a whisper from an angel. Three words that changed the situation, *Protocol Invisi: Granted.* Conscious to a trance-like state, the bodies of the platoon changed. A deep crimson red orb glowed within their hearts – they turned into super-soldiers. The physical and mental abilities tripled; they went beyond their limits. The strain it had could end in death, tis was why limiters in the forms of time-limit and half-awaken state came in handy. The change was simple, humans turned into superhuman puppets following orders.

“Subjugation Platoon 05, we have new orders; the boss has asked for us to annihilate the opposition. Go and do us proud,” vaulting over the broken frame, figures were seen leaping from building to building. Some moved at neck-breaking speed, the enhancement proved effective against the Sultrian’s.

‘So, this is the power of Phantom,’ wondered Kendy unaffected by the suit. ‘To be made a leader, one must be strong without enhancement for thee is he who controls the stronger forces,’ posited and ready, the real battle began.

“YOUNG MASTER, WE’RE SORRY,” came the crackling of the last transmission.

“Do you understand what I said earlier?” said Staxius calmly, “-whatever you have, we have it better and stronger. Does thee think money buys power? No, far from it, it’s one who makes power, and that I made sure to have at the ready. Go on, I dare you, speak to the lady who’s been pulling the strings. I know she can hear me, go on, I challenge her to voice my secret out-loud.”

“Just because you won at Memat doesn’t mean you’ll win here.”

“Poor child,” said the king disappointedly.

“Mother, please, let me at him. I’ll divulge the information on the Arcanum. Let’s see him get out of this alive!”

“Don’t do anything harsh,” said a classy accent.

“But mother...”

“Mind if I interject,” spoke Staxius.

“How did you get on the encrypted channel?” asked the lady.

“The hows is none of thy concern. I presume you’re the one leading this poor boy around as if a dog. My lady, if thee don’t wish further harm on the boy’s already broken spirit, then I’d advise for thee to retreat.”

“Majesty, you may have defeated us in Memat. We hold leverage. Besides, aren’t thy forces far away? You still fell into our trap.”

“Lady Selena Othpool, concubine of Mishline Guiz Patek and thy son, the bastard Wondelle Othpool. What leverage will thee, considering thy rank in the family, have on I?”

“King Haggard, how did thee know of my identity?”

“I know everything about the Dynasty. Thank you for being so open in challenging. I do admit the entrance was rather troublesome. ”

“Well, tis no blood on my hand if I were to release thy information to the public.”

“Go ahead,” said he winking at the frustrated Wondelle.

“You asked for it...”

“...”

“...”

“Mother, do IT!”

“...”

“Was the information perhaps deleted?” proposed the king.

“Sorcery...”

“No my lady, tis the power of Phantom.”

“Wondelle, retreat, we haven’t the sufficient power to fight.”

“But mother, I still have the gift from the church, I can still fight,” pleaded the boy.

“Don’t argue, child, return to me.”

“The bastard son is going to her mother’s cuddle arms, how pleasant,” remarked Staxius.

“DON’T YOU DARE!” he fired across.

“WONDELLE, DON’T GET CAUGHT UP IN THE PROVOCATION.”

“Do as she says, my child, waste no time returning to thy father’s plaything.”

“YOU STUPID,” breaking away the earpiece, “-EVERYONE, ATTACK. DEMON OF KRESTON, HAVE THY REVENGE!”

‘Hook, line, and sinker.’

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Souls of the dead, thee who’ve sworn to serve me in life and death, come to my side. Blood-Arts: Ghouls Requiem.

Hands rose from a semi-transparent swamp. Painful and daunting, they rose with blank stares. “Go feast, my minions, go feast and spare the life of Wondelle Othpool.” The numbers increased; those present began to shoot aimlessly. Bullet hit to only but stop the ghouls momentarily. Sloppy as they seemed, the gestures were beyond fast.

The demon standing over the forest moved. Intherna and Gophy’s bodies were kept in a bubble attached to his head.

“ATTACK, DEMON, PROTECT ME!” a swoop from the giant had ghouls and humans alike thrown into the distance. “You’ve lost, king of Arda,” laughed the figure who stood on the beast’s palms. Semi-transparent at first, the body began to materialize physically, the claws were the first to have color and texture.

‘It’s sucking their mana to regenerate...’

Chapter 427: Bluff

Death Element: Unleash Aura, within the risen ghoul army awoke the King. The ruler of death, the triangle of the death element lit in white. Wondelle, bastard of the Patek’s controlled the demon. The beast reacted to each word said, each action, and every gesture. Broken, torn, ripped apart, however one would describe the yard, the reality was naught remained. A heartless corpse, a mother without her babe, a child without a parent – same was the grass. Once lush to nothing but the remains of the stone-path. The flowers, once a source of fragrance was reduced to mud.

“If we can’t have the mansion, then neither can you!” yelled Wondelle with the murky hair still blocking part of his eyes. “Attack!”

“Not on my watch.” The building-sized arms swung at the mansion the same as a blacksmith would hammer a weapon.

Death Element: Magical Barrier, arms held out forward, a hemisphere materialized to only break. The power behind the strike wasn’t physical, no, it was imbued with higher-mana.

Heed mine call for I, Staxius Haggard, call upon thy strength. Stop all who dare oppose mine own will, Death Element: Magical Barrier, Pentagram Variant, Hell’s Gate. Conjured with the same size as the demon – the strike halted. The demon followed with the other arms; slow yet powerful, the strike kept on adding one after the other. It made breathing hard.

‘Just how powerful is this demon,’ thought he straining to block the attacks. Each shockwave traversed the land to shake the surrounding. Tremors came as a result; people thought the end of time came.

“COME ON, MORE, ATTACK MORE, DEMON, CONSUME ME TOO,” fissures formed on the gates. Wondelle’s face shrunk in exchange for the beast’s power.

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‘The heir has lost it,’ panting, ‘-if the gate breaks now, the whole town is going to be destroyed.’ With a sudden push, the gate broke at the exact time of the strike. In turn, this had the arms ricocheted.

