

Death Magic 431

Chapter 431: Scifer Rethem and Miira

The memories of Miira took Staxius to another world. Her mind dropped to a state of remembrance, a retelling of what happened before and after the activation of the World break spell.

“Scifer and I started at odds end. We were teleported into the first dimension, a place built by humans, they called it the virtual realm. There, he and I worked to solve the mysteries of reality. A world within a world, details of what happened do not directly affect us. Tis so thee have an idea of where we met and started. As you’ve guessed, Scifer’s name comes from Lucifer, the fallen angel, lord of the devils, thee name it, he has many variations. The one unknown to most, God-Slayer. Our job was to hunt down the ghost and steal their abilities. The quest is given by the Supreme God Kronos. He told us of a time where his own son imprisoned and trapped him into a realm beyond the norm. There, he could but wait and pounder as time flowed. I was at his side, waiting for millenniums for the day the heir awoke. After said day came, I became his assistant and we remained friends with differing interests. On the last day of our stay in said dimension, a certain entity made himself known. No gender, we named it, him and gave the name Devourer for the simple reason he ate everything we knew. The world, everything – all gone in an instant. It was then that things grew though. The Gods and Demons came to know of his awakening. The Titan’s too, they were very much pleased by the God-Slayer. Tis was a chance at retribution. If not for Zeus’ involvement, my companion would not have taken the path of destruction. Yes, the son of Kronos came with an army of hundreds of thousands, unprovoked at that, to take claim over the Dominion of time. He had been waiting for the day the symbol of power could be transferred. The supreme god Zeus wanted nothing more than power, and hungry he was to the point of killing his own father for the second time. Luck had it the Lord Death was present to handle the forces. It had the son in a foul mood – Kronos ended up dead as a result. We returned to witness his final moment being dragged on the cold floor. No mercy, no care, he wanted power, and not getting what he wanted – slain in cold blood. On that day, Scifer broke the restrain of mortality and borrowed powers from Goddess Gophy – Quietus. In his wake, many died, and Zeus retreated. The amount of strength he gathered from slaying the elite angels allowed the leveling from mortal to higher-god. Needless to say, the son retreated having done his job. What remained was the dawdling life-essence of Kronos. The only way to save was to gather mana from different worlds, a large amount was needed. The highest concentrated and closest to Origin – this dimension, he conjured World Break, a curse to allow monsters and other beings to be born and multiply. Their sole purpose is to live and kill, gather mana, and send it to Kronos’s dominion. The place thee knows as Totrya in Hidros is now an impregnable province ruled by Scifer. Even the Tower of Aria is nothing more than another gateway for people to give their mana. Following that, we headed off to other worlds in the search for ancient weapons – warriors, and anyone who could join in the war against the Son. We were close to that goal, fighting off the countless assassins sent after us, until a few... I don’t know how time quantifies into the present, but we were ambushed. Zeus had been gathering an army of his own – the coming battle happened at the dominion of Time. Fighting, killing, it kept on and on, days into the night, waves after waves, we fought and fought and fought until he broke. Scifer’s spirit after becoming a god forced his way into walking up the stairs of the Death Reaper. He tried to steal power from Death himself and ended up breaking. For a few minutes, the power he wielded was of utmost fear, even the mid-tiered gods were taken aback not wanting to engage. Sadly, after a strike to the heart by Zeus, he conjured a barrier to save what remained of our forces. Tis there I lost my comrade; I granted him a chance at life, a normal life inside his dimension, a life of peace and quiet.”

“Scifer Rethem,” said he thinking, “-I wished to have known the man who stole my power more than once. I hope he’s doing well. Now,” fingers touching one another, “-Lady Miira, what was the quest given by Kronos?”

“To find the truth behind Origin. Those of the divine nature know Creation is the birth point of all – an entity who not many gods speak nor know about. Some call it Great-mother.”

“And, what’s the relation with Origin?”

“Well, Qhildir, God of Philosophy said there is another higher being – an event, a person, a figure, who knows, the name given is Origin. Kronos suspected time to have been born from a certain point. All begin at the point where time exists, and the god of time is no different; he came into being after time was created. There’s a certain point even the God of time can’t go back against, the very few hours at the exact moment of start called Provenance. That’s the task we were given.”

“It does make sense,” said he carefully reflecting on the ideas brought forth, “-the time before time, makes one wonder does it not? Humans view us as gods and us gods view Creation or Origin as our creators, what a troublesome logic,” walked over to the blinding outside, “-I heard you said something about Tower of Aria and Totrya, are the domains still under Scifer’s rule?”

.....

“No, we had Kanad and Kylsha be the ultimate rulers of each area.”

“What about the monsters, the drop coins and valuables upon their death and revival after a certain time; care to explain?”

“It’s a system the God-Slayer brought over from his world. The coins are the essence the monsters carried given a physical form. An incentive of some sort.”

“And where do they get the energy to revive?”

“The dimension is closest to Origin, he made sure the energy was drawn from Provenance. As long as the planes live, the monsters will keep on regenerating infinitely.”

“Kanad and Kylsha,” said he, “-I remember those names from somewhere.”

“They invaded the birthday of King Blain a few years back.”

“I see,” smiled he, “- you seem to know everything, don’t you.”

“I had Kanad give me a yearly report of the happenings.”

“Well, Miira,” facing the lady, “-I’ve inherited what was once Scifer’s right?”

“Correct.”

“It includes his followers and dominion, the monsters?”

“I’m impressed,” said she with an astounded expression, “-did thee piece the information so quickly?”

“Wasn’t that hard,” said he, “-the monsters are under my command, right?”

novelusb.com

"Yes."

"How do I summon them?"

"No idea," shrugged she, "-tis was his doing, not mine – it's all related to the Sickle."

"Let's say for example an adventuring party makes it to the top of Aria and defeats the boss. Will the tower crumble or?"

"No, it will restart; the winning party will have a fortune given to them," said she with pride.

"Incentive for the troubles. I did experience something strange. The monsters, they're becoming self-aware. Until now, I thought of them as nothing more than targets to shoot whenever bored. Their souls seem to grow with each death, their intelligence too."

"Really?"

"Yes," *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.*

"Did you call on me, master?"

"Saniata, come and stand here."

"O-ok..." she obeyed with a little hesitance.

"Look Miira, this fine lady here is a monster. I killed her so many years ago but her soul, her soul felt alive and well, and thus her presence. She can talk, feel emotions, and has a beating heart."

"I can see that," commented she noticing the flushed face, "-might I ask a question?"

"What is it?"

"Why does she seem so bashful, is she a concubine of thee?"

"No, god forbid," shaking the head in dismissal, "-I'm married to only one lady, and she's the only one I need. I may have sucked Saniata's blood more than once."

"Why do such a thing?"

"Her blood is tasty and refreshing."

"Master," her long lashes flapped, her fin-like ears moved gently, "-is there something else I might help with?"

"No, you may go." *Snap,* she vanished.

"There, you see, the monsters are intelligent."

"I think that's only in her case. I wonder what might have brought such a change."

"Lady Miira, the conversation has been pleasant and long," blank and stern, "-the real question now. Are you friend, or are you foe, what do you want, and what do you expect?"

"Comes down to this," she stood. Her medium-sized silvery-grey hair was tied in a lowered bun. Her nose was pointy, the eyes – oval and rounded, the lips, not big nor too small. A beauty mark underneath the left eye, freckles over her nose, and moderately sized ears. Her figure, slim and battle-ready – she was taller than most of the ladies around, long and generous legs. The chest was of adequate size, out of all her features, the slight melancholic smile was mesmerizing.

"I don't know," said she, "-I'm the assistant to the God of Time, reason dictates I must become thy assistant."

"Is that so," taking a step back, "-there's always room for someone strong. The dimension magic was impressive, however, I need not another assistant. What else can you do?"

"I have experience in managing realms – I mean, I ruled over a few worlds in my time."

"Well versed in the matters of state then?"

"Well versed is an understatement," her eyes rolled.

"Good, pledge, and swear thy loyalty to me."

"Is it necessary?" asked she sulking her cheeks.

"Yes, a blood-oath."

"A blood contract?"

"No, more than that, a blood contract with thy soul as collateral."

"Very well," she dropped to her knees and lowered her head. "I, Miira Kronicious, swear my life and soul to the current inheritor of time."

"Good," said he lifted her head, "-take out thy tongue." A droplet of his blood landed to engrave the mark of the Death Reaper. "Thy are now bound to me, you should be able to go back and forth into the world inside my shadow. It's a good place, I mean, every one bound to me is there."

"What now?" asked she back on her feet.

"Do not use my title of god before anyone. Here, I'm known as Staxius Haggard, Blood King of Arda, and one of the leaders of the Argashield Federation. That's for the public. I also go by the name Xenos in the adventuring world and Shadow in the underworld. I'll have you up to speed in a few days."

"Are so many identities needed?"

"I don't know," he reached for the door, "-come on, follow me, you're going to meet a few people who know of my identity of god." The walk across the massive palace felt tiresome, her face kept on going left to right.

"This is a first," said she, "-I've spent most my time in taverns or inns during the travels with Scifer."

“Should be a new experience to be the companion of a king,” smiled he reaching the main entrance. “We’re actually at a friend’s palace, far away from Hidros.” The white-stairs against the sun felt as if a flash.

“Master, we have Lady Cake send over the bike,” smiled Gophy sat atop the vehicle.

“Where’s Cleopatra and Intherna?” asked he close to the bike.

“Over there,” she pointed to the left, “-there were a few spies who snuck into the compound.”

“From Patek?”

“Yeah,” smiled Gophy, “-I feel pity for them.”

Crash, “-welcome back, majesty,” said Intherna casually stepping off a man’s face buried into the stone-walk way.

“Where’s Cleopatra?”

“Here,” said the lady with three bloodied heads, “-I caught the invaders.”

Chapter 432: Shadow Realm

“Cleopatra, did you think bringing bloodied heads here would be a good idea?” referring to the trail left behind, a few maids walking past snarled. Blood wasn’t easy to clean, and amidst the ruckus; the Queen of Elendor made herself known.

“Good morning, Staxius,” said she scurrying down.

“Good morning, majesty, said he with a bow.

“Might I ask who the fine lady is?” her attention turned to the stranger.

“I’m Miira Kronicious, your majesty,” bowed the lady, “-a humble follower of King Haggard.” The sentence had many faces fall into weightlessness. The idea of she who had wished death upon their leader was foolish and irresponsible.

“Well met, Miira,” smiled the queen courteously.

“Intherna, Gophy, Cleopatra, and Miira, please, return to my shadow and make acquaintance.”

.....

“With pleasure,” said they with evil in the stare.

“By acquaintance, how rough should we go?” whispered Gophy the last to leave.

“Try not to kill her, assess the skills, she’ll be a great asset.”

“Puppet army... I see, good, I shall do so.”

Alone with a bike and the waking sun – he stood as the four went on to be acquainted. The shadow realm was a place of bliss. As dangerous and imposing as the name sounded – the world birthed from the inheritance of the greater Death Element, made an idyllic replica of Hidros. The place there was

filled with people, rather, puppets, counting amidst the populous. The day-night cycle was the same as the 'real' world, and inside Claireville Academy did they spawn.

"We're back," said Cleopatra yawning.

'What's this immense mana I feel?' wondered Miira on guard from the ladies. Few gaze here and there's showed an oval, empty battle-arena. The same place where Eira and Staxius held many o' battles before.

"Lady Gophy, Goddess of Chaos, Lady Cleopatra VII Thea Philopator, Queen of Eduipt, and Lady Intherna, daughter of sun-god, Rah, it's a pleasure to make thy acquaintance."

"You know of our names?" asked Interna taking a strong step forth.

"Tis obvious I'd know the names of people who were close to Zeus," lobbing a glance at Gophy, "-isn't that right, Mistress of the Supreme God."

"Quite uncalled for," said the Goddess with a river freezing stare.

"There's no need to glare as if thee wishes to eat mine heart."

"Miira, you seem a little too confident," commented Cleopatra.

"I need not hear that from a lady who'd not blink twice to let her empire fall to survive..."

"Crude remarks," added Intherna, "-it seems thee wishes to fight wholeheartedly?"

"Yes, I wish nothing more than that!"

"Well then," said Adete with a microphone, "-Miira, here in Shadow Realm; despite our lower numbers, we are a community. To have access into said world, you must prove yourself," the arena barriers rose and grew transparent. Many ghouls sat as spectators with even a griffin flying over the opened-roof.

What Adete said was true, it was a long time coming but the world inside his Shadow grew to accommodate a whole continent. The people who swore to obey were treated to a life of simpleness or luxury depending on their thoughts. Intherna and Gophy were the monarchs – the Queens of the Shadow.

"Is this place really called the Shadow Realm?" chuckled Miira.

"Yes, is there a problem?"

novelusb.com

"No, I just figured there'd be two cages with us battling using cards."

"Have you lost it?" asked Gophy.

"I guess you didn't get the joke..." walked towards the center, the arena split into two.

