

Death Magic 671

Chapter 671: True Demonlord [2]

“What do we write then?” inquired the stumped investigators.

“Anything else, write about a monster invasion or whatnot. As long as the agency or any affiliates of Phantom aren’t affected, we’ll be dandy. I must admit, the body was a man who passed out from late-night drinking,” left to right, “-I’ve made our disposition clear. Have a great day, officers.” Hairs stood on end; the young noble left confidently. Admiration and envy spawned before their eyes, a constant thought went about, ‘-how can I become like him, or, can I ever become like him?’

‘Should handle them easily. The paintings have been loaded into the jet. What else...’ the phone displayed many options for cargo, ‘-I’d be best to bring weapons. Some of Gate-Six’s latest models will do fine. Pistols, assault, and sniper rifles. I wonder how Asmodeus and Kul are doing in the Alphian underworld?’ Igna rejoined the party of acquaintances, the members of Vorn were very interested in stories of war. The more they grew in popularity, the more he felt fulfilled on their behalf. Not a matter of heart, or whatnot, Vorn was the first to hear him play beside a legend in the music world. In a way, their bond was more than friendship; one of which would take a while to recollect and brand. Meanwhile, the influence didn’t halt either. A helicopter direct for the castle carried the Pride of Hidros, or what remained of her. Queen Gallienne impatiently stood outside, the wind and cloudy night didn’t make much difference. Her best friend, a contract made for life, was alive and well. Grievance over her death was one the lady bore in solitude. Mental health declined substantially; she couldn’t believe it was her voice on the phone. Then again, where the Haggard’s are involved, anything is possible.

The backdrop rudely changes to one of menace and adrenaline. Current location, south, past Ogdawoan’s airfield – a still under construction space research center.

The night sky and how it differed, the true watcher of the world. On one side of the world, a friend impatiently waited for another, while on the other, the intent of slaughter diffused across the lush fields of gravel.

The yet-to-be-finished building(bearing a hemisphere roof) stood on a skeleton of what would be considered a great investment. The building company, Xiola, adamantly displayed their efforts in form of signs and the brand name. A top-side view of the area would follow as is, ‘-a lonesome car to the right (else north) the construction in the middle(surrounded by iron gates and the natural treescape) and lastly, a bunch of unknown vehicles to the left (else the south) hidden under the canopy.

“éclair, is the information correct?” wondered Kul with her feet kicked onto the car’s deck, the slightly lowered window allowed for a fresh breeze to cleanse the claustrophobic inside.

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“How dare you question my sources,” cried via the car’s audio system, “-wait and watch. Asmodeus, don’t be overly aggressive. This is a survey mission, we need information, and what isn’t in the digital world must be acquired in the analog.”

“And we’re the pawns,” she exhaled boringly, “-Asmo, do the thing for the both of us. I’m hungry, tired, and want to take a nap.”

“Please take the mission seriously,” said éclair.

“Yeah, yeah,” said Kul just about jaded with the ordeal, a roll of the eyes and she excused herself from the boring reality and seeped to the ever-colored dream world.

Perched shy of the hemisphere, binoculars in hand and transmitter in the ears, “-there they are,” said éclair, “-watch them closely.” He did as was told, a legion of suited men, clearly attentive to their surroundings, joined before a toppled vending machine. Those at the back scanned with much sternness to an obnoxious lecturer.

Party one said, “our agreement is as due.”

“-We appreciate the welcomed effort,” replied party two.

“Words mean nothing in our business. Hand over the money and everything will be great.”

“-should have expected this kind of response from your association.”

“Cut the crap, we have more things to attend to,” replied party one.

“Could you stop saying party one and party two, I’m getting confused,” fired Asmodeus.

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“Fine, here’s the rundown. Party one are people from the underworld, party two are the client-” gunfire halted the explanation.

“That’s magic!” cried Asmo. Water spells of lethal capacity fired in tandem beside guns. A well-laid-out ambush stood before the fallen members of Party one. The negotiator, barely living, coughed blood and faced the assailant, “-fuck you,” *bang!* blood splattered.

“Waste of air,” said the shooter. “-Alright, no need to give ’em money. You’re under our protection now; tis a message to any who dares opposed the Hondo Family.”

“Thank you immensely, lord Hondo.”

“Ah, don’t worry about it,” he gently patted the head of a prominent businessman as if he was a pet, “-stay loyal to us, we’ll make your company one of the greats.” Part of the legion left, the remainder carried and buried the bodies. In the end, Asmodeus waited whilst a deal turned bad concluded.

Slump-shouldered and tired, the car doors opened, “-you still sleeping?” said Asmo settling into the driver’s seat.

“Shut up, I had to keep myself entertained.”

“And you chose to sleep?” the engine toggled, “-what a waste of time.”

“Excuse me?” she side-glanced, “-you know who you’re talking to?”

“Not you,” he facepalmed, “-I was referring to this espionage mission. éclair better gets that pixelated arse over to the radio and explain what happened. I hate when my time is used without a purpose.”

“Someone’s grumpy,” said the speakers, “-and for a man who’d enjoy wasting time fantasizing over who he’ll meet in bed, tis quite an audacious statement.”

“Leave my love life out the equation.” The car slowly made its way onto the less-than-car-friendly path. “-I knew we should have used the jeep or SUV.”

“Don’t bring that up,” sighed Kul, “-I didn’t know the mission would be here out of all places. Whatever dude, I’ll keep my suggestions to myself next time.”

“Sorry, mother, I apologize,” he pressed his hands to her, “-no more next time, ok?”

“Whatever,” she pouted to the window, “-stop at a drive-thru, then I might consider.”

“Did I intrude in a lovers quarrel?”

“Shut up!”

“Jokes aside, the mission today was successful. I half-expected the deal to end badly. I’ll start from the top. Our goal is to take over one of the four great families. To said end, we’ve turned Luon onto Saku. Moreover, we’ve aggravated matters between Saku and Luon, the former has decided to ally to the already rigid foundation of Vermillion and Yonak. Simply put, Luon are against three. The prior deal was one made long before the alliance between Luon and Saku broke. In plausible outcomes, Saku decided to have Luon take all the deals they once made as an alliance. Without their dogs to do the bidding, Luon had to send members to recuperate money for a scam. The construction company of Xiola heavily bribed the top for the contract – if not for Saku’s intimidation, they would have never gotten the deal. Once one is involved in the darker side of the world, there are no turnbacks. In the end, Luon took the bitter path and paid the ultimate price. They don’t have money nor protection; a wounded dog has wandered into a lion’s den.”

“Basically, they done goof.”

“Correct, they done goof. I’ve sent the video; the lawyer should return to us with a proposition sooner or later. Frankly, the plan was to intervene and save the deal. You heard it yourself, the Hondo Family. Best research else we might be blindsided.”

“Man, part of it went over my head,” said Asmo, “-the whole being in the shadows thing doesn’t work for me. I perform best live, especially when the other party is a female.”

“Just because you can charm anyone you meet, doesn’t make thee an expert at manipulation.”

“Say what you want, dear Kul. My charms and talents are enough to rule over a kingdom – tis the truth, nothing more, nothing less.”

“Keep your egotistical arse bound to the mortal realm,” a pause later, “-is there a reason we’re not teleporting?”

“You said you wanted a drive-thru,” the lashes blinked emptyly.

“FOR FAST FOOD, NOT A DRIVE THROUGH THE FOREST!”