Death Element: Hand of God. No spell, ‘-I’ll stop him myself,’ invisible hands grabbed onto the monster’s arms. Power versus power;

Deep slumber, deep rest, awaken for the chance at retribution. Gate of which stands before mine way, open for thy master has come: Nevermore – Hell’s Gate. The pony-tail loosened as it swayed. Focused and firm, the release of mana had the demon pause momentarily.

Souls bound to my soul, companions, servants, those who I’ve deemed worthy to stand at my side, heed me, heed mine voice, heed mine call. I, Staxius Haggard, Ruler of Death, call upon thy strength, arise: Box of Soul – Release.

Roar! body of a lion, front feet talons, head and wing of an eagle and twice as big as he. A griffin, big and majestic, stood proudly on the roof. The wind seemed to obey as it eyed the demon.

“Majesty,” came a lady with blue-skin, long eyelashes, and hair to match the color.

“Saniata,” smiled he, “-I need help.”

“Thy wish is my command,” said she bowing.

“Go, take the griffin, and go rescue the goddesses.”

“Yes majesty,” whistling, the legendary beast sprawled its wing to dash for the demon.

‘This is between me and you, demon.’

By the power bestowed upon me by the Supreme god Kronos, I, Staxius Haggard, inheritor of the sickle, order for the realm to go by mine pace: Time Control – Pause. Stuck in place by a stranger force, Saniata did her job all the while the Griffin roared. *Snap,* ‘-that took more mana than I thought.’

Dazzled by the change, the demon stood quietly as Wondelle held the worst after-effects. He hurled to such an extreme that blood spewed.

O' goddess forgotten by the ages, o' goddess who spread victory and peace over the souls of true warriors. I, humble vessel for thy Symbol, plea to have a sliver of thy strength.

"Thy wish has been granted."

The cold moon hid behind clouds, Staxius stood strongly.

I am he who slays without fear, I am he who shall be the last of what thee see. Heed mine call thou whomst dared to fight the natural order, tis the day thou ought to be destroyed, Ancient Magic – Astral Binding. The prison used on demons. Five pillars made a pentagram and dug themselves around the enormous figure. White and charged with concentrated mana, its channel in a catalytical way, the power of the higher-being. The weather changed, lightning struck, thunder roared; '-tis time for all to go back.' A giant sphere enveloped the forest, it devoured most to shrink in an orb to then into a tinkle of light.

Wondelle, responsible for the mess fell into his own puddle of vomit and blood. The ground crumbled around. With the remaining mana, *present and never changing, present and never yielding. All who wait break and all made are subjected to thine will. I, God of Death, the humble inheritor of thy power; call upon thee to have mine will answered: Time Control – Reversal.*

"Master, I have reports from Kendy's platoon. They've wiped out the forces in Memat."

"Good," laid on the moist grass yard, "-did you locate their base of operation?" the ghouls returned to his soul – any sign of fight disappeared.

"Yes, those who came to fight made camp to the south in Legrury near a military facility."

"Any more details?" asked he thirsty from the battle.

"It's hidden on the map inside the forest of Quendoel."

"Have the VT10-BSQD bomb the area. I want the airfield to be decimated."

"Master, I'd advice against it for the forest might suffer as a result."

"No need to worry – just order the strike, we can revive the forest afterward. Make sure they use the tamer bombs."

"Pabruska V1?"

"Yes."

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"Orders confirmed."

Out in 025, orders came for an airstrike.

"Luea, the boss has asked for our intervention," said a high-ranking officer.

“Yes commander,” replied a young man fresh out of the flying academy.

“Go make us proud,” replied two others. Four pilots came to assist in the fight; Luea Gregor, an orphan from Hidros was called on duty. He showed exceptional dogfighting capabilities. Thus, he stepped onto the darker runway with his partner, XF-23. A plane made for stealth, high-speed, and bombing. Black to match the night, the other three were the XR-00 Phantom Variant. The concept jet made by Cobalt so many years ago.

‘That should be enough for today,’ thought Staxius with arms over the forehead.

“Master, we’re sorry,” came two apologetic voices.

“Intherna, Gophy, how could goddesses be caught off-guard?”

“I don’t know,” trailed Gophy who disappeared into the shadows.

“...’ Intherna followed suit.

‘I have strong yet troublesome companions.’ Saniata made a circle on her griffin above. She seemed to enjoy the ride; ‘-can’t believe she was the monster I killed when Eira was mind-controlled. I barely made it tonight – if it wasn’t for the bluffs and firepower...’

“Master,” landed Saniata, “-what should I do with Wondelle?”

“Have him tied to a chair,” said he sat upright, “-before you go,” the voice grew cold, “-come here.”

“Did I do something?” her lashes fluttered endlessly.

“Nothing that grave.” The words didn’t help to calm the lady.

“Y-yes master?” asked she closer than before.

“Kneel and don’t move,” stood he.

“O-ok...”

Bite, sharp canines dug into the side of her neck, blue-colored blood flowed, her face flushed, her hands clenched and her eyes squinted.

On the night of the 16th – massive destruction inside Legrury made the headline. If it wasn’t for the explosion and the cloud that stretched onto the 17th, many would have stayed oblivious. Not wanting to acknowledge the existence of the airfield; those leading the southern province gave statements that the cause was an experiment gone wrong. The whole vicinity occupied by the base was gone in an instant. Orders for the squadron to return were issued. Kendy’s squad who were very much tired from the suit were also sent back. Thempa remained to be overwatch. Subjugation Platoon 04, would take over Platoon 05. The lower the number, the stronger the team.

‘We need to have them pay,’ mumbled Staxius waking. ‘Phantom isn’t going to stand down.’

“éclair, has Godfather Renaud been contacted?”

“Yes,” answered the butler. The curtains parted to show an unchanged yard, Tale was as if the same old town. “Good, what did he have to say?”

“The issue was sent to the Overlord; we need but wait.”