"Firstly, Lady Miira, you'll fight Lady Intherna followed by Lady Gophy. There's no need to hold back, the world is strong enough to accommodate the powers of the gods.

"Great," smiled she as the arena cleared.

"Lady Miira, I still have no clue how thee knows of my identity. Since the master saw you fit to join the Shadow Realm – I'll make sure to not injure you that hard." *BEEP,*

They dashed at one another without weapons nor spells. *Smack,* a deadlock from the punches meeting one another.

Flame Burst. Aiming her hand below Miira, flames came in the form of an explosion.

Dimensional Barrier. The energy from the attack was sucked into a vortex giving time for both to retreat.

Heed mine call o' spirit who dwells in mine soul, o' spirit serves mine blood, o' spirits who very ire could melt the world, come to me, Onix. No time spare, Intherna summoned her familiar. In its wake, the temperature rose beyond uncomfortable.

'She's going all out,' thought Miira jumping back, *Come one who is trapped in the never-ending clutches of time, Guardian of the Kronos's dominion, Gintaom.* A figure as tall as the arena stepped from a portal. Big, heavy, and resembling a status, "ATTACK!" the words activated the Guardian who conjured forth a plethora of spells around the vicinity. Each with angel-tier level magic, the projectiles blasted for Intherna's familiar.

"No YOU DON'T," voiced she angrily on the ground, *Come to me, Wing of RAH!* the arena illuminated with the blinding glow. The manifestation of her power, the fiery hair levitated, her legs crossed as she hovered with a staff in hand.

'She's NOT MESSING AROUND,' *BANG!* a direct hit dislocated Miira's shoulder and threw her away. '- The Goddess of Fire isn't to be trifled with,' thought she with the combatant coming full speed with the staff aimed for her head.

'Guess I can't hold back either,' *Guardian of the Dominion of Time, she who rules over the East – I, Miira, call upon thy help, grant me thy strength for the time of retribution has come: Azure Dragon Transmutation.* *SMACK,* her fall halted with Intherna landing a clean hit. However, she seemed to come out unscathed. A clench of the fist had Intherna thrown to whence she came.

"Don't screw with me," gritted Intherna with the wings increasing heat.

"It's been quite the battle," said Miira with her hair changed into blue and green.

"Who knew one of the four legendary dragons would make herself known," smirked Intherna.

"So you know of the Azure Dragon?"

"Yes," smiled she, "-who would not know the guardians who fought of both gods and demons in an attempt to save the universe itself. Their self-sacrificing defeat; how did thee manage?"

"The Dragons were defeated, but not killed – God Kronos made sure to have them saved and become eternal guardians of the real dominion of time."

"If thee have the power of Azure, then, I suppose, there's no need for me to hold back," the fiery hair changed into blistering yellow, the essence of normality around her shattered. *In the name of Goddess Intherna, daughter of Rah, I order mine powers to be unleashed, true form: Phoenix.* A blink and the

two fought without restraint. Blow after blow, the power of Miira dwindled as Intherna increased her strength. They continued until, *SMACK,* a well-aimed strike had Miira smacked onto the ground. Intherna's body became naught but flames with humanoid features.

"And that's the fight!" said Adete amidst what remained of the arena, the whole place was ruined. The guardian and Onix killed each other after breaking Claireville Academy.

Restrained, the pressure released, the suffocating feeling lessened.

"Good fight," said Intherna offering a hand.

"I underestimated the goddess of fire," chuckled Miira, "-I never knew the gods here were that powerful." The breeze came from holes littered around; debris was as common as weeds in an untended garden. A moment of respite after a long battle.

"Who knew the Azure dragon was alive," said Gophy hovering over, "-who are you really?"

"The Eternal Protector of Time. I wield the powers from four dragons of old – the Goddess of Kiant."

"The realm of the forgotten?" asked Gophy.

"Yes," smiled she, "-am I going to fight Lady Gophy now?"

"No," replied Adete, "-the people seem to have been pleased by the show of power. Welcome to the Shadow Realm."

"Thanks," cheers and applause came from the destroyed spectator seats, the ghouls, some injured, some without arms, others with no heads, clapped nonetheless.

"There's something I've been wanting to ask," inquired she who sat with injuries being healed.

"Go ahead," returned Gophy side-glancing.

"Might I know the name of the announcer?"

"You spoke of me?" came Adete sitting on her shoulders, "-I'm Adete, First Progenitor of the Vampires."

"You've got to be kidding me..." her head lowered.

"Why, is something wrong?" inquired Cleopatra tilting her head.

"Thee are insane," her head fell backward with senseless laughter.

"She hit her head hard," said Gophy with a nod.

"Fair assessment," added Intherna speaking as if doctors looking over a patient, "-the eyes are open, the mouth moves, but sir brain has long departed."

"Thee doesn't realize how powerful thee are," frowned she, "-the First Progenitor is a member of the Death Reaper's party?"

"No, you got it wrong," interjected Adete, "-we're not part of his party, we're part of his family. He might be a little off at times and has this weird idea of wanting a puppet army," she hovered to point at the ghouls, "-but they are living creatures with intelligence. They know, feel, and adapt – we're a

growing community, the Shadow Realm is a place of comfort for those who are too dangerous to the 'real world'."

"Heed these words carefully," said a stern Gophy, "-never use thy real strength in the real world. Come and unleash in the Shadow Realm, if we were to fight serious out there, we might accidentally break the very fabric of what the people know as home."

"There's an exception to the rule," said Intherna, "-we're allowed to only unleash the powers if orders come directly from Master Staxius."

"I still don't understand why such a powerful group of people are willing to stand at his side. Surely if thee were to go all out, killing death might not seem that unorthodox," a fair enough assessment.

"Trust me," laughed Cleopatra, "-despite my relatively new appearance, I've seen things I can't speak about. The man we call master isn't just merely the second most powerful entity, he's the father of the Heir to Creation, and inheritor of the cursed blood of the progenitors. He wields three symbols of power; Goddess Nike, God of Time, and God of Death."

"Even if we killed him," said Intherna, "-he would wake up twice as powerful as the prior version. Thus, defeat will come only by his hands, not the hands of another deity – tis the privilege of he who holds precedence over death."

"What did you mean by father of the Heir to Creation?" her mouth opened unconsciously.

"Do thee not understand basic language? The man is father to Creation's heir."

"JUST HOW DAMNED POWERFUL IS HE!" she screamed.

"Very," laughed the trio. "For now, let's just rest until he calls for us." Thus, what seemed to be fairies flew to fix the broken building.

'I've stumbled into a peculiar situation. I can't believe Scifer was trying to find and kill this man. I now doubt even the God-slayer could harm him. Fighting his companions alone is a tall order. What if someone managed to do so, they would have to deal with him personally, a god with three symbols of power, the blood of the cursed, and things I don't even know of. Maybe with him, finding the truth about Origin is possible. My revenge against Zeus seems doable...'

.....

"Staxius," out in Lazuli, off to the side of a pond, "-why are you holding your stomach?"

"I feel somewhat sick," said he sat on the ledge, "-don't mind me, what happened to the people sent to Mr. Elon?"

"No response yet," said the Queen facing a confectionary's shop. The windowpane gave onto the land of rainbows, pink, sugar, sweets, and candies.

"Is that so," thought he stood over to the shop, "-don't you want to buy some?"

"You sure?"

"Why not," they entered.

“Master,” said éclair, “-I’ve traced the people who attacked us earlier. They’re indeed part of Cimier.”

“The information was correct then, Cimier and Patek’s are one of the same. I was thoroughly fooled,” smirking at what was to come, “-don’t count me out of the race yet.”

Chapter 433: Lord Elon

The easeful dawn’s morning chirping of birds and warm light shuddered. The sound of engines came rumbling from the entrance. Rare was it for people to come so early and indeed stood a few wanting audiences with her majesty. When asked, the response came, ‘-Guards from Elon’s Empire, we’re here as overwatch for the meeting.’ The message flooded the castle as if a broken dam. The maids were envious of such a high-profile guest. If it had been a duke or someone of lower nobility, their reaction would have been tamer. The name ‘Elon’ was very much respected by the people of Elendor.

Dawn’s dimness was replaced by the sun who took his mantle in the skies – the empty courtyard was filled with heavy black vehicles.

“King Haggard,” said a lady dressed very lavishly, “-the day has come.”

“Indeed it has,” returned he with a rivaling outfit, “-Elina, how much do you esteem Lord Elon?”

“Very much,” replied she with a smile, “-he’s closer to a Grandfather figure, a mentor I should say, than the fearful Lord Elon. I forgot to ask, why is it you want to meet him?”

“To ask questions,” replied he strongly, “-is it wrong to wish to speak to a wise man?”

“No, I didn’t mean it that way,” her lips tightened, “-I wasn’t expecting him to respond so quickly.”

.....

“We’re the 25th of May, tis been quite a long time...”

“Wrong,” replied she raising her brows, “-I heard of people waiting years to meet him. Even in those cases, the people are taken to his secretary instead.”

“Elusive.”

“I could say the same thing about you,” giving a pat on his shoulder, “-good luck, King of Arda, go and do what thee came to do,” she left on those parting words.

Amidst an army of cars; came another line of faster-looking metal steeds. The gates, always shut, were opened for the man without asking questions. The slow pace made it very so stressful. The once white-staircase got layered by a red carpet. Such care for a man without a title of nobility, nothing more need be said. In the blazing sun, the main car pulled to the carpet; guards rushed to open the door. First exited a lady with a display in hand that soon stood beside. Then, at last, putting a foot forth, Lord Elon stepped with his very well decorated, meticulously crafted robe. Aided by a dark-brown walking stick toppled in gold, he paused to glance about.

“Lord Elon,” voiced Malta trimmed and proper, “-welcome back to the palace. I hope the journey wasn’t troublesome.”

"The master says it's fine," said a blond-hair lady with dignified features. Her spectacles seemed to accentuate the roundness of her nose. A few, unnoticeable wrinkles formed whilst she spoke, "-shall we head inside?"

"Let's," he led the way. Often, Lord Elon would gesture Alison, his secretary, to come close and lend her ears. She would bend to be at his height and listen. After understanding his message, she'd nod and stand straight – none knew what they spoke nor did they ever reveal what was said. The long walk across the palace was rewarded by the artwork and esthetics put into decoration. Going from hallway to hallway, they arrived onto one very much dressed. Walls filled with tapestries recounting the tales of old. He would glance to peek through the ever-narrowed eyes. A slight raise of the white less filled brows hinted at him being pleased. Reaching the end, rose a massive double-door with edges of bronze and silver.

"Greetings Lord Elon," said the Queen in her formal apparel.

"Greetings, Queen Elina," spoke the Lord softly while Alison nodded. Domed roofed with angels extending their wings, naked figures posed melodramatically – a work from a famed local artist.

"Greetings, Lord Elon," came a soothing voice from a towering figure.

"Greetings, King of Arda," said the Lord carefully lifting his head.

"I wish I could say and partake in conversation," interjected Elina, "-I've duties to attend, please, make use of the retainers as you would your own."

The room, circular but not obvious, hosted curved white-framed windows with smaller and more frequent panes. Hidden by a light curtain, one could see the restful garden outback.

"Do you mind if I ask some questions first?" inquired Alison stood beside her master.

"No, please, go on ahead," replied Staxius sat and staring at Elon.

novelusb.com

"Why did you wish to speak to my mast-" he rose his hand, "-what is it, master?"

"Alison, thank you for being attentive. I'll take over the conversation, please, go have a tour of the garden," a long-extinguished flame rekindled, he hadn't been so assertive since a few years ago.

"Yes, my lord," nodded she with a grin. Her heels clopped till the door where it echoed into silence. The room, amber and warm, emptied with both.

"It's been a long time," said he gradually opening the narrowed eyes.

"Yes, we've not met since the auction," replied he.

"I knew the day would come where we would meet once again. So, King of Arda, what is this about?"

"There are things I need to know," said he wearing the glasses, "-things perhaps meant to never see the light of day."

"Go ahead," intrigued, the man gave the aura of a bear exiting hibernation.

“Overlord...”

“Excuse you?” no reaction came forth.

“Overlord, Godfather Renaud, Godfather Stanley, the Dark-Guild, and the war in Alpha, how involved are you?”

“What do you mean involved?” the hands clenched onto the walking stick.

“I mean what I say,” returned he strongly, “-Lord Elon, I’ve spent a few days researching thy company. A few things came up that weren’t, let just say, ‘normal’. In no way is this a threat, perish said thought, I but want one thing, knowledge, and advice for the man who’s been in the shadows well before I came into the world.”

“Speaking in riddles, vaguely pointing at things that thee are sure – creating fear into another’s heart. Very good conversational skills” said he unbothered, “-I have the bad habit of clenching my stick when confronted with hard questions. My old age is very much trouble, my guard isn’t as it used to be.”

“Might I presume tis why lady Alison speaks on thy behalf?”

“I knew it,” said he with pride, “-I had the feeling that you were special, and indeed you are.”

“It’s true then,” voiced Staxius coldly.

“Yes,” replied the other, “-before I go into details, please, give me thy thoughts on who I am, really.”