A close room of monitors and state-level equipment lit in various blueish hues. The transmission shut, ‘-so loud,’ yawned éclair. ‘-being a butler is hard,’ the door opened out the basement, ‘-some coffee will do great.’ The manor resounded per his steps; the place sure grew lonesome without company. A trip to the kitchen, a flick off the coffee maker poured the nectar of nightly reign. The tall handsome figure leaned against the counter and sipped; a bland view of open doorways waned emptily. ‘-I love my job,’ he chuckled, ‘-everyone relies on me, and it’s amazing. I wish I had an assistant to help out from time to time.’ *BEEP,* the watch displayed, *Asmodeus*, ‘-can’t I enjoy a cup of coffee?’ a timid touch of the glasses showed the man in question.

“You’ve reached éclair’s helpline; how might I be of help?”

“STOP JOKING,” cried Asmo, “-I forgot my wallet, Kul’s breathing down my neck. Could you handle the payment?”

‘These two,’ he exhaled, a tangible holographic display of their location summoned out his palm, a red dot showed the location and the fast-food joint confidently named, *-no food no life.* A press resolved the query, “-there, the payment is complete.”

“Awesome,” they cheered, “-your awesome, I love you!”

“Whatever,” the transmission ended. ‘-Eccentric people,’ he laughed. Not all would be fun and games. Between helping the Raven and drug production, time was scarce. Especially since the master would return soon. The basement lit, the surveillance camera showed piles upon piles of Angel’s dust and barrels of God’s Ale. Without clients to sell, the stocks increased until they shifted into another room. The multiple screens displayed another notification. The arrival of the young master, along which came a message, ‘-have the art gallery readied for the new pieces. We’re going to host a few private parties to draw attention to ourselves. Wait till Lum is ready, we’ll follow the ways of the entertainment world when the man returns.’

“The master is on his way,” he gulped, “-I ought to get matters readied.”

Thus, a new day rose, a new day that brought plenty of possibilities. The duo of Asmodeus and Kul arrived at the gambling house; popularity increased by words on the street.

“Have you heard of the gambling house?”

“No, why?”

“A man won around a million exa in a game of poker. The stakes are scarily high.

“I also heard they have the best women in town. No matter your fantasy, they’ll make it happen. One-eyed Jim and his envy for crippled woman satisfied his lust too.”

“If that freak can be satisfied, so can we.”

A shot in fame didn’t mean good business. The word was of their abundant choice in partners. Where there is a choice, there are also the degenerates of society. The boldness to satisfy their lust for power, money, and carnal inklings, Raven’s den had it all. In a way, the new businesses somewhat alleviated the headache of the nearby brothels. The rougher customers visited, and some never left. Two words dictated Raven’s modus operandi; integrity and respect. Fail to obey, and tis death, or worse.

Dawn snuck onto the glacial airfield. Aceline stood fulfilled by the sudden reunion. Julius waited in the company of his lover. A nod of the head and off they were to Alphaia.

'Hidros is in good hands,' he sat lavishly in the leather couch, '-I'm glad Rotherham's grown into what it is. Time to head for Alphaia,' a laptop displayed multiple prompts, '-the monster plagues affected many, no viable cure in view,' read a new article, '-I smell profit.'

Chapter 672: True Demonlord [3]

"Stand in line, vigilantes," a ruffled crowd made for a sloppy interior of sterile scent. A day of fighting ended without satisfaction nor concrete achievement. In more ways than one, the task at hand was empty. Vacant walked the health care workers, vacant watched heroes from beyond a plastic sheet, and vacant were the lifeless gazes of the critically wounded. Report stood with 30 out of 50 injured, five of which fell into a comatose state. Nameless and faceless, they were the side characters, and everyone understood so, pawns, cogs of a better mechanism.

"Those who were affected by monster injuries, make way to the quarantine area." A vague piece of technology in hand, a tag around the neck, and a quantified status of their physical and Sultrian abilities begot a very olden type of hierarchy. Tough times, tough decisions – a young adult, barely of age, arrived a few minutes prior with a leg missing. He bled profusely, the nurses ran alongside the boy to no avail, despite the help, naught could be done. The party beside him cried and mourned; add salt to injury, the current overseer of said establishment, donning a white-lab coat and mask, strictly asked the guards to escort those members to the q-zone. The scent of the Aedric curse, the demonic energy encompassing the underworld, reeked off the boy.

Ones of the true sight gift saw the particle, evidently, so did the watchers. "-Have the zone be shut, we ought to have a thorough investigation." The injured, tainted by Aedric energy, were handed a collar to brandish. They ordered with no questions asked. Heroes of the AHA scowled a few livelier characters, '-they sit and do nothing.'

Grouped by the severity of the curse, not injury, but curse density, tsked a foul taste in many mouths. The least tainted were treated first, opposed to the vice-versa in popular health care establishments. Whatever the treatment was and how cruel it seemed, a prior contract clearly stated the risks and obligations. Short as were, none would dare speak against the malpractice. Then again, a careful explanation said; '-Aedric curses have no cure. The hospice divides into two sectors, one for physical injuries and the other, curses. Priority is to the latter, for if it spreads, the whole town and continent might be at risk. Playing the blame game will bring nothing, stand firm and watch, pray for thy comrades and watch their fight. The invasion of monsters is a pest we must sooner or later defeat. Vigilantes set the questions aside and allow the professionals to do their jobs.'

A bland room kept the mortally wounded boy. The party(cleared for signs of monster afflictions) quietly waited nearby. The doctors worked earnestly – many o' patients in the same situations ran down the hall. The unsavable were given painless deaths.

"What do you think?" asked a tinier lady in a fighter's uniform.

"No chance he'll make it," said a pragmatic, oval-shaped face man, "-you weren't there. Jonl and I saw him take a monster square on to save an unconscious fighter. I knew he ran on adrenaline but alas... he didn't die, I killed him."

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"Don't be harsh on yourself," said a kinder-looking man of somewhat stern build, "-things happened. We're vigilantes, tis our duty."

"No, I'm not talking about that. The boy was fast on his feet, a truly rare ability. He's saved so many people, by all means, the alliance should have recognized his talents. Even if he recovers now, without a leg, I don't think he'll be able to accomplish his dreams."

The short procedure ended, the doctor dowsed in blood, threw an apologetic nod, and headed to the next patient. Nurses behind arrived to break the news, "-we tried everything, the blood loss and overwhelming extent of the monster curse prevented any magical or otherwise, means of treatment. I'm sorry." They bowed and left; a figure clocked in black leaned against the window directly opposite the door. He gestured boldly for the party to take a last visit.

"The undertakers," whispered the pragmatic leader, "-you have to be strong to endure these emotions on a daily." Inside laid the boy encased in a transparent barrier. His last moments were peaceful, or so said the expression. "-Come on guys," they gathered at the foot of the bed, "-bid your farewells." *doup,* a gentle tap broke the moment of silence. The boy watched palely through the cage, recognition in the eyes murmured into a 'I-I-I'm sor,' he bit and tore into his lips.

"-stand back!" cried the undertaker, "-may you rest in peace," a press of a button exploded the boy's head and neck. A swarm of greenish pests bickered against the cage, "-Purify," two claps, "-I'm sorry you had to witness this."

Traumatic expression burnt into the junior members, "-I understand," tightly holding their shoulders, "-please take care of him for us."

"I will, thank you for protecting us." Mutual respect eased the pain of needless deaths. The smaller lady buried her face into her hands, the other kept a static, open-mouthed expression, at the ceiling. In a way, the audible senses heightened on the surrounding. Pain and suffering were abundant, "-he killed him without remorse."

"No, he was already dead. The Undertaker did his job. I've seen my mentor died similarly. They didn't wait twice and just killed him; the slight chance of the plague and tis death. We're lucky the hospice came with the idea of the q-zone."