“Good,” quick to have breakfast; he teleported to the hotel where a heavy day awaited. Jefferson’s transgression during last night was clear. They, despite the ambush, held a meeting with Cimier. One of which Kendy broke apart to have hostages. Needless to say, the captives were tortured into saying what he wanted. ‘We’re allied with Cimier.’

That phrase alone broke the DG’s code of conduct. Thus, the plan to have Godfather Stanley and Jefferson fall was enacted. Godfather Renaud himself was pleased by the results. Lerado thus had room to breathe.

“What’s the plan for today, master?” inquired éclair.

“I’m teleporting to Hidros.”

“Teleporting?”

“Yeah, there’s no time to waste.” *Ancient Magic: Conjure Portal – Hidros.* Opposite to teleporting his body, the portal’s requirements were cheaper than a cross-continental trip.

“The air feels homely,” commented he taking a big whiff.

“Master, you’re home,” said a smiling Rosetta tending to the garden.

“Feels like ages,” nodded he, “-where’s Lizzie?”

“Her highness just left for piano lessons; shall I call back Rile?”

“No, there’s no need to trouble her.”

“Will you be staying?” going through the motion of calling one of the maids, “-no.”

“Sorry?” she frowned with her ears spiking.

“The mansion is but a stop on my journey someplace else,” the conversation ended. He walked to the attic where the portal to Rotherham was summoned. ‘-There’s a man who made an impression on me so many years ago. I need to seek his assistance. He might not be willing to speak to me at first, but I must make sure to meet him.’ Teleported inside his office at one of the skyscrapers, the walk took to Cake’s office.

Knock, knock.

“Boss,” coughed Cake sucking onto a child’s neck.

“Did I catch you at a bad time?”

“N-no-no-no,” her head shook furiously.

“Excuse me,” scurried the boy out of the room.

“I’m so sorry about that,” she wiped her mouth carelessly.

“The blood of a virgin?”

“Ex-virgin...”

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“Did you seriously?” paused he with a raised brow.

“I’m joking,” she laughed, “-I’d never do something so crude,” lashes flickered. “How was the trip in Alpha?”

“Bad,” said he taking a seat, “-the continent is a mess. Though it shames me, I was played for a fool by the conglomerates.”

“What did the emperor say?”

“Nothing, he’s hand-bound to avoid potential war between the factions.”

“Who knew,” sighed Cake, “-who knew the idyllic continent to be such a festered mess of greedy conspirators. I presume you have a plan?”

“Yes, I need a flight to Elendor.”

“Elendor, that’s around a 10-hour flight. I’ll have the plane be readied, you’ll be there at the latest, tomorrow 10:00. The V12-Mk-2 will be readied.”

“Thank you,” the door closed behind. Down on the street where none roamed about, he walked for the airfield stood a far distance away. Trees, bins, street-lights and the cleanly built town of Phantom. It was hard to imagine only workers, researchers, and students lived here.

“Father?”

“Eira?” stared he as a car sped by.

SCREEEECH! “-be careful.”

“What are you doing here?” asked she with the car door opened.

“How are your studies going?”

“Please father, this isn’t the time to have a conversation about me. I need answers, were you not with Sultria?” the pale complexion turned into mild pink – especially the cheeks. The long white hair and face matured into a refined lady.

“Tell me, Eira, what do you think of Alpha?”

“Why this question?” her brows knitted.

“Just tell me.”

“It’s a good place,” the tension relaxed, “-with dark secrets, I suppose?”

“Is that all?”

“Yeah, that’s all,” she shrugged, “-you still haven’t answered my question.”

“I’ve come to take a flight to Elendor. Does that suffice?”

“Father...” her expression sunk the same as he would.

“What?”

“I heard of what happened in Alpha. Are you sure you’ll be alright? Julius told me about a few things mother would not have wanted to hear.”

“Will I be alright?” giving a puzzled look, “-listen, you need to worry about getting engaged.”

“Not this talk again,” her eyes rolled, “-I thought I made it clear that I wanted to study first.”

Chapter 428: Elendor

“I suppose we did agree,” said he with more going through the mind.

“Father...” taking a step closer, “-are you ok?” asked she gently poking his cheek.

“Don’t I look alright?” came a soothing reply, “-anyway, care to give your old man a lift to the airfield?”

“Old-man,” sloppily dropping her hand, “-sure, father, let’s go.” Turned in haste, her expression was of mild annoyance. The habit to never speak of his troubles made her angry. “Father,” at the car, “-if ever the day comes where you need help, please reach out. You have me, mother, Julius, Lizzie, and everyone in Arda to have your back. Asking for help isn’t a shame.”

“I know it isn’t,” close behind, “-I’ll consider it one day.” Smug to sit inside, they drove to the runway where the jet was lined and ready. Exchanging few good-byes, he took-off for Elendor. The place where he spent many months in the company of her majesty the Queen.

Smooth and uneventful, the plane flew towards the sea. “éclair, how are things in Elendor?”

“Not that great, master,” said the butler through a screen. “There’s been skirmishes at the Eastern-border. King Juvey the Cray seems to want to start another war.”

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“Isn’t the non-aggression pact active?”

“Who knows how long will a piece of paper hold the belligerent king.”

“Good point,” he paused to stare at the clouds, ‘-best rest. I need to be ready for when the time comes.’

“Master, I’ve informed the head-butler of Queen Ela III to have transport be readied.”

“You did what?” the would-be silence broke.

“I don’t detect any Phantom linked vehicles and forces in Elendor, therefore, I thought it best we contact her majesty.”

“éclair, you’re wise but too wise. The head-butler is a rather troublesome individual. What is done is done...” the less amiable response had the spirit wonder.

Thus, a whole 11 hours passed. Fondly enough, the time was 11:00, the 18th was here. The jet touched down at the private royal family’s airfield. On the outskirts of the capital city of Lazuli. The tarmac felt hot to the touch, the risen heat rendered the ground blurry to the eyes. Now, things may get confusing.