“As you wish,” taking deep breaths, “-Lord Elon – thee are the man people refer to as the Overlord. You’re the one who stays in the Shadow of the Dark-Guild, the pinnacle of power.”

“How do you conclude?” inquired the man with a neutral expression.

“The first time we met, thee said, ‘give regards to Godfather Renaud’. The words deliberate, you wanted someone to find out who you were. Tracking thee was a challenge; I did decide to contact since I needed help with the situation in Alpha. Tis then the idea hit me – why did my plan fail; how did they know what I was doing? It felt more of a test. The meeting with the Patek’s surely, the Dynasty would have taken no risk in revealing their involvement. They were forced into risking being exposed, a higher being stood presiding over their choices. The puppet master who’s been testing us ever since the auction. It made sense, especially when Godfather Renaud became right-hand to the Overlord. I have eyes on powerful people, and Godfather Renaud fits the role too well. Lastly, the guards, the way they move and act, the glares, it’s all reminiscent to the underworld.”

“Bravo,” the brows lifted the sullen cheeks into a smile, “-I’m indeed the Overlord of the Dark-Guild. I doubt you’ve spoken of the whole-method used to find my identity. It’s true, I wasn’t only testing you, but the whole organization. There have been very peculiar incidents with the family being killed or killing one another. Tis something I refuse to allow, fratricide. In no way will I sit and watch the family be destroyed. The Lerado incident is something I can’t personally be involved. Stanley sure was quick to throw a fit, I know he’s working with another organization. The Patek’s or rather known as Cimier was one of the branch family of the DG. They split around a century ago and grew strong with each passing year. The situation is dire...”

“Lord, isn’t the DG powerful?”

"We are powerful, don't get that mistaken. Renaud is my right hand and heart of the DG, if it wasn't for the money brought by the sale of narcotics, prostitution alone would not have had us go anywhere. In a way, I'm grateful for Phantom. Stanley is my sword, he controls the Assassination Sect, the DG's best fighting force. I fear the man has been led astray by the tales from Cimier. That damned geezer Rowley was always a man of charisma."

"That's the reason why thee aren't acting?"

"Yes, if Stanley leaves our care – I predict the DG falling in less than a year."

"..." The information needed a second to assimilate. Lord Elon said things known to him, only, out loud. A recompense to the man who discovered his identity.

"Lord Elon," said he with a threatening expression, "-it's not wrong to assume the worst. There may be alliances being made between Cimier and other 'lower' gangs to wage war against us. The Dark-Guild are too prominent, tis both a boon and a curse."

"The damned youth of today know nothing of our code-of-conduct. If only I was back in my prime, the situation would have not gotten so bad," regret slowed his speech. "What is it you want, Shadow, I know you called me here to discuss another matter."

"Actually," he laid back with fingers touching one another, "-our goals may not be so different. I was defeated by the five-conglomerates; It's not hard to assume them being linked to Cimier as sister-family and such. Phantom was ordered to leave Alphaia. The Lerado's, mainly, the lady, is being held by the neck into selling narcotics for lesser the market-value."

"Poor girl, her husband had so much promise..." the cheeks twitched.

"Lord Elon," smirking, "-I have an idea. As opposed to breaking Cimier from the shadows, let's take to the main stage. Their conglomerates are nothing more than facades for their inner-workings. I say, let's fight them head-on without tricks. Thee assured me the Dark-Guild is strong."

"Are you referring to the Elon Empire?" the face froze on the verge of hysterical laughter, "-my boy, I'd have never thought of such a possibility. I've been in the shadows so long I forgot how to see the light. How do you propose we go about the plan?"

"How big is Elon's influence in Alphaia?"

"If we're talking business," a press on his phone had Alison enter the room.

"Thee summoned me?" asked she taken aback by the familiarity in the two.

"Staxius Haggard is better than we thought," laughed he with coughs.

"Lady Alison, might I ask a few questions?" stern and unforgiving, she quickly turned to Lord Elon for what to do. The response was a nod.

"Yes, how can I help?"

"How influential is Elon in Alphaia?"

“Quite significant – of their electrical products, the majority of the factories are owned by Elon’s Empire. I’d say we manufacture most of their use.”

“How about revenue?”

“Money isn’t an issue, combined, we made around 10.6 Billion last year. Why what is this about?” asked she with a shrug.

“That’s from legit businesses, right?”

“Yes, obviously,” she paused, “-what do you mean legit businesses?”

“Don’t worry, Alison, he knows of my identity,” mumbled Lord Elon.

“What’s happening here?” her pitch rose.

“We’re going to war,” said Staxius nonchalantly, “-a war of buying and trading. The battlefield will be the world of commerce. Shadow against shadow, none shall win, however, if light goes against shadow, we might stand a chance.”

“...” facing her master for answers, he facepalmed.

“Alison, does thee not understand what he means? We’re going to war using the Elon Empire, and not the DG.”

“Really?” her confusion broke into excitement.

“Yes.”

Chapter 434: Qhildir, God of Philosophy.

14:30 displayed onto the digital clock centered at the front of the lecture room. Curved in shape with descending heights, most of the seats remained empty. Differing diagrams and notes on Magiology were shown on the holographic display. The lecturer, a man in his olden years, carefully glossed over theories and possibilities. As for the students, there but a few, 7 in total, most of which being girls.

“That’s it for today, we’ll resume next week,” said the man exiting. The silent room broke into mild chatter.

“Ysmay,” gestured Eira, “-want to grab something to eat?”

“No, I’m sorry,” returned she with a more matured body, “-there’s preparations I need to make for my engagement,” her face held utmost joy.

“Oh yes,” said she remembering what was forgotten, “-I still can’t believe you and Timothy had that sort of relationship...” the face lowered to the slightly bulged stomach.

“Things happen,” her face flushed, “-father wasn’t happy,” the fear portraited as if an open-book, “-the only way the family isn’t shamed is if we get married. I mean,” she paused with an evil glare, “-it was my intent.”

‘Bearing the child of who she loved to not be married to another, the shy Ysmay has grown a lot.’

.....

"What about you?" picking her display, "-how's the would-be Empress of Alpha doing?"

"Don't tease me like that," they giggled to head outside.

The somber sky of Rotherham made it ever more reclusive. A car stood at the ready with a smartly dressed man.

"Princess Eira, it's a pleasure to see you again," said the man taking off his glasses.

"Timothy," said she nodding, "-I never thought you'd come to pick Ysmay."

"I had free time," both embraced as if birds cuddling, "-she's under my care and the engagement approaches."

"You better take care of my best friend," said Eira in a menacing tone.

"Don't worry," grinned Ysmay, "-he'll be good to me." The love in her eyes kept on dowsing Timothy's face with sweetness.

"I suppose we should get going." Thus, the couple headed off the compound onto the relatively quiet road. The desolate trees in the desolate campus with desolate leaves on the lonesome pavements were amplified by the cold-breeze.

'Would-be empress said he,' the brows fixed into an expression of discontent. The car door slammed.

"There's no need to be so rough," said Red-Fury.

"Oh, shut it," replied she, "-I've a lot on my mind, could you take over the drive?"

"Yeah, no problem," the car began its journey towards Arda. "Shall we take the portal?"

"Do whatever," returned she coldly with the seat reclined, '-the Emperor broke our courtship. Here I thought he'd be the man with who I could entrust my will. What a disappointment. Father was ousted from Alpha, things have gotten out of hand. He seemed so distraught the last time. I wonder what Mother has to say about that?'

Following the incident in Alpha, mainly, the ending of the courtship – a message was delivered by an ambassador of the Alphan Empire. He brought the news that his Imperial Majesty ended the courtship. No further details were given – the queen of Arda was more than angered. Filled by ire at the potential heartbreak of her daughter, a strongly worded letter was returned to the Emperor. From 14:30 to 17:30, Red-Fury drove along the outskirts of Rotherham into the main-roads over which passed the railway. After a certain village upon turning towards the north – the hue changed from red into a blueish green to then disappear into the nothingness of the roads amidst the rainforest.

"Lady Eira, wake up," said the car strongly.

"What?" her sleep broke with the setting sun's ray flashing across the insides. The trees and foliage-covered a private road. No start, only end, for it led to the castle. Access was to royalty only, and so, emerged the red-steed from the tree-filled cave.

'The place sure has changed,' said she taking over the wheels.

"Highness," hailed a guard stood before a tall shadow gate.

"Open the portal towards the underground parking."

"As thee wishes," he reached for his collar, "-Overseer, please link the portals towards area E3." *Bling,* it swapped for a blueish hue.

novelusb.com

"Please," motioned the beastman.

"Thank you," replied she rolling up her window.

She arrived at a massive underground space with nothing but cars. The latter wasn't of poor quality, some military, some comfort, and some sport. Divided into a few sections, Eira pulled into a vacant spot. "Have a good day, my lady," said the spirit as the door closed. 'Why do I still use Red-Fury despite the other cars around,' shaking her head, said section was her private lot of transport. It contained more than a few sport-cars of which a few were unique and made for her especially. Tis were gifts from her father, the king, who spared no cost in pampering his family. 'I won't be surprised if he gets me a jet next.' She continued to a portal in the middle.

"Greetings Highness, I hope the journey wasn't tiresome," said a cat-lady behind the counter.

"No, it was rather pleasant," replied she courteously. The portal-room had grown exponentially, "-where is my lady-mother?"

"Her Majesty is in a meet with a few nobles. She'll be done in a few minutes. Prince Julius has also come to visit, shall I open a portal to him?"

"Yes, please do."

"As thee wishes," *cling.*

Blond hair changed to green mixed with white, "-what happened to your hair?"

"Sister," said he stopped to turn on the lights, "I didn't expect you to come so quickly," he took the work-goggles.

"Had nothing else to do, say, what happened to the hair?"

"Nothing much, I reverted to my natural hair color," oil on the spotless cheeks, dirt-covered the fingers, the griminess of the workshop the King once used was plastered atop the shabby clothes.

"Why are you here?" asked she entering the room, "-are you not working with Scott as an assistant?"

"About that," he moved to rest against the workstation, "-Lady Elvira asked us to have a break. There are things they need to settle – I don't know the details, something to do with Alpha."

"On vacation then?"

"Yeah, I suppose," he touched his nose turning it black. "Do you know why mother called us?"

"I have no idea," she shrugged, "-what are you working on?"

"Watches..." said he nervously, "-for some reason, I had the urge of wanting to tinker with gears."

"You're the exact copy of father," laughed she, "-always getting side-tracked by things that pique thy interest."

"Sister, we both know you're more of his copy. The emotionless persona doesn't come instantly."

"No, you got it wrong," she sighed, "-I saw people die during the war. It made me numb to most."

"Whatever you say, sister," he resumed working, "-Lizzie was looking for you earlier, she's at the study, I think, Rile's there with her."

"Thanks, see you later, little brother."

"You too, big sister, later."

Sweet notes mixed with a whiff of sorrow came out a certain door. The piano played with each note resounding with the listener. *Click,* "-big sister," the piece stopped with little Lizzie dashing for the Princess.

"Woah there," she bent to cuddle, "-I missed you."

"I missed you too," said Lizzie giving a peck to her cheeks, "-want to hear my song?"

"Sure," on her feet, the shorter princess scurried to the very big piano. A behemoth compared to her size with her legs dangling off the seat. The song resumed; each note evoked emotions.

"Princess Lizzie has gotten very dexterous with the keyboard," commented Rile.

"How so?" asked Eira listening with eyes closed.

"I might insult her hard work by saying this, but I think princess Lizzie is a prodigy. It's been close to a year and she's mastered a few pieces that require skills. The teacher said she has perfect pitch and can assign notes to any sound she hears."

"I'm not that versed into classical music," said Eira, "-her way of play sure is an emotional ride. Happy at once then woeful the next."

"How was it," said the young princess.

"It was excellent," came another voice from behind.

"Mother!" exclaimed she.

"Lizzie, how are you?" quick to hold her child, they conversed.

"Good evening, mother," said Eira.

"Good evening," said she reaching for another hug, "-I'm glad to see you both well."

"It's good to see you as well, mother."

“Rile, where is Rosetta, have her tend to Lizzie. And Eira, I want thee to change as well, we’re having a formal dinner later – there are things we must discuss,” the words came across strongly.

“Yes, mother,” bowing her head, the study emptied with Eira being the last to leave.

The soothing sound of water landing, steam rose, Eira’s long hair rested against her back. The shower felt closer to cleaning, the tiredness of the few days gone down the drain.