"Is that why they wear the tags?"

"You're new, I forgot," tightly clasping her hand, "-here's the reality of our continent. The plague, curses, monsters, it's everywhere. The media never shows the dark side, there's no cure, no way to fight back, nor a way to repulse the enemy. They respawn and continue without stop, meanwhile, the vigilante program is used to acquire Sultrians to be used as instruments of war. God has forsaken our land. The tags we wear are poisons, they activate the moment a trace of Aedric energy is felt running through the

veins. The healthy are taken into custody to be used for tests, the wounded,” the face lowered slowly, “-you’ve witnessed it.”

A heart-tearing scream echoed across the hall, a lady around their age demography cried and yelled. A headless caged body slowly rolled for the morgue, she shouted and insulted the workers, ‘-damned monsters, my baby was alive, you could have saved him!’

“Jonl, why don’t you say anything?”

“Aptha...” they locked eyes, “-I can’t say anything, what is there to say. I came to Alpha in hopes of finding a future away from the battlefield, turns out, this place is on the way to becoming another infested nest.”

“I never heard your story.”

“Meza sir, my story isn’t much to be desired.” Nurses were stern in their glances.

“Let’s go outside,” said Meza, “-we’re in the way.”

“Meza sir?” they climbed on a flyover and watched towards the distant field. The geography altered, a sterner wall of bricks and magic hoisted against the invasion. Remnants of the day of evil lingered, a once clean asphalted road alongside which were old shops, cheerful people, and a homely feel, crumbled into debris and carnage.

“Tell us your story, it might take away the grief.”

“I guess if it helps,” he turned from the battlefield to the cleaner inner-town, “-I was born from a commoner family in Hidros. My father wasn’t exactly noble, he had status and money as a trader. Life was pretty nice, I guess, we got what we wanted and were able to enjoy the greater things in life. I had a privileged upbringing. Didn’t stop the fact and questions about my blood. Regardless, I stormed through the education system and found myself being admitted at Claireville Academy. This would have been a feat of greatness if it had been a decade or so earlier. To not bore with the details, I pursued Magiology and the ways of the fighter. Monsters are pesky things at the academy, we have classes solely for the understanding of their movements and actions. I was average in every way. There, I heard the legend and stories about a legendary man who started as nothing and became a king. You might have heard of him in Alpha too, he’s the founder of the Haggard dynasty, the man who carved a way through our rigid class system and allowed for us commoners to dream big. Most of the past is secrete, we know he played a crucial part in many conflicts. What drew me the most was the way he found and forged the legacy of Kniq, the adventuring team that everyone, and I mean, everyone at the academy wanted to follow. It didn’t matter if the top guilds were present or not, my father said, if ever a state-level crisis arose, Kniq, clad in their unique and recognizable uniform, would swoop onto the battle and change the course of the war. I know I’m getting off track, I love to talk about the one I aspire to be. In a way, I decided to follow his journey. Claireville academy, then Azure wall, and after, I made for the tower of Aria or Aris, I can’t remember. My rank of Tier-5 Ruby didn’t inspire much confidence. I soon found myself faced with reality, those who bear the name Haggard are bound to be great. I mean, Princess Eira, won the Inter magical tournament, Prince Julius, won it again, and lastly, Princess Lizzie, she’s hailed as a prodigy of the piano. Their name shouts of prestige and excellence, I can’t hope to compare. The more I walked, the larger became the distance, until I found myself lost inside the tower. I got cocky

and ran. My party leader risked his life, lost an arm, but vehemently said to save myself. Some people have an energy about them, they care for others, care for themselves, they have a sense of purpose so strong it flattens doubts and misconceptions. Back to the tower, once rescued, my party dissolved and I was stranded. The weak are abandoned, and I had to face the truth, I'm weak. There, a lady grabbed my hand and said, "-if you want to become strong, harsh as it sounds, leave behind the people who died for you, leave it all behind, and only hold onto their will. Let the pain and frustration guide the will to be strong". She had blond hair, was tall and beautiful, a member of the legendary Knig, Viola. Beside her stood the only Platinum-ranked Adventurer in the whole of Hidros, Achilles. The chance encounter changed my life for the better, I began training under Viola, my body and fighting abilities heightened until I found my true calling, marksmanship. I worked for years until the rank of Tier-4 Bronze. I tried hard to break into the Tier-3 Silver realm... sadly, I was at my limit. Achilles recognized my hard work and allowed me to venture forth one last time. We climbed and climbed, fought, day and night, stayed for at least six-month. I faced death so much I viewed him as my companion. Age caught up to me, I reached my late twenties, my vision dwindled, and my guild suddenly said to retire for my own good. I didn't accomplish much, I have a few boss kills under my belt, and it's all. I returned home and expanded to Alpha, lot of money meant I could start a business, the time came to settle. Two years later, I heard the rumors of a phenom, the Devil of Glenda, a man who single-handedly slaughtered an army of seven thousand. One way or another, I felt close to him and decided to join the AHA. My bronze tag and rifles are the only possessions I need – one thing is for sure, Sultrian has no chance of pushing back the invasion. I wish I could have helped, well, that's enough for me."

Chapter 673: True Demonlord [4]

"You're more experienced than I," commented the pragmatic leader.

"Experience doesn't matter when faced with a battle strategy. Of course, the more experienced leader will have a pool to draw from. Can't exclude natural talent, and you have it, the qualities of a good leader."

"Guys," Apatha pointed to the field, "-the mist, it's rising."

"What's the time?" fired Meza.

"Nearly 18:00," replied Jonl.

"We need to go, like right now," they dashed down the stairs, "-we're out of here, trust me."

"The fog figure?" they gulped.

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"Yeah, getaway, let's run, I'm not losing more men in this pointless battle."

The sun dipped and rose repetitively onto the 29th of October. A familiar yet quite impressive chance of atmosphere and scenery trumped the solemn depart from home. In a way, the town felt nostalgic. The jet gripped the runway, as did the sun over yonder, a few hours later – the vampiric lair stood sternly before the cloudy background. 'Finally, home,' he drove and parked, unbranded transport trucks arrived to unload cargo. The workers hastily did their due and left; part of the rush was the sternly stood éclair at the doors.

"Welcome back, master."

"Good to be home," he replied, "-I'll take a shower," he faced Vanesa, "-what about you?"

"I'll take a shower too!"

"We ought to freshen up," added Aceline confidently, "-come here, Vanesa, we'll have fun in the bath."

"Okay," said a cheery jingle and off they were inside the large space, éclair pulled closer and whispered, "-is the lady sane?"

"Worry not, here I present the effect of closing curtains. Her past was nicely put behind, she joyfully reunited with her best friend, and they made up instantly."

"I see," they walked inside, "-what about the princess?"

The pace slowed to a snail's rival, '-I never realized the lobby to be such a grandiose area. The paintings are sublime, the décor must have cost a fortune. The chandelier, I didn't bother taking in my surroundings. How big of an idiot must I be, the trip home sure return prospective on matters.'

"My lord, is everything ok?" inquired éclair, the troubled silence wane heavily.

"Oh, don't worry about it," he cheerfully tapped the butler's shoulder, "-Princess Eira's headed for her new home. Her marriage is undisclosed, I hope it happens quickly. I mean, the emperor did somewhat announce their relation."

"Pardon my boldness, you seem fresher and changed."

"Oh yes," he smiled, "-I faced my aunt and lady mother. Holding the grudge didn't seem appropriate, I figured, why not bury the hatchet. In other news, I've moved from Viscount to Prince in the title. Arda's under new rulership, and I'm in line for the throne. The Duchess of Rotherham is Queen of Arda. Not that it matters. The proud title of Viscount shall not leave me so easily."