The kingdom of Elendor splits into five provinces – each one bigger than the other. In fact, the kingdom held most of the land in Iqavea. Counting among the five provinces, one had Dreqai, Melanthorn, and Elendor just to name a few. Yes, Elendor was the name of a province as well as the Kingdom. Situated to the North, Elendor is very much a place for mining. Queen Ela III of Elendor also made her residence in the province.

Stepping off the jet, a red carpet rolled to lead towards a black-limousine. The unforgiving sun kept on blazing the vicinity. It was the real-life version of an oven. The airfield itself held many hangars as one would expect.

“Hero king of Arda,” said a well-dressed man with long stashes that twirled at the proximities. The eyes were clear and vivid, the brows – plucked and trimmed, the ears, very sharply edged, and the nose rounded off and polished as if a crystal ball.

“Head-Butler Malta,” said Staxius walking on the seemingly melting carpet. “You needn’t have to go through such trouble for a mere welcome.”

“You’re wrong, sir,” he took a step back in astonishment, the hands and arms made waves – in all accounts, tis was melodramatism.

“There we go again,” whispered an assistant steps away from the car.

“We must tend to the hero king,” approached the butler with hand close to his chest, “-we must not disrespect HE,” the pitch rose as if a singer, “-who saved us in the war,” back to the norm. “So you se-”

“Enough,” interjected Staxius, “-I don’t wish to come across as rude, and forgive me if I’ve cut thee off, there’s no need for drama. The sun has me by the throat, if we are to stay longer here, I fear I may melt. Would that not be a greater insult?”

“Ahh yes, his majesty is very much right...” bowed and moved backward as if a reversing truck, “-please, have a seat,” the door opened.

“Thank you.”

“I understand why master seemed too distraught earlier,” whispered éclair.

‘And who do you think is responsible...’ the words stopped at the lips for the limousine accelerated brazenly.

“DRIVER!” crept from the front seat, “-WE HAVE A GUEST IN THE BACK,” the same accent, the same variation, and the same overzealous passion. The energy given was in no way negative, no, it was an infection. A malady many people subconsciously emulated as he would often pressure the conversation. The passion which would influence most in the first few days would often turn to dismay. The over-active persona would have many fatigued and become annoying.

“King Haggard,” the window separating the driver and passenger rolled, “-Queen Ela III wishes to speak a few words.”

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“Courtesy states one must present himself before the monarch without care for the reason.”

“Wise words,” the barrier rose once more. ‘The heat of Elendor is never-ending.’ The roads outside were moderately filled with vehicles. The people here were of darker complexions for the sun was prominent. The soil, richer at Hidros, was hard and dry – not the same as a desert, but close. The drive took a few minutes until a natural barrier of leafless trees. A path stretched out the main-road with, ‘private property,’ written on a notice board. A few distances inside, the noise of the main-road dwindled to the voice of nature. Gates atop which stood guards in watchtowers overlooked said entrance.

White against cleanly cut greenery, a humongous palace erected itself a few kilometers from the main gate. A big fountain of clearly crystal blue water flowed, long was the dryness of the soil gone, the lush courtyard, well-maintained flowers, and plants; not to forget, the palace itself. Protected by a natural wall of the forest, followed by man-made walls with electric fences, tis was the Queen’s residence. The limousine, a mere pebble compared to what the lady owned, went around the fountain to the main-entrance. Stairs of white lacquer adorned with matt-black lines and circles sprawled to form an art-piece. Maids made rounds tending to the bushes and cleaning.

“Here we are,” said Malta opening the door, “-her majesty is inside, please, follow me.” Over the stairway they went just as a group of ladies left.

“My, if it isn’t Mr. Haggard,” paused one of the ladies with light and short dress. Her straw-hat was very much feminine.

“Lady Leina,” nodded he.

“Her majesty must be lonesome to call onto the handsome King of Arda,” added one of her peers jestfully.

“I’m honored to be compliment by a lady who is far more handsome than I.”

“Ever the charmer,” winked Lady Leina, “-good-day.”

“Good day to you as well, my lady.”

Continuing inside, the retainers gave smiles, they knew him and so did he. Greetings were exchanged in the form of smiles or nods of the head. After what seemed to be hours, Malta arrived to a tall ceiling room.

“Please, wait here as I go fetch her majesty,” the loud doors closed leaving him alone. The domed roof, designed by a very symmetrically focused architect, held an ever-big chandelier of what seemed to be diamonds. Two very tall windows were at diagonals to one another. The frilly curtains helped in blocking the torturous sun. Under the chandelier rested a star-shaped table surrounded by couches. The pillows matched the texture and fabric of the couch which followed the table that in turn followed the curtains and wallpaper.

“King Staxius,” opened the door brutishly.

“Queen of Elendor,” returned he standing to greet the monarch.

“It’s Elina,” she facepalmed to then exchange kisses on the cheeks. “I didn’t realize you would come so quickly,” caressing her neck down to her cleavage, “-I’d have gotten ready.”

“Ever the jester,” laughed he, “-there’s no need to be ready for a married man.”

“Humph,” her eyes rolled, “-so, what brings you here?” the posture turned to be dignified.

“I came to seek an audience with a man I met many years before,” they sat whilst maids brought in refreshments.

“Do tell,” said she.

“Happened at Dreqai during the convention of arms and weapons. You know, the day I met GateSix and purchased a few weapons. I came in contact with Mr. Elon.”

“Oh...” her speech slowed, “-old man Elon.”

“Why do you sound so suspicious?”

“Well,” sat all the way back the couch, “-Mr. Elon is a scary man. Don’t be thrown by his age, that man can fight, and dirtily at that. He’s the owner of the Elon Conglomerate.”

“I know... the Elon Empire that has a lot of brands and shares into most of the businesses known to us. There’s no escaping the brands, from Hidros to Iqavea, Alpha, and the world over, the man is present in every single place.”

“Why do you want to meet him so bad?”

“Don’t know yet, I need to speak to him for advice. The man’s age and experience are what I’m after.”