‘Why do I feel so hopeless,’ she sat with back against the wall, ‘-what is the feeling of rejection. Everyone in my family is talented or strong-willed. What about me, what have I accomplished? I’m a strong enough mage – still, it wouldn’t amount to much on the evolving battlefield. Lady Gergusser hasn’t spoken to me ever since the incident with the ancient dragons. Father is awesome, Mother is strong and confident, Julius is charming, and lastly, Lizzie is talented and prodigious. The world of music will be shaken the moment her performance goes live. She’ll be an instant hit; people love children who are ‘geniuses’. What have I accomplished? My journey took me to the field of Magiology, tis here I found how intelligent the founder of the subject is. However hard I try, there are boundaries humans can’t cross. I suppose I’m lucky to be brought up by...’ *Crack,* the water froze, “-HOW FRUSTRATING!” The ice melted almost immediately, ‘-what a pathetic mess of a daughter. Here I thought getting married to the Emperor would assure a lasting alliance between our countries. I was going to do my job as princess... will the gods not allow me that chance either?’ tears flowed to merge with the running water, ‘-am I useless? What should I do, my friends all have families, ambitions, and room to improve. Me, I’m nothing but the side-character, there’s nothing I can do but wait and watch.’

“Wrong...” echoed the room in a tremor, “-CHILD!”

“Who is it?” she stood with an icy-sword summoned.

“I’m the medium to Qhildir, God of Philosophy.”

“...”

“I’m it who controls the knowledge of all that existed. Child, do you desire power?”

“Power?” asked she lowering her guard, “-what does thee wish in exchange?”

“Nothing,” said the voice, “-I desire nothing for I know all and experienced all. Child, I but wish for one thing, and tis an apostle, an heir to what I’ve worked for so long. Does thee accept to know the truth?”

“What truth?” her lips tightened.

.....

“Truth about everything. Eira Haggard, daughter of the God of Death, heed my voice, tis an opportunity to become a being higher than human. Thee will be granted the title of Librarian, the Guardian of my knowledge, she who knows all!”

“The Librarian?”

“Nexsolium, does thee accept?”

‘The Librarian, guardian of knowledge... does that mean I be useful to father?’

“Yes, thee will be known in the divine realm – knowledge is the ultimate strength; thee wishes to fight beside the God of Death?”

“Why me?”

“For the reason that thee knows of what it means to be weak. Lord Death once took my love, I held a grudge for centuries until my lover returned as a fragment to say she held no regret. What sort of being would I be to hold a non-existent grudge? In such a way, thee are closest to how I felt, lost, and surrounded by far superior people.”

“How will becoming the Librarian affect my life?”

“Not much, you will forever be Eira Haggard with the added difference of being my heir.”

“Qhildir, God of Philosophy, I accept!”

“WISE CHOICE!” the room froze instantly into a world of letters, numbers, symbols, and more. The body teleported to a realm beyond ‘reality’. A black and blue robe ended at her thighs. A pointed shoe styled footwear materialized with wings at the sides. Her right-shoulder was wrapped in a shawl with multiple writings. A halo of symbols rested as if a crown.

“Eira Haggard, welcome to Nexsolium,” said a soothing voice.

Chapter 435: Librarian of Nexsolium

‘Nexsolium...’ the words stuck in her thoughts as if a catchy tune, over and over again, ‘Nexsolium, Nexsolium, Nexsolium.’

“Where am I?” asked she loudly. The floor seemed to be blue with clouds dotted around. It felt as if walking on the sky itself – the pathway continued forth without end. The walls were bookshelves made of gold as opposed to wood, the books themselves ranged in hue. Some were even semi-transparent and others flat-out invisible.

“You’re in the realm of knowledge,” said the voice, “-welcome to my domain,” the sound, scattered, gathered onto one point, a spiral downwards into a figure.

“Welcome to my library,” said the entity with a clean-shaven face, no hair, big deep eyes engraved onto darkened circles. They seemed to be farther into the skull than what one would expect. The clothes were all but a wizard robe with stars and the moon’s crest dotted into stripes. “I’m Qhildir, God of Philosophy,” said he taking a step forth.

“Eira Haggard,” she curtsied.

“The outfit suits thee well,” said he in good faith.

“Forgive my asking, what exactly is this place, and how am I going to be thy heir?”

.....

“Straight to the point,” said he facing the never-ending pathway, “-over yonder is an infinite amount of space. The bookshelves here are what thee are allowed to view as the Librarian. Worry not, the

restriction will be removed later on, consider this to be a trial. Eira Haggard, I have an initiation test thee must pass."

"What if I fail?"

"You'll wake and think of the experience as a dream," infants with wings came carrying a ladder.

"What sort of test is it exactly?" asked she walking closer to the figure.

"A reading test," said he nonchalantly hanging off the ladder in search of a specific book.

"Reading test?"

"Yes," *Screech* the sound of flesh against wood screamed as he slid downwards, "-a reading test. There will not be any combat involved, not now anyway. The test is simple," he held out a palm with a hovering book, "-I want you to read the first chapter of this Grimoire."

"Grimoire?"

"A book written by witches, angels, demons; whatever thee think doesn't matter. It's a book of knowledge filled with curses, blessings, spells, and mind-breaking passages of power. Similar to incantation one uses in thy realm to conjure specific spells, the grimoire is a log for all the forgotten spells of various worlds and dimensions."

"There's a catch," she frowned, "-care to tell me more on the particular of this specific Grimoire?"

"Sure, tis the Oath of Valera Volume XI. It specifically deals with mana amplification since that's what thee studies. It will be very enlightening, I think since the Volume goes in detail on how mana interacts and the linking factor between Origin and what we know."

"The way thee voices it," she paused, "-it sounds simple enough. Yet, I suspect the passages are more of incantations than text."

"Thee catch on quick," handing over the book, "-Grimoires are notorious for having their own personalities. They work like spells, the first word you read and the whole information is transferred to thy subconscious. Tis when the real test begins, in the first chapter, there's an incantation I want you to call forth."

"Alright, anything else I should know?"

"Not really," *snap,* a hovering orb materialized, "-once you've read the Grimoire, I want thee to use the spell onto this orb here."

"Here goes nothing," holding the Grimoire felt heavy, the book seemed to be alive. The cover, black and dull, gave the impression of having stares hidden throughout. 'Nothing ventured, nothing gain,' glancing the God, he seemed to hold a certain air of mystic. "Oath of Valera Volume XI," the hardcover flipped to show the erased name of the author. The first few pages were the same as an ordinary book, '-this pressure,' she reached the page before the first chapter. The pages seemed to be glued, applying too much force would rip the pages. Confused by the resistance, her head subconsciously looked towards the God. What returned was an emotionless face, '-father.' A blinding light shouted from her outwards;

the book illuminated everything as she fell into a trance. The words levitated to channel into her mind, the eye sockets squinted in pain, her face showed the displeasure; her hands clenched into a fist.

"Lady of Ice, arise," a voice spoke within her dream-like state.

novelusb.com

"Where am I?" the eyes opened to complete darkness, nothing, no one, solitude materialized.

"Awaken, Lady of Ice," same again, the faint trace of misty snow flew as if a shooting star.

'If this is a trance,' *CRACK,* '-there's only one way to break out.' *Stab,*

"AHMM," inhaling deep, the darkness cracked into the dirtied Nexsolium. 'The grimoire, I feel the power coursing through my veins,' blood dripped from her legs, '-I can't afford to lose this opportunity. I'll become strong for my sake, not the sake of another, I will become Eira Haggard, not the daughter of Staxius Haggard, not the princess of Arda, not the Empress of Alpha, but Eira Haggard, I'll live for MYSELF!"

"Wise choice," said the ever-speaking voice, "-I, Guardian of The Oath of Valera, henceforth recognize Eira Haggard as a competent vessel."

'This feeling,' she watched the orb. "Heed me, mana traversing the multi-verse, I, the host of Valera's Oath, under the third passage of Diminution, command for thee to obey mine will, begone and reform for I deem it so, and in my name, thee shall obey for mana is but the tool granted to those worthy." Her palms closed in a crushing motion that generated a typhoon above the orb. It spiraled into creating a tornado bearing lightning and thunder. The dormant orb rekindled with electricity blasting its surrounding.

'The Oath of Valera,' thought she pressing her hands together, "-the orb has been granted mana anew," the catastrophic tornado reduced into a gentle wind.

"Impressive," said the god holding the orb, "-Eira Haggard, that was beyond expectation. Thee not only spoke the passage but manifested the spell in its entirety, I applaud the drive."

"Thank you," said she falling to one knee, "-did I pass?"

"Eira Haggard," came the god holding out a hand, "-thee are worthy of being my heir. By the name of Qhildir, I grant thee access to Nexsolium and its knowledge." *Snap,* the mark of the god burnt onto her left-arm. "Librarian of Nexsolium, stand."

"No need to tell me twice," she stood with a smile.

"Before thee run off and read, there are a few things I must say. Firstly, the library is a collection of everything I know and have found. The Grimoires are cursed and very powerful, similar to Valera's Oath, you can read and grow powerful, that is thy job as the guardian. You might have noticed; the place feels closer than home. The details and summary of the millions of books in here are stored in your memory. There's a hallway down the corridor with a familiar inside. He'll guide you if ever thee needs help. Secondly, time here goes at a much slower pace than the 'mortal realm'. Powers acquired here will transfer instantly. Lastly, there are three books locked from thee to see, they are the Dien, Tein, and Slein, the three ethereal chronicles of past, present, and future. Even if you read them, I doubt the

language to be understandable. If curiosity forces thee into checking them out, I wouldn't be angered. Do make sure to be careful around them, tis for thy own safety, the guardians of Past, Present, Future..."

"I understand," she interjected, "-I'm not interested."

"I knew you were perfect for being my heir. There's something I've omitted."

"Which is?"

"Nexsolium, as in the entirety of the books here, have been read by you in the last five minutes. It's safe to say you know every single word present here – but as I explained, tis locked in the subconscious. The Lady of Ice, thy alter ego, will preside over such information for its required to protect what is precious to you."

"Does that mean I don't have to teleport to the physical library?"

"You can, tis just the knowledge is stored in the subconscious. If you need a specific piece of information, the trip into the physical library will be required."

"Basically, I'll have to return if I want to go in-depth about theoretical subjects. The vices, spells, curses, are already in my subconscious?"

"Precisely. It's a protection and prerequisite for becoming the Librarian, she must know and read all to understand least."

"What do you expect from me?"

"To guard the Library against everyone. The knowledge here is valuable – strange entities might try to reach for a deal or things of that sort. Priority will to always guard the books, I don't care how it's done. Librarian Eira Haggard, thy body has evolved into a demi-goddess."

"Really?" she looked about feeling nothing.

"The change will be apparent when thee return."

"God of Philosophy," she knelt, "-I swear to protect Nexsolium."

"Just what I wanted to hear. See you around, Librarian, it's time to wake up."

"TSSH," she regained consciousness with water flowing out the showers. 'My body,' knelt, '-why do I feel so heavy?' her arms, legs, breast, waist, grew in size. 'What happened?' she crept towards the nearest mirror. 'My figure is more feminine than before...' the mark of Qhildir was still on the left arm.

"It wasn't a dream?" she wondered staring at the ceiling with a less than dignified smirk. "The Librarian of Nexsolium."

Knock, knock,

"Come in," voiced Eira wrapped in a towel.

"Pardon the intrusion," said Rosetta, "-I came to check since thee took longer than usual."

"Sorry for the wait."

"Lady Eira, have you grown?" she watched curiously.

"Yeah, I think I've outgrown a few of my clothes."

"No, not that," quick to rectify, "-thy face, thy expression, it seems joyful and pleasant."

"Does it now?" she paused in the middle of wearing her dress.

"Yes, very much so, it's a pleasing sight. A smile really does suit thy visage, highness."

"Thank you." The head-maid soon left the joyful princess alone.

Meanwhile, the throne room had a little change of décor. Queen Shanna made sure to have the proceedings be in secret. Many knew of the plan, including the young princess. Soon, Youst was sent to collect Eira from her bedchambers. Unsuspicious of what was happening, Eira did as was told. Expecting a strict dinner, a surprise came in form of a big party. Fireworks went off outside, people applauded her entrance.

'What is this?' wondered she approaching the throne. People around whistled and cheered; the situation overwhelmed her mind.

"Princess Eira."

"Queen-mother," said she, "-what's the meaning of this?"

"Shush," she placed her index over her mouth, "-look over there." A spotlight focused onto a dark-piano with a well-dress Lizzie. Beside her stood Julius with a microphone.

"Mother..."

"Just watch, Eira, watch my lovely daughter, watch." The piano played beautifully – a few bars later, Julius joined into the song with an equally amazing voice. Both complimented one another, the song, the lyrics, it wasn't something common, no, far from it, tis was an original composition by them for their big sister. The words were of how much she meant to them, how much they idolized her, how much they adored her.

Big sister Eira, we love you!

"M-mother..." on the verge of tears, "-w-what is all this?"

"Isn't it obvious?" came an emotionless voice, "-everyone was worried about you."

"Father..."

"That's why Lizzie and Julius decided to have this surprise party," said Xula, "-they were worried about how you felt. The courtship ending and how thee acted during our calls made them nervous, they wanted to do something to cheer thee up."

"B-BUT WHY?"

"Because we love you," said the siblings, "-please don't be so hard on yourself, big sister," said the adorable Lizzie.

"If something's on your mind, reach out to me," smiled Julius, "-I might be young, but I'm reliable and strong."

"And we'll always be on your side," smiled Xula.