"Is it official?"

"The ceremony is in a few days. The leadership soon returns the place to a normal balance," paused before the shower, "-I'll freshen up. Have the paintings be ordered neatly at the gallery. We'll go over the next course of action."

In a twist of fate, a pair of rumbunctious demons returned home. 'Those two again,' he hastened to the lobby, "-well, looky 'ere," snarled éclair, "-we have a drunkard Asmodeus and a fatigued Kul."

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"Don't start with the preaching," *hic* "-I wanted to show my ladies a good time. Instead, they showed me a good time, we had fun for 1 day and night straight, man, they missed me so much."

"Shut up," *smack,* "-Asmodeus, you're a pest, go to hell."

"Why slap me," he frowned, "-come on, Kul, you know you wanted to join in the fun."

"I'd rather die," she turned her forehead to éclair, "-help me take this loser upstairs."

“Alright,” obliged the butler. The cacophonous stumble and tumbles of a heavy drunkard echoed till the room, “-I appreciate the help,” said Kul.

“Are you both alright?” he wondered.

“Why do you care?” she narrowed.

“Because we’re comrades, aren’t we?”

“éclair,” she smiled and gave a hug, “-we’re comrades, you right. I’ll go take a bath, see you in a bit.”

“WAIT-” she dashed for the hall with her jacket thrown onto the bed, ‘-masters...’ settled at the wide opened entrance, ‘-I suppose it’s fine, cliches are a must at times.’

Water ran, she reached inside without knowledge of another, “-hello Kul,” said Igna, “-quite the coincidence,” dressed and proper, “-have a nice bath,” he nodded from the next door.

“Thank you,” she smiled. And no, they didn’t use the same room, actually, the place was made in a way to avoid such unnecessary troubles. The bath sure was occupied, the laughter and jests of Aceline and Vanesa rang true, “-am I intruding?”

“No,” they replied, “-the jacuzzi is large enough for five people. Come on, join in, the view outside sure is one to relish.”

Towel around the neck and moisture under the feet, a few scattered glances about the fuller manor brought comfort. Soon, the sweet aroma of food seductively pulled onto the nostrils and palette. ‘-éclair’s grown as a chef; I can sense it.’

Flames rose in waves; the cooking station was handled expertly by one who had done his research. “Master, I’ve prepared coffee.”

“Awesome,” the warmth immediately begone a relieved sigh. A gulp warmed the inside with the care of a mother, “-what have you been up to, éclair?” quick on the uptake, he seamlessly joined the fray and helped in food preparation.

“A lot of things actually. Shall I give a report?”

“Go ahead, I’m all ears.”

“As pleased. When the master left for Hidros, I resumed activities in the infiltration of the underworld. I gathered intel from many o’ sources, good to say the agency is quite popular, their clientele are the hidden millionaires of the world, people who manage a lot of businesses through other people, and let me say something, they are getting paid. The more information I gathered, the easier it became to paint a picture of what we can expect. The Ravens have made a stark remark in the underworld. The name’s not well-known – they know us via the gambling den. The idea to use Asmodeus’s power and influence over human vices is unparalleled, we give away money at times but bring in so much more. In the time you were away, we made in the millions from gambling alone. Obviously, it’s dirty money, I’ve somewhat laundered it,” he flicked and the phone vibrated, “-here our current Raven balance; 10,034,000. It’s not grand, I know – but still, that’s the amount I filtered. The stockpile of Angel’s dust and God’s ale downstairs are filled to the brim. I had to order the puppets to stop. By the current marketplace value, for each bag of 10 kg we sell, we get around 200,000 exa. And, let me tell you, those

bags are tiny and easy to hide. The makeshift storehouse has approximately 500 bags, then again, it's too small, the grand total is 100,000,000 if we sell, and I'm not counting the god's ale. It's cheap profit. The Anti-Narco unit hasn't sniffed Odgawoan, the families are pumping money to keep them shut. We should really think of a plan for distribution. Between the Ravens and our narcotic endeavor, matters look fine for the future."

"Sure, it does," he paused, "-whatever the price is, they are but bags of white powder gathering dust. It's going to be hard to sell, unless," the eyes shimmered, "-the gambling den..."

"Right on the money," he winked, "-we'll use it to slowly entice customers, who in turn will spread rumors of our high-quality products. The families will be angry, and would most likely look for the supplier, and then, we'll but retail them the bags, they'll do the dirty work."

"For that to come true, we need support from law enforcement. The chief of police," he smirked, "-she owes us a few favors, we might need to have a little chat."

"I knew you'd see the bigger picture."

"The plan is well thought out. The question remains, what's the Raven been up to?"

"We're in process of taking over the Luon Family. The fuse for upheaval has been lit a long time ago – the last warning has been delivered. They need to act now else it's do or die."

"I suppose I did say for you to conquer the underworld."

"Yes, we can't afford to stain thy public image. Speaking of which, have you checked the Arcanum lately?"

"Too lazy to check social media," he sighed, "-come on, the food's ready. I'll set the table, call onto the others. Take this," a potion conjured, "-it should help the drunkard Asmodeus."

Emergency broadcast, flashed across the phone, *-the AHA have been stumped by the newest invasion. Anywho can read said message, make for the northern side of town. Any help will be appreciated, an outbreak of infection has broken out the hospice.*

Fingers to the earring, "-what's the meaning of the broadcast?"

"No idea really, they must have used the general channel for law enforcement. They are in dire straits, what should we do?"

"The monster plague," quick on the holographic display, "-I have an idea. Search for a pharmaceutical firm on the brink of bankruptcy and buy them out – who said the money can only be made using dark drugs, the pure ones are often the worse of the bunch. I'm headed for the battlefield; I doubt the princess to join. My inherited knowledge should easily find a cure for the curse."

"Always scheming," he chuckled, "-I'll get right on it."

The readied dining table full of delicious meals was left untouched, éclair and Igna vanished. Aceline and Vanesa arrived to breathe sighs of disbelief, heresy, she proclaimed, "-the food is cold!" cried the little one.

“How’s the situation?” fired across the communication channel.

“Pretty bad,” replied Meza, “-we’re evacuating the patients. I can’t believe the monster grew stronger in two days, what the hell is this?”

“Don’t complain,” returned Jonl, “-Aptha, hang back, don’t rush in yet!”

“BUT, THERE’S A KID ON THE STREET.”

“Ignore him!” he shouted, “-the boy’s infected, the life signs are gone.”

“ENEMIES TO THE LEFT!” cried one over another channel.

‘God damn,’ the scoped locked, ‘-come on,’ he breathed, *thud, thud,* ‘-fire,’ he pulled between the heartbeat.

A whistle and snap startled the girl, ‘-was that Jonl?’

“Good shot,” complimented other vigilantes, “-we’ll push back the monsters. Meza’s party, keep looking after our fallen. Aptha, good job healing the wounded.” Crowds to the left and right, images sprinted past, a blink, and one would miss the death of a comrade. Vigilantes fell, the monsters, skeletons in heavy armor, used bows and swords, in addition to them came the fallen infected vigilantes. The more they killed, the more people turned, and in turn, the more the fight harshened.

“Where are the damned heroes?” *BANG,* grenades rang the cacophony of chaos.

‘Keep the head down and shuffle along. Use what Meza taught you, Aptha, you can do this,’ she slithered across to an abandoned shop.

“Are you the medic?” said a man doused in blood.

“Yes,” she gulped, “-how’re the casualties?”

“Look for yourself,” a side-glance through the broken window – living beings were impaled, heads were sliced, the streets marred red. *SMACK,* a rock narrowly missed her face and exploded whatever was behind, ‘-oh god help me,’ she gulped.