“To be frank, your impressive as well. Phantom is on its way to becoming a powerhouse of their own.”

“I suppose...”

“Staxius,” her head shook, “-look at my wrist.”

“Why?”

“Look!” she pointed, “-Meldorino, you see, a company you OWN.”

“Not anymore,” the words were harder to say, “-I was played a fool in Alpha. The conglomerates are far too powerful for us to take alone.”

“Is it money you’re after?” she glowered.

“No, money isn’t the issue, that much we can handle. There’s something I need but can’t seem to grasp – maybe I’ve grown senile.”

“The search for knowledge,” she hugged onto a pillow, “-I understand what you mean. Besides, as a member of the Argashield Federation, tis my duty to help our leader.”

“No, please, this isn’t relating to the Federation.”

“Who cares,” she laughed, “-Staxius, you really mustn’t be so cynical of people. I’m your friend, I trust you – I don’t expect trust back, but at least, believe in me.”

“S-sure,” he smiled, “-please, Elina, can I ask for a favor?”

“Now that brings a smile to my face,” returning the pillow, “-Malta, Eghushi, Toe, and Meut.”

“Have thee summoned us, majesty?” four yellow mist materialized.

“Go and arrange a meeting with old man Elon. Tell him the King of Arda wants an audience.”

“As you wish,” they vanished.

“Did you have to call onto the assassins?”

“Listen,” her face sunk into sternness, “-getting a hold of lord Elon is hard. Even if you manage to speak to him, the man is probably a decoy or a clone of some sort. Remember, it’s the Elon Empire, there’s no way he’ll come out for a king. Not even the Emperor was able to speak to him.”

“I suppose your right.”

“Now then,” her persona changed, “-come, let’s go into the capital and walk around. There’s no way I’m letting you off that easy this time.”

“Are you sure thee wishes to be in my company?”

“Obviously,” she stood to pull his arms, “-come on, let’s go, I want to see a movie.”

“My attire isn’t exactly suited for the weather here...”

“Don’t worry,” she clapped to which retainers came, “-please, show his majesty to the changing room. I shall be readied as well.”

“Just like old times?” smirked Staxius.

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“Just like old times,” she winked.

To the south-west of Lazuli, after the great-forest of lethlo, onto more rocky plains, surrounded by cliffs and greenery, stood a massive mansion. Inside was as if a small-town.

“Lady Alison,” came a man dressed formally, “-we’ve received this from the Queen.”

“The Queen?” stopped shy of an open-roofed hall with a fountain in the middle, “-why would she send a note?” intrigued, she read whilst holding her breath.

‘The day has come,’ thought she stomping towards the front where the hall gave onto a balcony.

“Master Elon,” called she respectfully.

“What is it, dear Alison?” returned a man sat on a hung couch watching the birds fly.

“It’s as you said, the day is here.”

“Please child, no riddles.”

“Lord Elon, it’s him, the boy,” said she excitedly.

“What boy?”

“Here,” the note was handed.

Chapter 429: Renewal

Right in the scorching heat of Elendor, Queen Ela III and Staxius went into town. There, they would walk, chat, play, and have a good time. Upon the lesser-known district rested a bar named Hoberg. The bartender, an informant of her majesty remained on standby. The job was tough and money came from the kingdom's pocket. Thus, to keep money in the green-zone, Hoberg was one of the most infamous places to get God's ale or Angel's dust.

"This place brings back memories," said the queen drunk from the past hour.

"Yeah, it gets better the more you stay," returned the king unbothered by the alcohol. The room in which they drank was little with no windows. The only exit was a smaller door at an arm's length to the right.

"Just like old times," smiled the king in casual attire – a flowery buttoned shirt, shorts, and sandals. If it wasn't for the unnaturally pale skin, he would have fit into the local's dress-code. The Queen was the same, she wore a short dress with the same flowery charm. It accentuated her childish side; the tigress like gaze seemed to be tamer.

"W-we s-should really g-get going," the pauses between words, the way her head wobbled, and distant gaze.

"You've had enough for today," smiled him wrapping her arms around his shoulder.

"No!" she pushed, "-I can walk on my own," said she confidently. The first step taken, the pony-tail, attached to naught but her scalp gave the illusion of her being pulled back.

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"Steady," reacted Staxius holding her arms, "-you'll be alright," he smiled, "-come on, let's get you to the palace."

"Y-you k-know what, King of A-Arda, y-you are a good man. A b-bit on the ominous side, but I like you. Else, why w-would I subject myself to such a dump of a place? I always say alcohol doesn't taste good unless y-you have good c-company."

"Let's get out," *Ancient Magic: Teleportation.* Changed into the lush garden of her residence, her body finally gave in to lying on the floor.

"The clouds are dancing," said she hidden in the shade of a cherry tree.

"They sure are," replied Staxius sat with back against the large tree-trunk. "Elina sure knows how to hold her alcohol."

"Are you making fun of m-me?" her face moved as if a wave, the tranquil ocean broken by the drowsiness of the liquor.

"No, I'd never do such a thing." The pink blossom against the dark-brown branches with the blueness of the sky. What a sight to wonder for trees of this beauty were rare in Hidros. There, the place was either filled with pine or some other woeful tree. Comparing the two surroundings; Hidros: cold, desolate, and

recovering from the war. Elendor: hot, filled with activity, on the verge of an economic boom. Traveling around the world was one of the many privileges he had.

“MY LADY QUEEN,” came an over-shocked voice. “-ARE YOU OK?” asked Malta with the back-hand against his forehead. “You went out drinking,” he stared away as if embarrassed, “-why such a thing, why do something so ungodly?”

“Give it a rest, Malta,” returned a darker voice. “Can’t you see she’s asleep? Let her rest, she’s been through a lot.”

“I suppose the ever-observant king strikes again,” sighed he. The gentle whiff of pleasantly crushed almond – the fragrance of the cherry; moved about as if fairies flew.

“She’s indeed been a little fatigued the past few months,” said Malta taking a seat in-between.

“She wasn’t being her usual self. I figured something to be wrong.”