"Mother...Father...Julius... Lizzie... t-thank y-you."

.....

Chapter 436: Village of Earn [1]

"Lord Death, please, I beg you, don't take her life, please, I'll find a way to resolve the issue, please, I beg of thee, she's the only one I hold dear."

"No, judgment has lain claim on her life, Syhton shall die for the greater good. Her kind mustn't be allowed to live. Human chosen by gods to be their heir must never overstep their boundaries. I'm afraid she has humiliated the word of what it means to be associated with a higher being, for that, she shall pay. I gave thee ample time to find a solution, yet, there's nothing I see but cries and sorrow." A dimension invisible by most, three entities stood with one levitating. The God of Death stood with his scythe at her neck. A clean-cut severed the angelic wings of which she fell into the abyss. Creation intervened to seal her fate as the Goddess of Stars. The ever-eternal darkness sprinkled with her broken wings.

"How could you," said Qhildir in ire, "-she all but tried to attain divinity, she tried to become a god, what is so wrong about that?"

"What is wrong?" asked he rhetorically; "-angels are nothing more than aids to a god. Does thee think a servant has the power to rule an empire? I think not. Look at thine lover, she's become a goddess, at last, her wish is complete and so is my duty as the destroyer. Begone and never dare make another suffer the same fate." Vivid to blurry then loud, dream broke at the strike of the clock. The time and date showed 28th May, 06:00.

'Why did I have the dream of Lord Death?' awoke Staxius inside Elendor, Lazuli to be precise, '-what does it entail. Did something happen?' pondering on why it occurred, the curtains parted in a smooth motion, the light from outside came as a much-needed awakening.

It had been a few days since Eira's surprise party. The latter went over nicely, guest from over the kingdom came in good faith. Her mood grew better, the sibling's song touched her heart – and soon, rumors of the voice of Julius and the prodigious Lizzie spread. The Ardanian Gazette tried desperately in getting a sneak peek for the populous. Though, as Julius said to the reporters, '-the song was for the First princess of Arda, there isn't a need to replay what has been said.'

Quick to step onto the well-trimmed yard, the villa, equipped with an outdoor pool, gave onto the north-western mountain range. The added river passing beneath all but augmented the price. One would expect a building to be on firm ground – well, most would be wronged by this particular estate. The Villa in its atrociously expansive compound was built over a ravine with trees from the other bank hanging over.

.....

'This place sure is beautiful,' thought he holding onto the strong balustrade after which flowed the water. The harshness of the fall, the pace at which the liquid dug itself to head into lower grounds – nature was a beast of her own league.

"Lord Haggard," said a lady walking across an elevated platform under which rested the pool.

"Lady Alison," said he breathing out the mouth, "-the mansion sure is an impressive work of architecture."

"There's no need to flatter us so," said she holding a warm cup, "-lord Elon is very fond of the river, thus we made a villa atop it." Her words enough told how powerful the man was. The way the platforms were layered was naught to miraculous. The villa itself, a mansion as big as the one in Rosespire, held a roof with choppers waiting to pounce. Guards were stationed constantly around the vicinity, on the opposing bank, amidst the forest. Saying security was tight would have been an understatement.

"About the Elon Empire, have thee spoken with my secretary?"

"Yes, we've discussed the future. Considering our standing, Elon is far more powerful than Phantom. I mean it with no disrespect. Meldorino is a lost cause, and from what sources have revealed, their attempt at making watches is god awful."

"Let me guess," he paused, "-the next best course of action is to co-found a company to fight those in the Alphian Empire."

"Yes, not only that, just as Patek backed the other four conglomerates – we from Elon will become one with Phantom."

"An alliance?"

"Yes, thee with the weapons and us with the money and influence."

"What of profits?" asked he.

"We need no part in the money, it's orders from Lord Elon, he sees thee in a good light."

"I see, Mr. Elon is generous?"

"No, far from it," she laughed to sip her drink, "-master is in his study. Tis the reason I came, he's called on you."

"Very well," he nodded, "-I appreciate the help." A press of a button called a lift, and thus he headed to the office/study, a mix of both for a soon to be retired man.

Knock, knock,

novelusb.com

"Come in."

"You called for me?" asked he stepping into a minimalistic room with a desk and three chairs.

"Come on in, Majesty," said he with arms behind his back whilst staring onto the forest. "Nature is a lady I wish to always keep by mine side."

“Yes, she truly is amazing.” Birds flew, the wildlife moved as the shuffling current strolled amidst their habitat.

“Staxius, I personally don’t heed to the social differences of a person. To me, a beggar and a king are the same as in they breathe the same air and shit the same.”

“I know,” returned he, “-people are equal for we are bound by life and death.”

“Good. Do you know the reason I chose you?” he turned sternly.

“What does thee mean by ‘choose’ you?”

“The Elon Empire doesn’t have an heir; I’ve never gotten married nor fallen in love. I always figured the underworld to stain the future generations I would bear. A part of me wishes for everything to crumble into nothingness. It’s the whim of an old man,” shaking his head with care, “-sorry, the rambling of an old man might be boresome to the youth.”

“Not at all,” he smiled, “-I did come to witness what a man of thy reach has accumulated in wise.”

“Well, I’m sure the details are being negotiated by our assistants, the company I mean.”

“Yes,” said he sternly.

“Then, Shadow of Phantom, I have a few assignments thee must complete.”

“Assignments?”

“Yes – my age doesn’t permit me to move freely any longer. Elendor is a hotbed for the Dark-Guild’s activity, the Queen knows of our presence too.”

“Is this relating to the gang-activity at the south?”

“Oh, so you know of the conflict?”

“Yes, my sources are pretty well informed.”

A few weeks ago, trouble began to brew at the border of Elendor and Dreqai. Imposters using the DG’s name went around selling drugs. More specifically, pills, meds, things used to have one fall into another’s power. The distributor came from overseas. The side-effects: users became mindless dolls wanting to do anything for a shot at tasting the forbidden fruit. The news did well to gloss over the issues. Public safety kept the matter hidden. There was no clue on who or what had imported the item, the resellers were far worse than the consumers – dolls who only bought and sold.

The lack of sustenance led to violence, the money ran dry, and the smaller gangs took to the streets. People were murdered and thrown into the lake. The news of someone being stabbed became so common the populous stopped bothering.

“We’ve found one of the main gangs distributing the damned pill,” gritted Elon, “-go to the Village of Earn, the gang calls themselves ‘Paste’. Shadow, I request this as the Overlord, bring upon death to those who dare to fool our produce.”

“As thee wishes,” the emotionless gaze turned to one murderous.

"I'll have a team be readied..."

"No need," he interjected, "-I can handle a few gangs on my own."

"Weapons?"

"Unnecessary," a sharp turn had him face the door, "-have the details transferred to Phantom – expect their heads on thine desk."

"As you wish," nodded the old man with the door closed, '-Paste isn't a gang. It's part of a family linked to one of the extended branches of Cimier. They're in no way, weak. Let's see if Shadow is talk or a true man of action.'

"Master, I've received the location," said éclair.

"Take command of one of their helicopters."

"Lord Staxius," said Alison, "-shall I have transport readied?"

"No need," he brushed off her offer and power-walked to the balustrade.

"WAIT, DON'T GO FURTHER!"

He jumped, "-WHAT IS HE THINKING?" rushed to see the damage, "I'll be back later," said he hanging off a rope ladder of the helicopter.

'-H-how,' immediate to stare the helipad, one of theirs went missing.

"Lady Alison, it suddenly just took off!" exclaimed a disarrayed guard.

"I see that," said she rolling her eyes, '-what sort of plan does thee have in mind?'

The village of Earn, built by the older generation, was a place of historical significance. The war of Dreqai and Elendor, long before peace, ended here, tis where the myth says one of Goddess Syhton's feathers landed. A massive cathedral, as well as an observatory, was made a few miles from where the people lived. Access to the observatory was restricted as scholars studied the stars. The Cathedral, a loving mother of a building, accommodated any and all. People from far or near, people of color or not, humans or not, no discrimination, no hate, nothing but the genuine wish to do good, an asylum for those seeking providence.

The chopper landed at an abandoned barn surrounded by overgrown wheat. "Why is everything desolate?"

"The field was abandoned due to mana poisoning from a monster who once terrorized the area."

"What happened to it?" he cut across the field to end at a dirt-path.

"The Order sent mages to deal with the monster, and thus the result."

"Why don't they use it, the land seems healthy from what I sense."

"They are scared," replied éclair, "-the local news did a documentary on why it has been abandoned. The people say it would be an insult to eat from what has been tainted."

Dirt path to a one narrow and eerie, the field led into the vastness of a forest. The coming dusk made an otherwise normal outline seem scarier. Toppled with the strange sounds one hears when the body is alert, rumors led to it being named the Screaming Forest.

“There are often bodies of young decomposed girls found naked and dismembered. The atrocities of this otherwise normal village never make it to television.”

“Tis the disadvantage of living in a village, the community is reclusive and rarely mingles with the cities. As long as the tax is paid, the kingdom has no qualm in how it’s run,” explained he fearlessly breaking sticks and leaves. More often than not, the ‘screaming’ of the forest came to nothing more than the agonizing death of the prey.

The walk lasted a while until a break in the darkness announced the village. Pyres were set ablaze along the entrance. ‘Are they warding off evil spirits?’ wondered he now walking onto a better, less tiring, gravel path. For a place made of concrete and stone, the first impression, the news recounted by éclair, pointed to being archaic in belief.

‘What’s that sound?’ a few meters from entering, muffled stomping and varying lights gave a hint of a ceremony or event. Quick to leap, he landed atop one of the three-story buildings and made his way towards the noise.

‘Oh no,’ paused to rest against a slated tiled roof, ‘-this can’t be real.’

A massive fire burnt in the village square – bonfire with figures chanting and dancing. The noise made by the song, the crackling of the wood, all but hid the real truth, people were being burnt alive.

‘Help me,’ said the charred body of one of the victims.

“éclair, is there any report of this on the news?”

“No, master, none.”

“Then record it,” said he wearing the glasses, “-I want details on those who are dancing aimlessly around the fire. There’s a reason we need to find answers. This may be more than a gang-related activity, I’m beginning to question the integrity of this village.”

Chapter 437: Village of Earn [2]

‘What an opening impression for the Village,’ thought Staxius sat under the mid-day sun. The slated-brick roofs were old and some close to collapse – masons were on scaffolds restoring those of ‘privilege’. The night was spent over a similar roof – the view of the starry sky, in an almost enchanting way, forced him to peer into what Syhton gave her will for.

‘The village wakes from their sleep as if nothing happened.’ Staring down to the village square – where once bodies burnt, the area was cleaned. No trace of ashes remained nor even the evidence of a fire. The local market opened with vendors bringing their moveable stalls, some rode on horseback, and others in the back of vans. The disparities of how businesses profited were shown in the medium through which they sold.

Layered in a neat and narrow cell-type arrangement, the traders shouted to invite customers. Those who shopped where the ladies of the many families. Daughters, young babes – the majority being

female; walked to bargain. The younger 'men' were with their fathers, working as apprentices in physical labor. Farming, blacksmithing, craftsmanship, to name a few, the modest work-shops were in a differing section.

"Master, I've information on the people of last night," said éclair with the glasses flickering. It showed the portrait picture of a few people of interest.

"The village leader, the doctor, and the resident alchemist," mumbled he, "-I came to investigate gang-trouble..."

"Master," interjected the spirit.

"What?"

.....

"We should intervene."

"For what reason?" asked he with a grudge for early morning hunger had the stomach crawl with noise and hate.

"I heard what thee mumbled last night, during the age of where demi-humans weren't accepted, the age where witches were viewed as the devil. You hypothesized that the situation here is the same as back then – humans fear the unknown and would rather comfort to mindless drivel from a religiously dressed man opposed to the rambling of a man of science."

"They don't seek reason," sighed he, "-getting involved might cause more trouble than we're due."

"Isn't it the job of someone with the power to help those who are helpless?"

"No," said he sharply, "-I'm no hero. I'll help if the situation relates to the task at hand. If not, the village can burn to ash – hell, I'd call on Intherna to help them be at ease," the murderous smirk manifested in small inclinations.

With the sun as background, he jumped to stroll around town. The outfit was soon changed to one modest and not eye-catching. Attracting attention wouldn't help the task at hand. Thus, he hid his presence and became a walking shadow. The heightened hearing senses went from person to person, filtering, listening, and waiting. éclair did the same for he logged what people said using lip-reading. The habitual chatter was of prices going up, a scandal of two youngers running off to marry, or the next-door weird neighbor having touched another animal. Left to right, granted he could have used the All-seeing eye – ended in naught, the sunset with the 26th coming to a close end.

A one-story high inn opened its door at dusk. Men from all over arrived in work clothes, some with concrete, and others with paint. They joined arms to enter with smiles – the atmosphere was the typical 'I need booze to take the day's worries away'.

"Good evening," said Staxius walking to a small counter atop which rested a cactus.

"Good evening," returned a demi-human, "-how may I help you?" asked she with a yawn.