“-Please help us,” begged the injured, the hospice, a few minutes away, was blocked by a fallen building, the latter broke and crumbled suspiciously.

“WHERE ARE THE FUCKING HEROES!” cried the channel.

“No idea!” replied Jonl, “-sorry boys, I’m nearly out of ammo. They caught us off guard.”

“No...” whimpered along, “-NO, NO, IT’S THEM, IT’S THEM, RUN FOR YOU-” the transmission cut.

“Everyone, listen,” said Meza, “-the advance party was wiped out, last words were fog, The bosses are coming, anyone unable to fight, get off the battlefield. The AHA is on their way, let’s hold out until then!”

“NO DEAL, MEZA, WE’RE DEAD.”

‘So much panic, this should be a nice fight.’

.....

Chapter 674: True Demonlord [5]

In seconds, multiple transmissions suddenly cut. Fog arose onto the battlefield of which consisted of bodies, a singular road to the north aligned by broken buildings. Rangers hoisted atop the broken vestiges fired to no avail, threat wasn't on the ground either, from above, came multiple crows and fogs of black. Tension skyrocketed, and none could stand before the army.

Therein, the coming of fog meant certain death, those able of body, brave vanguard a few minutes ago, cowered on themselves. Knees shook, face paled and an entourage of trauma-inducing nature.

"RETREAT!" cried Meza, "-barrier casters, create a secondary line, we'll guide the fight westward."

"No can do," fired an earnest fighter, "-I'm at my limit, most of the casters are dead or injured. The assault was well-coordinated, they took out a lifeline and are readied to pincer."

"He's right," said a solemn voice, "-I'm out of ammo. Cut the losses and wait till the fight ends, this is our only hope."

"Jonl, you serious right now?"

"Yeah, the more people die, the stronger they get. Apatha; how's the triage?"

.....

"Bad," she replied, "-very bad. We're out of supplies, my abilities are strained by the mortal wounds."

"Damn it," he peered out the advance scout position, "-any vigilantes abled to move, head westward." Two options presented themselves, either help the fallen or help the abled. Meza choose the former, deep inside, the thought process was biased, the truth in the vigilantes to pull through swayed the outcome. He wished wholeheartedly for their success.

"Boys, boys," spoke the fighters, "-time to be used as bait," they nervously laughed. Lustful glares locked onto them, "-stall for time people. The heroes are on their way, we fight till the bitter end. HEROES ARE PEOPLE WHO SACRIFICE THEMSELVES FOR OTHERS!"

"HELL YEAH!" the last battle cry. Down in their hearts, despite the adrenaline, the sad reality of worthlessness and weakness veered its ugly face.

The horde, compromised of skeletons and turned Sultrians, split for east and west. The monsters of the air swooped and killed the rangers, Meza's map blinked red each time a fighter died. Sweat and fear plastered on his face, the makeshift medic camp cried in horror.

"They come..." said a guard, "-we're doomed."

"What?" quick to check on he who spoke, *slash,* blood dowsed the floor and walls red, '-no,' her heart dropped, '- don't tell me...' the body fell, her eyes wandered outside onto the coming fog, '-they're here...'

"éclair, infiltrate the channel."

“As wished.”

Between the bait and hardworking camp, the prior death-filled street cleared, “-Hello, is this working?”

“Who is it?” returned Meza.

“Listen well. Rangers and survivors make their way to the camp. Healers focus on those who can still fight, have the spellcasters in somewhat fightable shape, cast barriers. Two factors are needed to win this battle, first, the rescue of the fighters, second, we destroy the enemy.”

“Destroy the enemy?” inquired Jonl.

“Watch and learn, fellow comrade of Hidros. This is how a true adventurer fights.” A nonchalant presence landed, the horde momentarily halted and glared. Meza, far away, snuck a glimpse as did Jonl.

‘The bait’s not doing their job,’ he scanned, ‘-well, here I go,’ he leaned, picked up a long sword, and a few pebbles. Two steps forth, the pebbles flew past the monsters and nicked the fearful vigilantes. The fresh scent of blood drew the attention of all, those headed for the camp turned and growled. ‘According to plan,’ he stood in the middle, the horde itched to pounce, ‘-they’re being controlled by others, must be the fog. This is most likely a premature attack, I’d hope, who am I to guess what monsters are thinking.’ Firm into the fighting stance, ‘-let’s go old-school,’ each step resounded, the speed wasn’t impressive nor did it speak of power, instead, each time the soles made contact, a blackish mist remained on the floor. *GRRR,* ‘-finally, here they come.’ Every beast in the vicinity went for him, ‘-dark mana, I knew they’d be enticed.’

Faster monster leaped with rudimentary weapons, scratches, and bites; a fighting style not viewed as favorable. ‘Barbaric,’ he stood firm without a single gesture, *-Spatial-Arts: Killzone,* a semitransparent drop of nothingness made contact and conjured a sphere, the radius stretched millimeters beyond the sword’s reach. Claws first and head later, it crossed the barrier and death. A slow and rhythmic slash set the pace, hesitation shook the common consciousness, ‘-come on, leader, show your face.’ *click, click, click,* chanted an otherworldly creature.

The aura changed, the vacant glances filled in ire and lust, the horde leaped. On the outside, nothing differed, however, the Killzone allowed time to move per his will, thus, the more jumped, the faster he got. The seemingly weak and gentle strokes hastened, the posture firmed, one by one, the monsters fell.

“Meza, someone’s on the battlefield, what should we do?”

“Didn’t he give orders earlier? Focus on the camp.”

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A silver of hope showed itself amidst the carnage, the bait crawled to the camp, projectile weapons drew onto the stray enemies. The focus on a single man gave leeway to strategies. ‘Where’s the AHA?’ gritted Meza.

A shock of condensed energy halted the slaughter, ‘-here come new orders.’ The puppets halted and faced the camp, they split, the stronger headed for the sole-support line.

'Good strategy,' he smirked, *Go forth, Vengeance, slay all those who dare stand in our way!* a swipe to the camp spawned a vicious tempest of flames, the streets carved behind the immense pressure, stray wanderers on the way charred instantly. A figure stood behind a mountain of flames.

Meanwhile, inwards of the town, emergency messages hit every response unit. The blocked path didn't allow for backup to arrive. Never mind the heroes who were stuck in an attack to the east, pressure arose from the toppled building. 'What are the heroes doing?' slightly glowing light-grey hair hovered onto the scene, the eyes lit vividly to match the purity of white, the hair swayed harshly at the increase of power, '-simple,' the bottleneck cleared in seconds.

"My lady!" cried a few stray construction workers, "-thank you for the assistance."

"No worries, how's the status of the invasion?"

"Last report states casualties in the hundreds of deaths."

"I go away on a trip and this is the result." *Woosh.*

Ambulance sirens fought their way to the incident area.

"Who was that?" inquired a bystander.

"A very strong person," replied the worker, "-her exploits are heard all over the continent. She's the sole reason the monsters haven't been able to break through Whuotan."

Debris and empty streets told a different story, the lady landed amid a concluded battle. An unhinged sword, bloodied at the handle, stood on high above a mountain of bodies. 'Is the battle over?'

"Alright, take him to the back, he should be fine," the camp somewhat smoothed.

"I have great news," said Meza, "-ambulances are on their way. They'll take those who aren't afflicted by the curse."

"What of them," the mask lowered.

"We don't have the means to heal them as of yet."

"I see," he exhaled, '-by the lowered tone, they'll be left to die.'

"What should I do about him?" inquired Apha.