“King Arda, you do care a lot for your friends,” returned Malta with a big smile.

“I suppose I do,” said he resting his head against the tree, the passing sky soon filled with images of the past. “I had friends I cared about; I swore to protect them, but naught happened for I was weak and unsmart. I left one of my only real friends to die – not him, but his family and fortune. All he worked for gone in a second. That province was supposed to be my responsibility, yet, I threw it onto him thinking about the future. What did he do in turn? Accept the burden with a smile. How can I say I deserve someone so caring? I dug into his past and found many things that were beyond his care. He took charge, cleared my name, and did so much. What do I recompense? A mere token of remembrance... I wished to have seen his sister get married.” Staring Malta strongly, “-I’m not a good friend. I’ll use whoever I need to get whatever I want.”

“It’s not a bad thing,” whispered the butler, “-I might act overzealous, I know people hate my personality, and I do myself too, but it’s a must. I need to keep up the act for her sake – Lady Elina has been through more than most people. She suffers from the trauma of the battle of inheritance. I’m her only friend left from those days – she’s alone. The large palace, the riches, everything is a show. I want for her to be happy; I truly do. She’s a good person, however, the world doesn’t see her that way. They view her as the traitor who left the Wracia Empire to join the Federation.”

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“Is the populous so heartless?”

“No, they stand by her side, it was a long time waiting. Being forced into worshipping their god almost had our culture devastated. Similar to Arda, Elendor has their own sets of beliefs – our eyes are to the sky, I’m sure thee knows the story.”

“Looking beyond what we can see. Malta, may I ask something?”

“Yes, there’s no need to ask for permission, majesty.”

“How is the situation really, how’s the situation with the Wracia empire.”

“Ah,” the voice sunk, “-we’re at war. Juvey the Cray is hard at trying to enter from the North-East. Tis the reason why she ordered such a large shipment of weapons. The General is directing the forces as we speak. We’ve managed to hide the information from the public.”

“Why not ask for help?”

“She didn’t want to impose on the Federation,” sighed the butler, “-if we called for help, the non-aggression pact between the Wracia Empire and Argashield Federation would break, the war would bring nothing. ‘The people of Hidros needs rest’, tis her words.”

“She’s too caring for her own need.”

“I could say the same about you, majesty.”

“Well,” he stood, “-should we let her rest in nature or carry her inside?”

“Nature seems fitting,” smiled the butler, “-who would be so foolish as to refute such an idyllic scene.”

“You’re right,” holding out a hand, “-what was the response from Mr. Elon?”

“No idea,” he grabbed and stood, “-thee’ll probably have the answer later tomorrow.”

“Suppose that leaves today without a schedule,” quick to exit onto the green yard, “-when she comes to her senses, tell her we have somethings to discuss.” Wings sprouted, large and dark, an angel. He disappeared with a single flap leaving few feathers behind.

“éclair,” hovered inside a cloud, “-status on the war?”

“Majesty is going to get involved?” asked the spirit.

“Depends...”

“I’ve tapped into the military channel. The fight is at the Germa mountain range, the natural border separating Elendor from Juvey the Cray’s second province.”

“How bad is it?”

“Not that bad,” said he going through the battle-reports. “It’s been mostly special ops in the forest, villages, and such. Undercover operations that are hard on the mind. If it goes too loud, the blatant violation of King Juvey will awake a tsunami of panic.”

“Why doesn’t Elendor take this violation to the Emperor and demand compensation?”

“Impossible. Master, thee knows a single piece of paper doesn’t have the power to stop the warmonger Juvey. The complaint will give him green light to attack.”

“Help from the Federation might make matters worse.”

“Most definitive,” whispered éclair.

“Once again, I can’t do anything to help...” Unable to think, he dashed off into the emptiness of the skies. Flying for hours on end to find answers.

Dawn approached; lady night threw her veil over the continent. Queen Ela III awoke with a headache. 'The hangover is going to be bad,' thought she looking around. 'Nausea... damn it!'

"You awake?"

"Staxius, what are you doing in the tree?" her head slowly raised.

"Watching the sun-set," said he looking down, "-damn the breath stinks."

"How did you know!"

"Sharp senses," he winked to dropped, "-go have a shower and rest."

"I will," she accepted his help to get up, "-how long has it been?"

"Couldn't tell you myself," he shrugged, "-here."

"What's this?" asked she holding a potion.

"Something I made to help with the hangover. I know how much you hate it."

"Wait, does it work for real?" a mix of joy and curiosity came in form of her tight lips and risen brows.

"I made it."

"Then it's poison," she laughed.

"Poison?" quick to pinch her cheeks, "-as if such a thing would be enough to kill you."

"OK, OK, I yield." The cheeks flamed, "-you really need to stop pinching. Tis unbecoming my ranking."

"And you need to stop drinking like a dwarf."

"Whatever," she ran towards the palace, "-I'll see you in the morning."

Many things came to light. Queen Elina was similar to King Staxius as not wanting to impose on one another. The conversation with Malta felt pleasant. Just speaking about his friend to another gave a semblance of peace. The feeling was weird at first; however, the words from both Ela and Eira forced him into speaking about what he felt. Night fully settled onto the province and a reply had yet to come. Time at this moment wasn't an issue. He retreated from the battlefield of Alphaia – he lost against the five giants. The battle at Tale was nothing more than a faker's attempt at a meaningless victory. What he said on that day was mostly elaborated lies. Granted, éclair was very helpful. The victory gave one thing – time. Meldorino was lost. For time, he lost things that was more precious. Cake out in Hidros received news of the tragic event. Meldorino returned to the Gaso conglomerate with fame of them being tied to the late hero Luna. On top of that, they held the capital Staxius gave. Things seemed to have been going down the road of despair. Though, the King didn't back down without a fight. All the products were imported from Phantom – Meldorino was but a reseller of what Phantom's items. Thus, the damage was limited.