"Is there lodging available for tonight?" asked courteously, the lady's ears perked.

"A traveler I presume?" said she with pride as if cracking the secret to a long-awaited mystery.

"Yes," nodded he, the outfit and backpack made it obvious.

"There is lodging available," said she after a few moments.

"Good," said he giving a once over. Brown long hair styled in front covered her neck, chest, and downwards towards the stomach. Her right eye held the scars of a bad injury, each time she smiled – reclusively, it would reveal lost teeth as well as a few chipped. "-Might I book one?"

"Listen," she grabbed his shirt and pulled closer, "-we have a room available – I'd personally recommend camping. The rooms are used for... let's just say the bonding of two strangers. Your white hair and red eyes are tell-tell signs of thee being a vampire. I'm from Arda, I long to return home. Dreams are dreams, as a fellow Ardanian, don't subject yourself to the disgusting lodging we have."

"Aye Mela, how are you!" said a broadish man waltzing over the counter, "-long time no see," he slapped her bottom to then smell the fingers whilst giving the strangest lick of the lips.

"Excuse me," voiced Staxius, "-tis improper to jump the line. If thee wishes to do such an act of disgust, please, book a room instead, I'd rather gouge mine eyes than to be subjected to such vileness."

"What he say?" he frowned.

"Mr. E, please," she jumped into his arms, "-he's a traveler, doesn't know the ways of Earn. Please, go have a seat, we'll send the usual."

novelusb.com

"Sure, sure," he fondled her breast as if pressing a horn to then hit Staxius's shoulder.

"Weak," he snickered and left to be greeted by other tough-looking individuals.

"What were you thinking?" returned she with a disheartened face.

"Is it not normal for an Ardanian to help another?" said he casually, the murderous fire swayed with every passing moment.

"Oh..." she paused with a relaxed visage, "-I appreciate the thought, it does mean a lot."

"Mela, bring over the drinks!" screamed the man across the room.

"What will you do?" she turned to Staxius with urgency.

"I'll have a room booked," he smiled, "-I also want to experience the ways of 'Earn'."

"Sure," her eyes rolled, "-use room 03, I cleaned it yesterday. That'd be 5.54 Exa."

"Have 40 Exa."

"..." she glanced upward, "-it's too much..."

"Take it as a tip," the gentle voice made it easier to swallow, "-an act of gratitude from a fellow countryman."

“Thank you so much,” quick to hide the excess inside her undergarments, the lady guided him upwards.

“MELA, WHERE’S THE DRINK!” screamed the man with a tensed almost painful expression.

“Jonny’s bringing it over,” fired she across climbing the stairs. Each step brought a sinking sensation breaking. The planks were rotten and nearing their life-span.

“Here we are,” said she with flushed cheeks.

“You weren’t lying,” commented Staxius, “-they are really going at it, hard.”

“Ha-ha,” nervous laughter followed with the door opening, “-I told you, this place is vile and decrepit.”

“There’s no need to be tactful,” said he stepping inside, “-I knew full well what sort of scenarios awaited.”

She shrugged, “-I better get going. If you want food, come down, I’ll personally cook them. Have a good night...”

“Haggard.”

“Awesome, good night, Mr. Haggard.”

Tight with only a bed and a place to change, the curtains were old and dusty. The windows, rusted at the hinges – cobwebs in the corners with collected dust. Roaches scurried from one end to another, she didn’t lie in the place being filthy. The buzzing singular light bulb didn’t help the situation.

“Master,” voiced éclair, “-I’ve searched for the identity of this Mr.E.”

“And, what came up?”

“I had to go around many servers. Mr. E’s full name is Ethin Zuda Lonek. A foreigner hailing from the kingdom of Konak.”

“Konak, it’s inside Iqavea, right? The kingdom to the northeast of Vlaiwia.”

“Yes, there isn’t much known about them.”

“No matter,” stood at the windows, “-we don’t need to know what Konak is up to. Did you find anything relating him to Cimier or the underworld?”

“About that,” paused the spirit, “-Snow.”

“Snow,” stopped short of punching the window, “-why did that name come up again?” rage-induced glares scanned the room in search of things to break or kill.

“Majesty,” said éclair softly, “- I know of the incident with lady Lizzie. Snow, the underworld organization of Konak – is a part of Cimier. Tis the information I gathered from their private servers. I didn’t wish to bring the matters of the past; however, the situation dictates otherwise.”

“Enough!” the whole building moved. People downstairs held onto seats in wait for the coming earthquake.

'I lost my composure,' thought he breathing deep, '-the memories of Lizzie being killed are heart tearing. I didn't expect Snow to be active since we drove them out of Hidros. Does everything have to always return to where it began? Is it really necessary for me to relive my worst moments, the constant reminder that I failed to protect a girl who I saw as my daughter.' Tired, he fell onto the neatly done bed. Elbows covered his eyes, the hardness of when Lizzie was alive, her smile, her willingness to change into a better person. The attempt in her becoming better for her and his sake. The memories rushed to the point where the real world became naught but an empty casket.

Slam, a loud noise broke his idealess sleep. A check on the watch showed 22:00. Faint moans of discontent were knocked onto the thin walls of the rooms. The noises and screams gave the mental image of what happened.

"Master, that's Mr. E."

"I know," he stood with anger, "-I can't live down that moment." He barged out of the room and leaped for the other.

"WAIT MASTER, PLEASE DON'T DO ANYTHING FOOLISH!" screamed éclair without impact.

"You again!" said Mr. E on the bed with Mela. Tears had filled her face – her shirt was beyond unbuttoned; they were mercilessly torn away by a lustful beast.

"Ethin Zuda Lonek," gritted he entering the room.

"What!"

"Are you related to Snow?" the aura grew heavy, the coming feeling of nausea sprawled across.

"Yes, and what of it?" he jumped with a gun in hand, "-don't fuck with me, else I'll shoot. Turn around, there's some who needs to be taught a lesson," he glanced over the shoulder, "-don't worry my love," said he with a love-filled tone, "-I'll get rid of this intruder. We're going to bond as we did so long ago."

"You going to shoot?" said he with burning crimson eyes.

"YES I WILL," turned Mr. E.

"I doubt that," said Staxius touching the man's elbow.

"MY ARM!" the singular motion of touching blew the bones.

"Shut up," a flick of the sharpened nail slit Mr. E's tongue, the pinky flesh flopped onto the floor. Unable to scream, the figure fell to the ground as pouring blood made breathing hard.

"Come on," stood on the man's face, "-don't die on me yet, I've yet to start playing," said he with an emotionless face, "-come on, don't die on me." The applied force increased gradually, "-COME ON WAKE UP!" *CRACK,* the skull exploded with brain matter flown across. *Death Element: Void Flame.*

The body burnt noiselessly, the evidence of him being alive vanished. Mela's expression was fearful as she hid behind the blanket.

'I did it again,' thought he cleaning the blood. "You saw nothing."

"N-nothing..." the door shut.

.....

"Master, that wasn't the smartest idea," said éclair as they returned to their room.

"I know," he glanced over, "-I know, there's no need for a reminder. Mr. E could have given us information, well, whatever, we know Snow is involved." Laid on the bed, the mind felt at ease, the sight of another's death, the blood, the crushing sensation as he killed, '-I feel bliss.' Nothing more helped to calm the God of Death than killing others, a monster in every sense of the word.

Click, at midnight, the door opened.

"Master," whispered éclair, "-we have an intruder."

"I know," refuted he waiting for an opportune moment.

Woosh, "-who is this?" the arms wrapped around the trespasser.

"I-it's m-me Mela," she held tight onto arms which choked her from behind.

"Oh, it's you," the grip lessened, "-what do you want?" he sauntered in her field of vision.

"You..."

Chapter 438: Village of Earn [3]

"Not so fast,"

"What!" inquired she with a less than inviting voice – one of which was of profane origin.

"I don't mean to be rude," said he still holding her forehead. She had tried to embrace and push the man on the bed. "I'm a married man, and what thee are trying to do is the same as the man earlier attempted. Is that really the way thee wishes to proceed?"

"N-no," she gave into deep breaths. "It wasn't my intent," she fell to the floor, "-I wasn't trying to do anything malicious. It's just, earlier, you came and killed the man who had plagued my life ever since I came into this village. Like you, I was a traveler, sent off to the mainland during the war so many years ago."

"Come on," after toggling the slightly helpful light, "-get up," he gave a helping hand.

"T-thanks," she grabbed to stand, "-I'm sorry I was trouble." The full moon's ray caressed her face.

"Take a seat," he offered to then close the curtain.

.....

"A-are you sure," the figure gently sat, the motion screamed of pain. The right foot had dark-black rashes. It explained to her limping earlier.

"There's no need to be tactful. I'm sure standing up must be a vexing prospect."

“Well,” quietly tilting her head to stare at the roof as well as keep the man in her field of vision, “-I can’t let this stop the work I have to do. Some people count on me in Arda, the money I send is very much important for their upbringing.”

“I see,” said he comfortably, “-want to tell me about it?”

Her hands moved in a confused manner. Her ears and tail spoke volumes of her not knowing how to respond. The flickering of the lashes, the mild spasms of her nose, and the noticeable heavy breathing. “-Give me a moment,” she paused.

“Here,” he offered a glass of water.

“T-thanks,” gulping the whole thing, “-thank you for earlier.”

“Don’t mention it,” said he returned to the opposing chair.

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

‘Avoiding the issue,’ he thought, ‘-she knows things that may be of interest. What’s the best approach...’

“Yes, actually,” the aura changed into one reminiscent of home, a place where one relaxed in the company of others. ‘She misses her family; I guess manipulation is going to come in handy.’

“Could you tell me a bit about the Village of Earn?” the moaning of the neighbors grew into a full-on fight – screams of pleasure disrupted their conversation.

“The village of Earn,” unbothered by the noise, “-it’s a pretty nice place to live. I mean, there’s food and shelter, life here isn’t expensive. The heat isn’t as obvious as in Lazuli. I mean, as long as you don’t get in the way of the people’s belief, their prayers of the night, then you’re fine.”

“Could I pry a little more?” asked he with a fatherly impression.

“I-I...” she stopped.

“I apologize, there’s no need to recount what thee don’t want,” the voice suddenly filled with sincerity and trueness of goodwill. “I don’t want to be uncomfortable to a lady who was...”

“No, no,” the hand and head shook in dismissal, “-I needed a few seconds to gather my thoughts.”

“No, no,” returned he, “-there’s no need to speak if thee don’t want to – I respect thy choice of silence.” The ajar window had a breeze snuck into the room. The warmth soon divulged into the cold reality of Earn. Amidst the breeze came the faint crackling of burning wood. The ground moved with stomps and chants. Lights from lanterns cast shadows against the close buildings. It cut the conversation; her face froze.

“Don’t,” she whispered sharply, “-don’t stare!” even the noisy inn grew into a grave.

The tinkling of bells painfully ambled along the road for a while.

MORE, came from the hallway, the activity resumed as the bells faded.

“That was close...” exhaled Mela. Her face was met with a suspicious Staxius. The figure sat with fingers gently tapping the chair’s arm. The intruder breeze carried his hair to the side.

"I think we're done for tonight."

novelusb.com

"No please," she said loudly, "-I'll tell you everything."

'Easy,' thought he stopped midway standing.

"The village of Earn has darker secrets than most places around. We have the involvement of the underground as well as a few cults who cull the 'forsaken'. I'm willing to continue the conversation. I'm sure the stories would be entertaining, but I don't want to say anymore that could endanger the life of a traveler, let alone a stranger."

"I'm touched that thee think of others," said he coldly, "-it's admirable, I truly respect said mindset. Though I'm not a mere traveler, I came here for a good reason. We have our secrets."

"I understand," she nodded, "-let me start with the underground. The DG is selling pills. Well, that's what the sellers on the street tell us each time. I've seen people go insane after a few doses, I don't know if it's the pill or the dosage. I mean, everyone knows the rumor of the DG being a chivalrous dark-organization. They helped the poor many o' time. The cults, I mean, you heard them, earlier right? They cull the forsaken. I heard that from the few drunken guests. After one of my companions took the dose, she never came back, I figured her to have gone back to Arda. Well, I don't think that relates to the cult. We are told by the village leader to not sneak out at night, from 23:00 to 00:00, no one is allowed to get out. Tis the culling hour, they pray for protection against the monsters. The screaming forest is a real menace to our lives – just yesterday, a boy and girl went missing. There's been no news yet. The search ended in only a boot being found farther inside."

"Is that all?"

"Yeah, that's all..." her face lightened; "-I feel much better now."

"About the man earlier," voiced he, "-is he related to the DG?"

"I-I t-think," apprehensive about speaking, "-he s-said s-so."

"Forget I asked," smiled he, "-what are you going to do now?"

"I'm done for tonight," said she, "-I'll head home."

"Let me accompany you then."

"No, there's no need..."

"Don't worry," grabbing the nearest coat, "-come on, a lady must not venture at night so late." Pushing the door open, she gracefully accepted the offer.