"The injuries aren't bad; a healing potion should do the trick."

"Alright."

"EMERGENCY!" cried a squad, "-we found a survivor, the pulse is barely present."

'Yeah, he's not long for the world, the injuries are grave.'

"PLEASE!" begged a lady, "-save my fiancé."

'Lovers...' a brief scan, "-take him to the second room." From battle to now first-aid, treatment of the fallen was a priority. A strong personage entered the camp, the sight of relief blew the wilds, '-I thought the situation to be worse...' the few steps arrived at the segregation of wounded. Those able to move

helped in administering potions to the heavily wounded. The abundance of supplies was brought by a single man.

"How's the outside?" inquired Meza.

"The wave's backed off, I don't see them returning."

"Meza," the conversation broke, "-might you explain what has happened here?"

"Highness," they bowed, "-we were saved by a stranger."

"Excuse me?"

"Allow me to explain," a glance to the hall showed the man in question, "-let's move to a more secluded area." To which, Jonl excused himself in favor of aiding the patients.

A roofless apartment gave a decent view, "-Not much of a change," she commented as the camp was little more than a stone's throw away, "-tell me what happened?" A passing breeze enhanced her features.

"We were saved by a stranger, he's yet to tell us his name. Yet, I feel much power inside. Where the most competent of our vigilantes fell by the tenacity of the monsters, he single-handedly took on a horde of at least two hundred. Believe me, when I say, the way he fought felt careless and tiresome, it felt more of a hassle to him, like, what a waste of time, kind of feel."

"And, should I be impressed?"

"No, not at all. I'm just giving my report. After an anti-climactic conclusion, he took to the medical camp, donned a medical mask, and began to fight."

In before their eyes, time sped, ambulances arrived in full. The injured were taken for further treatment, those afflicted by the curse were transported in a less visually pleasing truck, destination, Q-zone. An otherwise lost battle held firm on a single strand of hope. The evening arrived, members of the AHA and fresh vigilantes mounted a stern defense. Another wall was built by the useless debris.

'I'm done,' fatigue gave to a harsh screech, '-unusable chair,' the breathing relaxed. 'Treating people is harder than killing them, who would have thought. She's something else,' he narrowed outside, '-I recognize her from somewhere, but where? The abilities are far stronger than I ever imagined.'

"Master, are thee well?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. What of the quest?"

"No deal, the government's funding most of the companies. We either wait for a deal or start a new one."

"A new one," he leaned into the chair, "-sounds rough, I don't want to be involved."

"Master, you're very entertaining. We could use the route of puppetry and gain what is wished."

"Or, look for a foreign company. Let's sit on it for a while, there's no way the monsters are being evicted so easily."

“Why?”

“They’re strong. Every time a Sultrian is turned, the collective consciousness assimilates the battle experience and abilities. Have to hand it to the ruler of the underworld, he knows how to gain experience no matter the situation.”

Footsteps interrupted the conversation, “-what’s your name?” said a shadowy figure.

“And who are you?” he glared.

“None of your business. Tell me the name right away.”

“Oh please,” he stood, “-a pretty face without the personality to match, how convenient. I’m sure you’re very amicable,” the height difference garnered a frown.

“I haven’t come to make friends,” a stern step forth, “-who in the hell are you?”

He smirked, “-much attitude from one who has to tiptoe to make her voice heard, I apologize, thy words don’t reach. Maybe come back when thee hath grown.”

“Insolent bastard!” her hair levitated, the room trembled, stray rocks circled menacingly, “-take back thy words.”

“No can do.”

“I warned you,” the expression dulled, “-die.”

.....

Woosh, “-was I supposed to be scared?” he sidestepped, “-the rocks are far too slow to do any damage,” the projectiles kept on the pressure, “-I’d like to stay and chat,” at the entrance, “-sadly, I don’t personally enjoy the company of smug brats. I hope we never meet again.”

‘-Little,’ the rocks halted, ‘-he’s gone...’

“Highness, is everything ok?” panted Meza, “-I heard the commotion.”

“Yeah, everything is fine,” the girted teeth and clenched palms said otherwise.

‘Hades’ firm on the invasion. The same strategy employed by Scifer. The brief visit opened my eyes, the AHA is incompetent. The heroes are slack and unnervingly annoying. Vigilantes do the work, and they take the credit. The media has heavily twisted the story. Not that it matters, I’ve gotten a fragment of the curse.’

Chapter 675: True Demonlord [6]

“Trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble, did I mention, trouble?”

“Stop repeating trouble,” said a saliva-filled mouth, “-I know we got trouble.”

“No Kazalon, trouble is worth more trouble, I know we’re in trouble. Don’t you get it?”

“Stop it, Voraum, you have the habit of rambling when we lose.”

"I know, I know, I'm angry, tired, and angry. Tell me, Kazalon, did we lose?"

"Yes we lost, Voraum, we lost many servants. The master won't be happy."

"No, no, he will be happy. They lose, they get strong, trouble is the man that arrived, he has mana similar to the master."

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"He can beat us?"

"No, we beat him easily. Servants of Hades can steal magical affinity, if we fight, we win, no question asked."

"Why trouble?"

"Because, trouble is trouble," wood crackled under the silent night, the forest's foliage hid unnecessary attention. The corpse of a dead animal festered creatures of the underworld. No rational shape or size could be put as description, the creatures, rather critters, would shapeshift at a moment's notice. Thus, ended on event 29th of October.

The next day arrived, Igna woke to a familiar manor and familiar entourage. Vanesa's listless attitude somewhat dwindled, Aceline truly took a liking to the girl. Not a word said, the idol asked for the car keys and headed into the city.

"What's up with her?" wondered Igna with toast in hand.

"The idol's gotten more confident," commented éclair, "-master, what should we do about the company?"

"I've asked aunt Elvira for assistance. Any updates on Raven's climb?"

"Perfect timing," said the butler, "-we received a message from Luon. The warnings hit home, Kul and Asmodeus are on their way to Stanley's homage."

The brisk morning air wrapped the empty early street in a feeble mist. Newspapers and bags swept across; the lamps remained alit.

"-How cold can this humanly get?" shivered Asmodeus.

"Don't complain," returned Kul, "-the lawyer should be here any minute." A modernized background of tall buildings cupped the rustic-styled street oppressively. Headlights opposite the road cruised to a stop. Two blinks later, "-let's follow them." The car toggled and made for a new location, the suburb. The tall pillars faded into the foggy streets; a melancholic tone weighted atop the richly built houses. Expensive vehicles were a common sight, Kul cast a few questionable glances until the other guides stopped. Something about talking to a guard, a few minutes later, despite poor visibility, Asmo spotted said guard peer outward and nod. A gate opened, and thus followed the voyage. They passed the gates, nodded at the guard who bore a stern expression and continued inside. No heed at the manor, Tomas, the lawyer, hastened his steps.

"You must have a reason to call us here," narrowed Asmo. The heated interior gave a pleasant relief, Kul undid her coat and followed the lead.

"Shames me to say, we're at a loss." The wooden-floored corridors pleasantly arrived at a large room. The latter gave view onto a pond, "-godfather, I've brought them."

"Brought them, have you?" the chair spun, "-I see," he halted in midst of knitting a scarf, "-good day, Raven," a large scar down the left eye foretold of the plausible story.

"Godfather Luon," they nodded.

"Come on, take a seat, young'uns." A click of a button toggled a screen to the right, "-did you record those images?"

"Yes," firmed Asmodeus.

"It's true," he exhaled and lowered his head, the arms strongly crossed in thought. Coffee arrived per a young butler. Hospitality wasn't good nor bad, a perfect neutral stance. The thought manifested in the slow ticks of a pendulum, the archaic and mechanical piece reflected the older gentleman.