'I can forget about Meldorino. The break into their market is going to be hard. There's no forcing the issue. I need to step back and re-evaluate the situation. The fight has begun. We fool everyone with the AHA. Let's hope Aceline's movie doesn't suffer the same fate. Scott must have seen it coming, that's

why he returned with everyone to Hidros. What move will the Emperor do now, Patek's must be on his throat for the comments about the AHA and justice.'

"Majesty," voiced éclair loudly, "-I've received a priority message from Emperor Sultria VI."

"Read it."

"Dear Father-in-law, I appreciate all the help you've given to Alpha. I think it might be best if I resolve my courtship with Eira. The Patek's are growing more active; it's the point where the Imperial family is at risk. They gave me a singular condition, that I order Phantom and the King of Arda to leave Alpha. From my heart, I want to marry Eira, she's the best lady I've met. I want to become a part of your family. Yet, circumstance says I must think of the greater picture. I know thee art not the type of man to give up, and neither am I. I promise I will get married to Eira, I will, even if that's the last thing I do. So, please, ask your forces to leave. The Lerado's are finished; there's nothing about it, thee lost."

'He ends just like that,' thought Staxius, '-I've lost everything that we've worked for.'

"éclair, order Phantom to retreat. I want everyone to return to Hidros, this battle is lost."

"Roger..."

'Don't worry Sultria. I'll be back stronger, trust me on that.' Staring out the window, the coldness of the night made him think. The journey ahead was yet to be complete, there were things unsolved, Kreston's remaining followers, the Underworld, Alpha, and most importantly, what it means to be the inheritor of Time.

Chapter 430: Miira

Time – Unknown, Dimension – Unknown. A blurred vision of reality, a pocket without exit nor entry, a room, a cell, no defined shape nor size. No up, no down, no right, no left. No right, no wrong, the place was there, existing and not. Real or fake, who knew. A wall, two walls, many walls, none cared to count, none cared to notice, none cared to observe. The reality was naught but a box, no color, black, white, who knew.

"Miira," came a muffled voice of a man in pain, "-did I do good?"

"Please, God of time, save your breath, I can still reverse the turn of events. I can find another time-line where you live!" urged a lady with wings sprawling out her back. She held the man on her lap.

"No," slow and tiresome, "-there's no need," a smile involuntarily made her cry. "Differing timelines will not do anything to gods. I've managed to make a multidimensional barrier; I don't know how long I can last."

"Why hasn't the Rogue Hero skill activated yet?"

"Miira, I'm sorry, but the Skill was disabled a long time ago. All my powers are dwindling, there's no time left. I should have listened and taken the Sickle of Kronos before the battle."

"No, it wasn't your fault, said she adamantly, "-the righteous gods saw us as the enemy. The supreme god did warn us about his son. Our quest can never be complete if he's involved."

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"I know," sighed the man with white hair. "-I was called from another world to do the duty of a god-slayer, I suppose I failed. What will happen of you?" he reached to caress her cheeks.

"I will make sure you return," her wingspan greatened, "-you will go back to your world and live a normal life. A life of a young adult. You'll forget any of this ever happened. It's the only gift I can give," pressing her hands in prayer, her mouth moved without a sound. The circuit line of a divine spell drew itself around the man.

"Complete," said she a few steps away from the dying man. Cracks in their barrier began to form, the gods were close.

"Scifer Rethem, Heir to Kronos, inheritor of Time, thy journey in the divine plane has come to an end. I, Miira Kronicious, assistant to the god of time, shall grant thee thy wish. Return to whence thee came." *DING,* twinkling of bells covered the man into a greenish color. 'Farewell, partner, tis where we part ways.' *CRACK,* the multidimensional barrier broke, the man vanished, and so did she. Entities of unknown stood with weapons drawn, a towering figure stood at the center with a thunderbolt.

'It's done,' thought the angel floating into the void, '-I saved the heir from death.'

"Miira," came a voice amidst the nothingness of space, "-hear mine voice. The quest to avenge my heir is yet to be complete."

'That's the Supreme god Kronos,' the listless face glowed in anticipation.

"Heed my words carefully. The Sickle of Time, my symbol of power, the things thee been looking for the ages wasn't given to Scifer. No, rather, I lost it upon a bet with the Lord Death. The symbol of power, as well as all the abilities over time given to Scifer, has been transferred to the Wielder of Death. The heir to the current Death Reaper – Staxius Haggard. He's a man of ungodly strength with rule over even a high-tier god. Go to him and recount what has happened. Apologize for what thee did, World Break, the spell created by Scifer is now in his hands."

'Dimension Orin,' thought she closing her eyes. 'The God of Death, what will the inheritor of the second most powerful entity be like?' Flapping her wings through the many timelines, Miira, an unknown, made her way to Orin, (the name given to the dimension in which lived Staxius).

Awaken by the sound of metal hitting the floor, Staxius sat with semi-opened eyes. The room felt heavy, even more so than usual. 'What's this?' asked he scratching his head. Just as he would place his foot on the floor, the entirety of the place shifted into a state of weightlessness. 'Is it Creation?' wondered he on guard scanning around. The prior interior was replaced by space, or what seemed to be a copy. The only 'real' object was the floating bed. Sheets rose above their place of rest; the scan continued.

'How powerful is this supposed god of death?' frowned the lady hidden amidst the emptiness. 'Let's see how he deals with this,' following a throwing motion, five shards imbued with ancient spells bolted for her target. *BANG,* it broke into smoke and dust. 'He didn't even react to my shot. He's weak, what was the Supreme god about?' Staring closely, the hovering dust dematerialized with the figure stood still. He kept on looking right and left.

'Guess the body of a god isn't going to be hurt,' her eyes narrowed, '-how about this.' A giant white orb conjured above her head, '-let's see if he can survive a dimensional attack.' It left her hands at an ominously slow speed. Staring it, one could see the rate at which the orb ate what was with the barrier distorted.

'Found her,' he turned to glare.

'Impossible...'