'I've killed the supposed member of DG. There's a chance the other lackeys to come ask questions. I care less about her safety; she'll be the perfect bait.'

"You going home?" asked the other worker.

"Yeah, see you tomorrow," they exchanged kisses to continue outside. The full-moon made it easier to see. The modest street-lights here and there didn't affect much. They but added to the atmosphere. The duo walked along the pavement.

"Why did you come to Elendor?" asked she with hands inside her coat.

"Nothing much really. Things happened around the world, so I figured visiting an old friend would clear the mind."

"Must be nice," said she with flushed cheeks.

"What is?"

"Being able to see the people you care about whenever you want. Arda seems so far away now, the plane tickets are too expensive. They are worth the same as a full year's rent here. I've no idea how my brother managed to book the flight."

"Your brother," interjected Staxius, "-he's Ardanian, right?"

"Yes," said she with pride, "-he's a member of the Royal Family's guard."

"Oh, is that so, how long?"

"He joined very, very long ago. The situation with Kreston and all that, he figured it best for me to leave," soothing and nice, her speech grew warm.

"Have you been up to date with the news?"

"What news?" she paused.

"The Krestonian Holy Invasion, saints came into Arda, do you not know?"

"No... most of the information is blocked. A village as reclusive as Earn doesn't get much information on things outside of what the people tell us. Did something happen?"

"Not really, out of interest, do you know what unit he worked for?"

"Let me think," they stopped at a crosswalk. "I think he was part of the Queen's special guard unit. He told me of becoming an adventurer per the king's orders."

"The Queen's special unit," wondered he piecing the information, | "-what's his name?"

"Rasu," said she with a smile, "-he's a weird guy who disappears without saying a word."

"The world sure is a small place," thought Staxius, "-Rasu you say."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, he's helped on various occasions."

BANG! a flash followed by 'tack'.

"GET DOWN," he pushed her head downwards.

"What's happening?"

"We're under fire, that's what," *Death Element: Magical Barrier.* The bullets increased in intensity. 'I knew it.'

"Master, does thee need help?" spoke a figureless voice.

The shadow realm thundered with dark-grey clouds.

"What's happening?" asked Miira sat on a table with the other goddesses.

"The signal," commented Intherna, "-it's the signal of the master being in danger."

"The man can't be in danger," voiced Miira, "-as powerful as he is, there's no way he'll be in any sort of problem." The thundering grew heavy.

"Miira," said Intherna softly, "-be a darling and go help our master."

"Sure," she reluctantly materialized.

"Does thee need help?" asked she came on a world of constant fire.

.....

"Maybe," he said in jest, "-the bullets aren't anything to worry about, but they sure are annoying."

"And the lady behind?"

"A family member of a friend – could you please take care of the annoyance?"

"Sure," *snap*...*snap,* a second later, "-there, they're dealt with." The darkness of the night prevailed into eternal silence. "Shall I leave?"

"Thank you for the help," they shook hands. On that, Mela returned home safely, she didn't ask questions nor tried to understand what happened. The fight ended the moment it started; 'the powers of a vampire is almighty,' tis what she thought.

Out in the far reaches of the divine plane, Qhildir stood before a council of gods and goddesses. The ever-present sense of fulfillment of the golden glow of the coliseum had the beings smile.

"God of Philosophy," voiced Zeus with angels tending to his needs, "-I heard thee have chosen an heir. The Librarian of Nexsolium, how worthy is she?"

"The Librarian managed to create this orb here," a snap had the object summoned, "-she wielded the grimoires without trouble. I've never seen such prowess from other candidates before. The homunculus thee have sent, beings made for the purpose of being my heir, were failures. This girl, on the other hand, has far exceeded my expectation."

"Good," he smiled, "-how long does thee think she'll be able to use the chronicles of time?"

"My lord..."

"Qhildir, tis the agreement we said upon. Grant me usage of the chronicle of time and I shall make sure thy lover is returned."

"Y-yes, my lord," lowering the head, the other gods could but snicker softly.

“The council is concluded for today. God of philosophy, better make sure to find the symbol of the power of my father. I don’t care about the means, go forth and do so!” he thundered.

‘Zeus has gone crazy,’ thought the sly Lixbin, ‘-he wants to have dominion over time. The God-slayer was killed and yet, we didn’t find the symbol of power. I wonder who inherited his will. The man wishes to create another war to perturb the balance of demons and gods. What is he thinking?’

On the firm soil of Earn, Staxius strolled around the outskirts of the village. The screaming forest in particular. The information on cults and the fake DG representatives needed investigation. Thus, the 27th started with him using the All-Seeing eyes. The expansive forest was a labyrinth. Neither sun nor moon could get past the foliage.

‘They must have a place of operation,’ thought he whilst exploring. A faint scent of mana tickled his nose. Following the trace, the seamlessly opaque trees gave into a passageway. A cave that continued downwards into the unknown.

‘Interesting...’

Chapter 439: Village of Earn [4]

The cave at first glance was hidden. Trees and nature made sure the entrance be concealed. If it wasn’t for the scent of mana, the opening would have gone unnoticed. To what extent did the path inside lead. The question wandered around his mind. Before setting foot inside, Staxius walked around the rock to observe for irregularities. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary – tis was clear that none had roamed around these parts for a few weeks, even months.

‘This is very interesting,’ after parting the leaves and veins before the entrance, ‘-the mana is more apparent inside.’ The footing wasn’t stable, any sharp movement and one would slide along the steep slope. The rugged edges would deter the wisest of men from continuing. A natural no-entry sign. Ignoring the unstableness, he threaded along gently and with care. Pebbles, set free by his steps, rushed down the slope until echoes of their stops returned. ‘There surely isn’t anyone using this place as a hideout, is there?’ Reaching the half-way mark; wings sprouted to ease the vexing journey.

Pitch darkness, he arrived, the vexing slope reclined into an open space. Droplets of water fell into smaller ponds. An impending regular strike of a bell, tis was the atmosphere.

Continuing forth, the vampiric blood allowed for sight. Only after walking another few meters that the trace of a man appeared. Rusted tools, unused irons which were of bad quality thrown in piles.

‘I knew it,’ thought he triumphantly. The pathway narrowed until a close-heavy iron gate. Muffled whimpering, masked by the vastness of the cave system, came into the ears. ‘There are people here. The mana I sensed were of those who’ve gone beyond ‘human’. A push against the gate showed no sign of movement. *Clang, clang,* the hinges broke. *Douf,* the gate fell with an ear breaking cacophony. So much for being quiet. Metal restraints were lined against the right corner of the area. Some held the remains of old skeletons whilst other, newer ones as told by the shininess of the metal, were empty. The walls weren’t straight either, it held a slope that led onto a drain. The prior stain of liquid, presumably, blood, showed which path it once took. Presumably blood, for there were also other places where the same contraption was used as torture devices. Locals named it the Oil Driver – boiling oil would be thrown from atop and left to dribble onto the victims.

'Looks different,' he squatted at the drain, 'the Oil Driver are normally built atop a spike trap. In case the restrain are melted with the oil, the victim is left to painfully glide into their death. Very barbaric way of torture. The drains are peculiar,' he stood to follow the path. It led down towards another part of the cave. An altar of stone with the distorted crest of the Krestonian god. The would-be blood flowed along until reaching the final destination, the table.

'I guess the Cult of Kreton is here,' thought he staring at the monolith besides the platform. '-what sort of experiments are they conducting?'

.....

"-P-please, h-help us..." came the fatigued voice of a young boy. Another tight corridor led towards a cell. Rats squeaked; the buzzing of flies paired with the awful stench of death.

Two children were locked behind the tight cell. A boy and a girl, the former had bruises and cuts all over the face and chest, whilst the girl remained relatively unharmed. He wore a single boot, '-Alia and Peo, the kids who went missing.'

"P-please, n-no m-more," said the boy seeing the dark shadow, "-I c-can't t-take it a-any longer."

"Calm down," said he conjuring a flame atop his palm, "-I came because I heard screaming, are you ok?"

"W-who a-are you?" asked the boy.

"A traveler, are you Alia and Peo?"

"Yes," replied the boy, "-this here is Alia, my cousin."

"I was right. Is Alia alright, why doesn't she speak?" the light from the flame didn't help for the girl remained hidden behind the boy.

"T-they burnt her tongue," said Peo on the verge of crying, "-please, mister, help us, I don't want to stay here anymore."

'What are the cult thinking?' *WOOSH,* a massive ax narrowly missed his nose to land at the feet. '-Why didn't I sense him?' The palms reached for the head, *Death Element: Void Flame – Fire Blast,* the armored body fell.

"Are there any more of them?"

"N-no," whispered Peo.

'Being kept captive must be hard,' the doors opened, '-living beside the decomposed corpse of other victims, what a shame.'

"Can you walk?" asked he quick to kneel and check on the kids.

"I can," said Peo, "-but Alia can't," the boy pointed at her feet. 'Dark-rashes.'

"Fine," he stood in the middle, "-let's go." He carried them out using both arms, one for each kid.

"Where were you in the forest. Don't your parents say the place is bad for kids to go wander into?"

"I know, but the village leader said mother called us at the barn. We used to play there and I knew the road." The girl fell asleep in his arms whilst the boy kept on gritting. The pain of moving about had the fingers trembling, yet, he didn't complain. Being rescued was most important.

'The village leader is a member of the cult. I can't take them to the hospice either. They'll be in danger, the village's ominous, I can't trust the locals to help.'

"Sorry, but I have to use magic, can you endure it a bit longer?"

"Y-yes," said the boy closing his eyes.

'A very strong boy, I'm proud.' *Ancient Magic: Teleportation.*

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" screamed Mela in a peculiar position.

novelusb.com

"No time to explain," said he ignoring her routine of doing yoga aided by the television. "-I need to use the bedroom, is that ok?"

"Yeah sure," said she straightening the back, "-aren't those?"

"Yeah, Peo and Alia."

"Wait, I'll go call the doctor."

"DON'T!" screamed he across, "-they'll be in more danger if they know."

"What then?"

"Don't do anything," said he putting the girl to rest. Peo needed first aid; the injuries weren't mortal but severe and at risk of infection. "Close the door, do you have a first aid kit?"

"Y-yeah, it's in the cupboard."

"Hey, mister, are you sure about not telling the doctor?"

"Don't worry," smiled he, "-I know how to treat a wound or two." Sat beside a small table, the wooden-floored room with a slated roof and circular windows had ample lighting. The place was neat and tidy, Alia slept as if a kitten.

'The injuries are far worse than I imagined,' thought he examining the wounds.

"Master, shall I send forth a healing potion?" intervened éclair.

"Yes." No time wasted; five flasks of Rare Healing potions materialized on the table. 'Guess the distance travel spell is active.' Thus, treating the wounds, the procedure ended with the healing potion. A green light came from out the boy, the treated wounds restored to normal.

"T-thank you, sir," before adding another word, the overwhelming tiredness of mana exhaustion knocked him out.

'Now for her,' walked to the other side of the bed, '-I don't see any visible injuries.' He opened her mouth without tact, '-they marked her with a curse of mana transfusal. Blood from the boy and mana

from the girl, what are they trying to summon?' *Death Element: Mana Cancelation – Nullification.*
Tsst the spell broke.

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.

"Should just about do it," thought he tucking them in bed.

Click, "-are they alright?" asked the overzealous Mela.

"Calm down," said he with a finger on the mouth, "-let them sleep." The door shut.

"Sorry, but, are they?"

"There wasn't anything to worry about," he glanced the foot, "-is there something you're hiding?"

"What do you mean?" she frowned with arms crossed.

"The rash," stated he, "-not normal, is it?"

"What brings that conclusion about?"

"The girl," he nodded to the room, "-she has the same rash."

"So, what does it have to do with me?"

"Listen here," two steps forth and they practically bumped heads, "-I don't want you to end up the same as the man yesterday. Mela, sister of Rasu, what will it be? I want answers, nothing more, nothing less."

"O-ok..." her head moved away, "-there's no need to be so harsh about it. My rash came from the pill, you know, the thing the DG is selling?"

"I see, how much did you take?"

"One, only one, not by my volition. It was that man; he fed me the pill and did as he wished."

"Sorry to hear that," he moved to the open curtain. "-Mela, the girl had the same rash. I don't want to think of the worst-case scenario..."

"Those who take the pill have black rashes grown on their body. Kreto sees that as being tainted. Take five or more and you become insane as if possessed." Buildings laid one after the other, the shorter roads were hidden. The landscape wasn't as marvelous as what was experienced before. A normal sight for a village-like Earn.

"You mentioned information being scarce in Earn," facing the television, "-doesn't that thing tell the news?"

"Oh," she laughed, "-We only have channels from Dreqai and Elendor. The news never goes into details about the 'outside'."

"Mela, I have a favor to ask."

"What is it?" the crossed arms relaxed; her frown grew accommodating.

"Do you have an idea where I might procure one of those pills?"

"..."

"Why?"

"I told you before, I have my secrets. I need to see the faces of those who are distributing such things."

"Fine," said as if disappointed, "-the sellers usually come around at night. They're often seen with the locals at our bar. If you want to see 'em, better head to Vil's brothel; it's crawling with them."