"Okay," silence broke, "-I heard the gist from Tomas. To be completely honest," the pressure dropped, "-I'm getting older by the day. The whole mafia thing isn't worth holding onto-"

Tomas interjected, "-Godfather."

"-let me speak." The tone of voice sufficed for the lawyer to nod and accept. "Where was I. Yeah, the mafia life. Luon's going to end, this mansion is the only thing the gang owns. We were betrayed by Saku, they raided our collective warehouse and stole the produce. Loansharking won't work – the video speaks for itself; I had my best men set out to collect on Xiola's payment. What little forces we had are gone, nothing's left, my son was killed, and now my grandchild too, this life isn't worth living."

"Tis the truth," said Tomas.

"Tell me, godfather Luon, how much does the family name mean to you?"

"Not much," he replied, "-a name, at the end of the day, is ink on paper. What's the worth without a family or people to entrust the legacy. We were at the bottom of the food chain from the start, the choice to be nonaggressive was mine. I saw many of my friends with whom I built this family die in vain. They were shot ruthlessly."

"Listen up, old man," interjected Kul, "-I don't care about the sob story."

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"Shut up for once," cried Asmo, "-let me talk, ok?"

"Whatever," she frowned.

"I'm sorry young lady, guess this old man has grown boring over the years."

"No, you haven't. Don't mind her, she's impatient. Godfather Luon, seeing there's none to precede the family, why not allow us, Raven, to follow said path?"

"You telling me to abandon everything?" they stared.

"Yes, I am."

"Ask Tomas," he leaned back, "-I only want death to come peacefully. Do what thee wishes to the family, tis but ink on paper. There's a drive of conquest, I sense it, maybe it is wise to leave the name to another party. I don't have any problem in the matter, the only condition is for the name to remain."

"Godfather, please reconsider. You could climb the ranks and fight the betrayers, please, I beg of you."

"Stop waning heavy on this old man," he smiled, "-Tomas, you were a close friend of my grandson, I had hoped for you both to take over the family someday. With all the members practically gone, I can't think of anything else aside from burying the hatchet."

"Godfather..."

"We'll be outside," said Asmo, "-come on, Kul," to which she defiantly followed. The mist cleared a little, the sun made its journey across the sky, "-why are you?"

"Appealing to their emotions?" he lit a cigar, "-to create a bond. Sometimes, violence isn't the wisest of choice. Inheritance of underworld names is a tedious process, either force or be chosen. Let's use the nonviolent approach first; if it doesn't work, we'll do what we do best," he puffed, "-sounds good?"

"Whatever you say."

The door would soon open, the parole of what the family's future commenced.

'Such an unpleasant curse to work with,' the basement rattled, '-the cure to the monster curse will be a hard one to crack,' access to Origin's knowledge provided much crucial information, the pieces were randomized, he but needed to solve the puzzle. A task that would prove very arduous.

'Damn,' five hours elapsed, '-I've been stuck on the same problem. The curse can't be purified, potions and scrolls won't work either. It affects the host on an elemental level. Tis unlike Hidros, the difficulties off the chart.'

Creek, "-ello pops!"

"Hey, Vanesa, how was the trip?"

"Pretty good," she smiled, "-the basement's very spacious."

"And you're full of energy," he backed from the research table, "-what's the occasion?"

"I got to eat a lot of good food," a large smile later, "-I'm full of energy."

"Come over here then."

"-Curses," her face shimmered, "-pops, this curse, it's new!"

"New?"

"Yeah, I don't know it," she leaned over the table, "-the taint, can I touch it?"

"-NO."

“Too late,” index to her mouth, “-tastes bad...” her face paled, the eyes rolled, “-tired...”

Poof, “-hey, Vanesa?” held in his arms, “-wake up, don’t pass out on me,” he tapped her cheeks to no avail. ‘The taint spreads fast,’ no soon could he help or use magic, her complexion mutated to a turned. “Don’t tell me she’s dead...”

Burp, “-I’m BACK!”

“Huh?”

“I said I’m back. What’s with the worried look, pops?”

“You ate the damn curse, should I explain?”

“Oh, come on,” she chuckled and rolled from his grasp, “-I’m the Aedric Mistress of Plague and Illness.”

“No, you’re the mistress of sleep and being listless.”

“Ok maybe,” she yawned, “-point is, no matter the curse or illness, I won’t die.”

“And, what now, you ate the sample?”

“No, I’m the mistress of sleep. Good night pops, good luck figuring a cure. The curse is a piece of work,” she pulled out her tongue and left.

‘Maybe I took the joke too far. Anyway, the sample’s gone, and I need more information. I should perhaps stop it for today.’

The afternoon wouldn’t be a casual stroll. While Asmo and Kul discussed the future of Luon’s family, multiple pick-up trucks pulled to the sidewalk. The stranger individuals waited prominently at the gate.

If things weren’t bad enough, the perplexing puzzle of a cure rudely interrupted. “-Better have a good excuse.”

“Tis more of a warning. Part of our home security was breeched; they accessed enough information to have a vague idea on our location.”

“And, what does the mysterious hacker want?”

“No idea,” *crash,*

Teleportation, out the basement and at the porch, “-are you insane?”

“What?” light-gray hair locked onto his, “-ITS YOU, I’VE FOUND YOU!”

“No,” they both stomped with intent to hurt another, “-are you a stalker?”

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“Hell no,” they locked in a battle of tone and visual authority, “-I just stumbled here...”

“How convenient...”

“Master, I’ve found the source of the attackers, state-level intelligence officers,” relayed across the earring.

"I know we had a rough exchange yesterday... care to explain the invasion onto my property?"

'How do I tell him I accidentally teleported here. I only wanted to catch a glimpse...'

"Time's ticking, lady?" the shoulder rose in demand of answers.

"I don't need to tell you my name," she side-glanced, "-and why were you shouting at me?"

"No, the question wasn't about the name. I want to know why you ruined..."

"-My lawn..." éclair exited the main entrance, "-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!" he ran over and knelt, "-MY LOVELY LAWN."

"Look, my retainers been placed under mental stress from the blatant act of aggression."

"-I"

"Silence will not get you anywhere." Simultaneously, a helicopter allied to the Imperial family formally requested to land. The grieving éclair couldn't answer, to which, Igna allowed so.

"Ignore the loud bird," he brought her startled gaze downward, "-your worries start here, lady. Not only is this an act of blatant aggression, but my butler's lovely meadow was also ruined, do thee have any idea how long it takes to cultivate such a lush garden?"

A slope of ice conjured downward the manor, "-Igna, I'm back," said the joyful Eira.

"Welcome back, big sister."

"What's wrong, why's the mood so heavy?"

"Well, you see," he stepped for a clearer look at the intruder, "-here's a very rude stalker."

"By éclair demeanor, I see she's... wait."

"Sister Eira?"

"Loftha? Xyra's been looking everywhere for you."

"I'm sorry," she bowed, "-wait no, how do you?"

Igna chimed in with, "-no how do you?"

"SHUT UP, EVERYONE!" fired éclair, "-I don't care, just step off my LAWN."

In before long, the confusion settled over a warm cup of coffee, "-my name's Igna Haggard, Viscount of Glenda."

"And my name's Loftha Sultria, the fifth princess of Alpha."

"See, that wasn't hard, now, was it?" smiled Eira.