'Why's the darkness being distorted?' the Sickle of Kronos burnt with increasing pain. 'Something is resonating with the symbol. What is it you see, symbol, show me the truth.' From crimson, the right eyes changed to have a clock replace the pupil. 'The very fabric of this plane.' Lines, waves, the framework making the reality as well as the time-span, '-there's the one responsible.' A figure hid behind what could be described as a curtain of lines. 'Dimension devouring orb,' the words suddenly came. 'The power oozing from that attack,' he sidestepped to allow the orb to pass, *Death Element: Hand of God,* two palms reached to hold the projectile. 'It's eating the spell,' thought he watching the outline break.

"Why is he standing there not doing anything? I guess he doesn't know the orb will keep on eating as long as time moves," she thought out loud.

"Unless time is stopped?"

"W-WHAT?" she turned to have her head grabbed and slammed onto the floor.

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"Don't you dare move," said Staxius holding her against a barrier. Since the place had no ground, he but made one of his own.

"LET ME GO!"

"Keep squirming and the injuries will kill you instead of me," said he touching her chest, "-thy heart has been damaged."

"LET ME GO!" she screamed into breaking away from his grasp. An explosion had him flown backward.

"H-how dare you," she gritted.

"Interesting," the same voice came from behind, "-don't resist," holding her arm, he pushed her face-first onto the same barrier. "Move once again and I'll have the orb devour you instead."

"I-impossible," said she unable to pronounce, "-only I can d-disarm it."

"I suppose that's true," said he slowly bringing the projectile to her face. "I stopped time around it, a snap and you're dead. What will it be, intruder?"

'My injuries are acting up again,' she squinted, '-damn it, if only I wasn't attacked by that damned guardian.'

"Time is running low."

"FINE!" all crumbled into them returning to the room. The interior was unaffected, the clock showed no sign of time passing. "A-are you going to let go of me now?"

"Yeah," he stood, "-don't dare move."

"Else, we'll kill you instead," whispered two murderously filled voices.

One held her throat whilst the other readied to incinerate the intruder.

"Master, what do we do about her?" asked Gophy holding a tight expression.

"I could burn her and end the story," said Intherna playing with her fire.

"No killing, not now," uninterested, he moved to the wardrobe to scour for a suitable outfit.

'What is with this man?' confused, speechless, perplexed, the question had her head bombarded as if being in a concert. 'Why is the god of death so callous, he doesn't seem to care. And the ladies here... I remember the black hair of the Goddess of Chaos. The mistress to that rotten Zeus, why is she serving him. What about her, the daughter of Rah, isn't the sun-god supposed to be a lone-wolf? I thought she joined Zeus...'

"I'M BACK," the door flung opened, "-MASTER, DID YOU MISS ME?" yelled Cleopatra leaping into his arms.

"No, I didn't," he held her face, "-please don't ambush me this early in the morning."

"So heartless," whimpered she noticing the intruder. "Who's the new addition?" the voice changed from childish to mature and menacing.

"Don't know, she ambushed me first thing in the morning," still going through the clothes, "-what works best, the blue or pink?"

"Master," sighed Cleopatra, "-the pink one."

"No, the blue one," yelled Gophy.

"I'd say go shirtless," laughed Intherna.

"Forget I asked," he returned to browsing.

"Good features," said Cleopatra holding the attacker's chin. "Are you a spy?" she moved close, "-you have a strange scent," *lick,* "-and a strange taste too."

"Don't you dare eat her," scowled Gophy.

"Says the lady holding a knife to her head. You have the cutlery used to eating, not I, I merely had a taste."

"Stop it you two," voiced Intherna softer than usual, her cheeks seemed to boil.

"Don't tell me..." inquired Gophy with a disgusted gaze.

"You play for the other team?" jested Cleopatra.

“NO,” flames conjured shy of burning their faces.

‘What is wrong with these people?’ wondered a lost Miira, ‘-That’s Cleopatra. She’s involved with high god Lixbin. Are they under his rule or what? Such powerful allies; just who is that man?’

“Gophy, Intherna,” he returned with shorts and an aloha shirt. “Let go of her.”

“Are you sure?” asked they sternly.

“She shouldn’t be of any harm. I feel like she’s here to talk, not fight, isn’t that right?”

“Yes, talk.”

“Then we’ll go have transport ready for later,” said Cleopatra to which the three left the room. She dropped to the floor; the bleeding grew obvious. “I knew it,” said he carried her to the bed, “-you are hurt.”

“I need to know... are you the god of death?”

“Yeah, we’ll speak shortly, for now, rest.”

Present and never changing, present and never yielding. All who wait break and all made are subjected to thine will. I, God of Death, the humble inheritor of thy power; call upon thee to have mine will answered: Time Control – Reversal. The wound returned to how it was, the pain on her face relaxed into comfort.

A few minutes later, “-where am I?”

“On a bed, resting,” returned a sarcastic remark.

“Astounding,” she sat upright, “-my injuries are healed, did you do this?” asked she watching a man sat on the window frame.

“Not out of the goodness of my heart,” he leaped to stand by her side, “-I have a few questions. Answer me this, are you the assistant Kronos spoke about?”

“He contacted you?” said she with fatigued movements.

“...”

“My name’s Miira Kronicious; assistant to the ex-god of time.”

“Staxius Haggard, heir to the god of death.”

“If he contacted you, then you must know of the heir’s death. Lord Haggard, there are many things my master did. One of them being the curse of monsters inside thy plane. For that, I’m sorry,” she bowed.

“The God-slayer cursed us with monsters, did I hear that right?”

“Y-yes, f-for that t-thee can have my head.”

“There’s no need for such dramatism. What is done is done. Do recount of what transpired till today. The God-Slayer has been more than a pain, stealing my power, and more. What happened to the man who defeated me more than once?”

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“Thee hold no resentment?” her brows relaxed.

“None.”

“Scifer Rethem, the heir to Kronos, was originally a normal boy from another dimension. Events occurred in him being taken from his home. At first, he was normal, no harm nor ill-will, well, until the divine army arrived at Kronos’s dominion. They killed him without mercy.”