"Where might that be?"

"Over there," she pointed to the far-left, "-close to the entrance."

"You can see the church of Syhton and the observatory from here," commented he.

"Yeah," her elbows rested against the ledge, "-Earn is a good place to live... apart from all that, well, you know..."

"Yeah, I know, no need to go into details."

"What will you do about the kids?" asked she gazing upon the church.

"Can you keep them here for a few days?"

"A few days," she sighed, "-won't they get bored?"

.....

"Don't worry about the cost," he handed a 1000 Exa note.

"W-wait..." her eyes opened; "-I've never seen so much before!"

"Will it be sufficient?" asked he for 1000 Exa was naught but change to him.

"I could take them in for a whole year with this," her joyful tone sunk, "-I don't want to be a mother yet. I'll keep them around for a week at most. Besides, Peo and Alia have their parents, don't they?"

"Tis them that worries me," he said with a mysterious voice, "-don't let them find out."

"A-as you wish."

"I'll see you later. Have a good day, Mela." *Ancient Magic: Teleportation.*

'Seriously?' her mouth stayed wide open. 'Just who is that man? Comes in, treats the kids, and just leaves behind 1000 Exa as if nothing,' she shut her window.

"Intherna, Gophy," stood atop a building.

"What is it?" they both came in the forms of wisps.

"I need thee to go and be decoy at the dungeon."

"Are we to go there physically?" asked Gophy not entertained by the idea.

"No, I'll create temporal puppet bodies – just imbued some mana in them and they should become replicas of the children."

"O-ok," shrugged Intherna. Thus, Staxius channeled for the Box of Alche and unlocked the first gate of Nevermore. Since the bodies were temporary, there wasn't a need for them to be durable.

"There," said he with the sun coming down, "-here's Peo and Alia." The dolls moved around listlessly.

"It's only a decoy, right?"

"Yes, all we need is information and time. Good luck, Gophy and Intherna, I'm counting on you." With the goddesses taking to their duties, Staxius set his eyes onto the brothel. The time came to find what was going on in Earn.

Chapter 440: Village of Earn [5]

'Vil's Brothel,' wrote itself across a neon-sign. A place for the desolate and a place for those in want of forgetting their lives. Similar to liquor, humans alike would fall to the three vices: greed, lust, and power. Lust of wanting corporal pleasures could be found at places like these. No discrimination on gender, anyone with the right amount could have anything desired (as twisted as it might be) money bought all.

"Hey, you look nice, come in, come in, I'll give you a special discount," said a lady backed by four others. They eyed those passing, bystanders who but fixed the ground and shuffled along.

"Look at this one," said a lady wearing a skimpy red dress. Her upper half was without undergarments for the breasts were visible through the thin fabric.

"Are you new around here," said another licking her lips, "-come, I'll give you a discount."

"Would you do me a favor?" approached the man with white-crimson hair. The emotionless eyes landed upon the lady in red, her mouth unwillingly opened.

"You're hot," said she trying to touch his chest.

"Please," he held her hand, "-would you do me a favor?"

.....

"Anything you want," she winked, "-come on, follow me," tugging on his hands, they quickly climbed the stairs beside which laid couches and tables. The place filled at a steady pace – the ladies found customers in haste.

"Do anything you want," she jumped onto the bed, "-I'll undress, or do you want the honors?"

"I want to get violent," said he cracking the knuckles, "-you said anything I want."

"Violent huh," she pulled herself against the back of the bed, "-give me a moment." A drawer opened to show pills and injections, "-I'll take one of these. I don't like pain; this will channel it into pleasure."

"Wait," he held the tablet, "-is this the drug sold by the DG?"

"Yeah, it's the new pills everyone's been talking about..."

"Then it's done," he grabbed the lot, "-what's your name?"

"Suzanne..." her eyes narrowed, "-what are you doing?"

"Sorry Lady Suzanne," he bowed in courtesy, "-I came here with the intent of deceit."

"No rough play then?" she sighed to hide her face in the pillow, the frizzled hair gathered around the left side.

"No..." said with an inviting tone, "-are you interested in selling?"

"Selling what?" her head rose, "-I'm already selling my body, what more does a girl need to sell?"

"Nothing corporal, I wish to buy... information."

"Information. Go on, I'm listening."

"Firstly, could you put on some better garments. In no way is it insulting, I just wish to speak to you as a normal person, not a lady of pleasure."

"Is that right?" she scampered to a broken-down cupboard, "-you're the first man to tell a lady to dress up as opposed to going ham."

"I do my best to respect people who are working hard. There's no shame in what you do. Actually, it takes a lot of strength to choose or be forced into this lifestyle," said he in earnest.

"Oh..." she returned with a proper dress, "-don't know what to say. I'm so used to people shouting insults and spitting. You're not from here, are you?"

"No," he smiled, "-I come from a faraway continent."

"So, what do you want to buy?" asked she with her legs crossed.

"Information."

"About what?"

"About the happenings of this brothel. I heard the sellers of DG come here regularly. Anything you can tell will be of great help."

"Oh, well, we don't ask questions. Whatever happens in here, stays in here – we don't know one another in the outside world. Tis the harsh reality," her chirpiness changed into one normal and vaguely serious.

"I see," he took out the pills, "-how much do you charge for a night?"

"Depends on what you want. Ranges from 4 to 10 Exa."

"Is that it?" asked he stunned by the cheapness.

"What do you mean, 4 Exa is plenty of money to live here," her tongue clicked.

"Are you bound by the brothel, sold by parents or lover, even a slave-trader, what's your story?"

"You're starting to piss me off," her brows firmed onto her words, "-I was taken since my fiancé couldn't repay his loan. I told him to not make a deal with the underground, '-we'll make the money back easily,' he said, what a fool."

"How much of a long did he take?"

"More questions?" she stared at the ceiling with a '-back off,' type of sentiment.

"Heed me well Suzanne, if you answer my questions, there might be more waiting at the end of the conversation."

"And what does that mean?" the visage contoured in a way to show disgust similar to how a child would react after sniffing excrement or things of bad scent.

"You'll understand later."

"Fine," she gave into the man's will, "-I'll tell you what you want. The debt I have to repay is 1000 Exa. It's a fortune for a small lady like me in a less than profitable village. In my five months of doing this job, I managed to chip away at only 40 Exa."

"What of Vil, is he the owner of this brothel?"

"Yeah, a member of the people who resell the pills."

"Good," he stood, "-shall we go meet with Vil right away?"

"W-what do you mean to meet with Vil?"

"Here," he threw a 50 Exa note, "-consider yourself booked for the night. Now, tell me where Vil is."

"5-50 Exa," her hands trembled, "-don't disrespect money like that."

"Shut it," the door slammed open, "-take me there right away."

"So much for respect," mumbled she stepping out of the chambers.

Down the stairs and onto the ground floor, the ladies and men were busy enjoying one another's company. Neon lighting strained the eyes; heavy make-up and puppet-like stares on those who danced. Farther inside, they came across another staircase leading to a basement. Two guards presided over with arms crossed.

"No entry from here, little lady," said one of the guards.

"The end of the line," said she turning to Staxius, "-let's go back."

"No," *Smack,* a singular punch dropped both onto the ground.

"WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR!"

"Shut up and follow," said he with a merciless gaze.

Click, "Ay, come on, I said not to allow anyone inside yet," voiced a man holding down a nude-teenager with his mouth gagged by undergarments. A video-camera filmed the tragic scene over a luxurious white couch.

"Oh shit," said Suzanne looking away, "-disgusting..."

"Suzanne," said he stepping off the couch with a large member, "-why have you come here," he slowly pulled-up the trousers, "-do you want another 1000 Exa added to the debt?"

"N-no, sir..."

"Then come here and finish what the boy couldn't complete," he reclined into the office chair, the lady ambled whilst casting gazes of, '-look what you've done'. She knelt to slowly undo the trousers.

"Stop," said Staxius, "-Suzanne, are you dumb?" asked he giving the injured boy a once over, "-I paid to have you for the night, why are you going to ruin thy mouth for one who hasn't paid?"

"Who the fuck are you?" asked the man wearing a hat, bright shirt with his enormous belly. The face held pimples and scars; the large, circular nose with smaller eyes, chapped white lips, and the scent of a dog in heat.

"A customer," said he walking to the table, "-are you in the Dark-Guild?"

"Y-yes," said he staring back.

"Suzanne, get here already," ordered Staxius.

"Do you realize what trouble you're in?" smirked Vel, "-this place and everything inside is mine. You've come as a customer, behave like it, and turn back."

"You misunderstand," *-crack,* the table flew to crash against the wall behind. "-I didn't come as a customer."

"Then?" quietly crossing his arms, "-why did you come here for?"

"What Godfather does thee serve under?"

"Godfather?" inquired he, "-what do you mean by the godfather. I'm a member of the Dark-guild, that's the extent of what I know."

"Fool," he shook his head, "-you're a fool to pretend to be one of us."

"One of us?" a whiff of fear flashed across his face, "-it can't be," he took out a pistol. "Member of the DG or not, a single bullet and none be the wiser."

"Let's getaway," said Suzanne, "-messaging with him is going to be trouble."

"I've not forgotten about you," snickered Vil, "-you'll be working as my plaything starting later. It's going to make a killing on the Arcanum."

"Go check on the boy," whispered Staxius.

"What will it be, Vil?" he thundered across, "-answer my question or else."

"Oh, shut it," he laughed, "-the DG, what a joke, such a dated organization with dated narcotics. Our pills are far better than Angel's Dust and God's Ale. Besides, who cares, Snow will soon return to Hidros,

our defeat will not be forgotten.” *Smack,* the man went crashing against the same wall, *click,* “-you misunderstand,” said Staxius holding a gun, “-the DG isn’t dated,” *BANG.*

.....

“MY LEG!” he screamed.

“Suzanne, close the door.”

“W-what, why?” she did so with fear in her step.

“You,” pointing at the boy, “-come here.”

“Y-y-yes s-sir,” said he limping across the room, “-how long has this man mistreated you?”

“A v-very l-long time sir,” sniffles came as he tried to gather the memories.

“Well,” giving an evil smirk, “-do you want revenge?”

“W-what?”

“Revenge,” he laughed, “-Vil’s nothing more than a pretender of being in the DG.”

Blood soon flowed about the room, “-don’t think of me lightly,” a press of a button had the upstairs turn into chaos. Countless heavy steps dashed into the room. Heavy men with guns and knives, “-MR. VIL!”

“We have guests.”

“What are you waiting for, KILL HIM!” screamed the injured Vil.

BANG, BANG, BANG, ‘-look at them,’ thought he standing still, ‘-slow and inconsequential.’ The gang ran with killing intent. As fast as they move, time slowed to a stop by the speed of the godly-vampiric body. The bullets came at a snail’s pace, he could pluck them out of the air as if water-bubbles. ‘I’ll have this,’ listlessly taking a knife out of one of the guards, “-a slice for you... another for you... and you,” one by one, the cuts inflicted were deadly and aimed at arteries.

“They are so beautiful, aren’t they?” said Staxius resting beside Vil.

“What?” he turned with a petrified expression.

“Be careful,” said Staxius holding his head, “-the bullets could kill you.” Three projectiles scraped his cheeks. “The rainfall of blood is hauntingly beautiful.” Two seconds later, the guards fell without any knowledge of what transpired.

“Adete, come out and have a feast,” said he casually strolling to the camera.

“Food, thanks,” she smiled, *Blood-Arts: Bloody Mary.*

“Boy, have you made up your mind?”

“Y-yes sir,” returned he furiously trying to hold the tears, “-I want revenge.”

“Good answer,” smiled Staxius. Suzanne’s desolate distant visage fixed at the slaughter; the bodies were cut so severely it couldn’t be said humane. The redness channeled into a crystal that flowed with Adete’s command. She made several apple-shaped orbs to take to the Shadow Realm.

“Going to use them as puppets?” asked she on her way out.

“No, they’re weak, there’s no point,” returned he tinkering with the video-camera.

“Good, it’s working.”

“W-who a-are you s-sir?” asked the boy sitting on the couch.

“A traveler,” he winked, “-did he have any toys or torture devices?”

“Yes...”

“Go fetch them, I’ll have our star be ready for the night,” quick to grab his collar, “-Vil, you’re going to become a celebrity tonight,” and so he was flung across the room.

“éclair, can you take over the broadcast?”

“Yes, why?”

“Send it to the Kingdom of Konak, this is a declaration of war against Snow.” Soon, the bodies of the fallen were stuck on the walls as if decorations – ‘-don’t fuck with DG,’ was written in their blood and at the center; Vil.

“What now sir?” asked the boy who seemed to enjoy the coming show.

“Go ahead and do what he did to you. Be as vile and crude – the more he screams, the better I’ll reward thee in the end.”

“What if he dies...”

“He’s not going to die,” smirked Staxius sitting with the feet atop a smaller table, “-I’ll make sure he doesn’t,” he puffed with a cigar in hand.

“It will be my pleasure.”