Talks between Luon and Raven concluded favorably. The Godfather and Tomas agreed for a change in leadership, in retrospect, the events seemed to follow the natural course, well, until one saw the bloodshed on the suburban streets. A close ally of Tomas revolted in attempts to overtake the leadership, in his cause, the employment of random gangs brought numbers without expertise. Kul

wasted no time, and soon, the quiet retreat of Stanley's homage made the news. Outrage grew in the community, especially the rich and powerful. Law enforcement would soon be painfully aware of who pays the taxes.

Chapter 676: True Demonlord [7]

Headline – Mass shooting, went across the television screen. Media were sure fast on their intel. The trio of Eira, Igna, and Lofta retired from the lovely meal and into the entertainment room. Here, where Vanesa quietly slept with a written note of, 'the Aedric Mistress of Sleep,' her passive-aggressive actions but made him happier. Time spent under Origin's side brought a multitude of emotions. That aside, they sat and listened, dusk painted the sky purple and specks of pink. A rare change of hue, often associated with a storm, went unbothered by the manor.

Police say the murder was the result of a gang deal turned wrong. They've yet to apprehend or put a name to the culprits. Eye witness reports say they saw a suited figure exit the premises, yellow tape and ambulances crowded the prior scene. Residents of the house, namely an old man, gave a brief interview and left without much information. He came across as a friendly man who joyfully awaited death. The scene of the attack changed to a clean and sharp set, "-thank you for the coverage," said a nearly dressed news anchor. "-Today's segment will be on gang activities, many of us know of their presence. The common people fear their presence, and today proves their reach, they've overstepped their boundaries. In my presence are the leaders of a humanitarian organization name Green Light, their leader, Count Gustav Oathtall and Countess Sabrina Oathtall." The camera panned towards two smart and menacing-looking nobles. The man, a guess would presume in this early forties, wore traditional wear for Alphians, the cheeks were clean-shaven until the chin, where he kept a roguish combo of mustache and beard. To his left, the lady, of which had her hair pinned in a majestic bun, heavy golden jewelry enchanted her neck and cleavage, her choice of outfit was one traditional with a sprinkle of avantgarde coyness. Her rounded nose, medium-sized lips of which kept a charismatic smile was a breath of fresh air opposite the strong and stern husband.

"Lord Oathtall, would you please kindly explain the reason for the visit?"

"Very well," he faced the camera straightly, "-simply put, the underworld has overstayed their welcome. The Green Light organization wishes to help Alphians any way we can, we've built orphanages, houses, and donate massively to the injured and homeless. Our efforts led us to rehabilitation centers for those who prey on narcotics. A team of well-trained doctors wholesomely welcomes anyone, no matter the age, and we provide anonymity. We truly wish to shine a bright ray of hope onto the poor and destitute. However, reports like these, a gang fight in a quiet suburb, is the reason why rumors of Ogdawoan's turned away many prospective residents. The attack has made one thing blatantly clear; law enforcement has done nothing to aid in combatting the problem. This is why, my organization and I, have decided to take this issue to the emperor."

"Lady Oathtall, care to chime in?"

"Listen," her lips contoured joyfully, "-I've fought earnestly to help the woman of Alpha. There are issues we can't speak about loudly, and I wish not to harm their reputation further. The reason the Greenlight organization was founded is to help the people, no matter their race or belief, we believe in a united world."

“Thank you,” said the host, “-we’ve recently been informed the Greenlight organization wishes to answer a few questions from our viewers. A number should be on the screen, please, call if thee wishes to impart any questions.”

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“éclair,” voiced Igna, “-block the channel and allow for only I to talk.”

“Consider it done,” he threw a phone, “-you’re connected.”

“We have our first caller. Good evening, thank you for calling the impromptu show.”

“Good evening,” he smugly said, “-my name’s Igna Haggard, Viscount of Glenda. I was directly involved in the shootings at one of our concerts, the situation hits home for me.” Not that it showed on camera, the couple exchanged smirks. In their mind, one so directly involved would accept their ideals without question, the name holds weight for those in Ogdawoan, the people would be more willing to listen to him, than a pair of unknown nobles.

“Then, my lord, it should be clear who must be held accountable,” returned the count.

“Au contraire, monsieur. You speak grandly on holding people accountable. I implore the people to sit back and think, who truly is to blame, law enforcement or some other party. If I, one directly affected, have but praise to say about public safety, then, why should people unaffected by the ordeal be angered on my behalf. Listen to me well, Ogdawoan isn’t a safe place anymore, and I don’t refer to gang activities. Our problems are far greater, the northern part of town, as most of thee know, was invaded and turned to a battlefield. The Chief of police has truly aided in suppressing the relentless attacks. Monster plague is an illness for which no cure has been found. Tell me, count Oathtall, has thine organization accomplish anything to help in the north? No. You sit here and argue about gang affairs which, I strongly say, hasn’t affected the daily life of the good citizens. Their involvement and way of battle are gruesome and morally wrong. Who is to say what is wrong and what is right, by Tharis’s name, none knows the answer. Humanitarian organization? I haven’t heard of any accomplishment. Law enforcement, thee who’ve chastised them for no good reason, fight day and night to protect the town. Take a trip and view the world for some perspective, I for once, regardless of my name and birthplace stand firm behind the chief, she’s worked hard and has helped the town more than the people would ever know.”

“Lord Oathtall, Lady Oathtall, care to refute his ideas?”

“Lord Igna,” said the lady, “-you spoke of us as if we haven’t seen the world. What about you, what have thee done? Aren’t you simply a noble from another country taking a vacation in Alpha?”

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“What have I done?” he laughed; “-you have naught but heavy makeup to show thy intellect. Actions speak louder than words, and my actions have proven what type of man I am. I don’t need acknowledgment from the humanitarian organization, if thee wishes to help, try reaching out to the AHA, reach out to the local hospice, and reach out to the law enforcement. Funds and supplies are needed to combat the real threat.”

“Answer my lady’s question,” interjected the count.

“My lord, without video proof, my words are not but words. They who know, knows, and tis all that matters.”

“Thank you, viscount Haggard. We truly appreciate your input,” said the host, “-tis all for today, people of Odgawoan. Next up, sport news,” the voices faded.

“And done,” he listlessly dropped the phone, ‘-even the reporter seems happy.’

“-Igna?” the duo turned and watched, “-what happened?”

“I forgot I had company,” he said out loud, “-well, my words speak for themselves.”

“No, no,” cried Eira, “-explain right away, what was the underlying tone.”

“To chastise the nobles and hail law enforcement as the better party. We can’t afford anarchy this late in the game. I ought to help an acquaintance of mine, her name mustn’t be sullied at any cost.”

“Igna,” interjected Loftha, “-I don’t like you one bit. I don’t feel anything, can’t read anything, who are you?”

“Don’t bother,” said Eira, “-my cousin’s a mystery. We’ve had our back and forth, hear me when I say he beat me alongside an army. Not only that, any plot I had was turned and flipped onto my head. Turn him against you, and tis hell, I say from experience.”

“Isn’t it just influence from the Haggard Dynasty?”

“No, not at all. He’s worked hard to gain the title of Viscount. From what aunt said, he rarely uses the money they send, even if he uses it, the amount is instantly repaid with interest.”

“No need to embarrass me, big sister. You’re the strongest enemy I had to fight, wit and strength-wise. I doubt I could best thee in single-combat at my state, you’ve achieved what mortals only dream about.”

“I don’t get it,” complained Loftha, “-friend or foe?”

“Family,” they replied, “-we’re family.”

“Sister Eira, it’s rather late. We should head for Melmark.”

“Stay the night,” interjected Igna, “-with the state of things, tis unsure if the helicopter would land safely.”

“He’s right,” she stood, “-I’ll go freshen up.” Before she spun, Aceline arrived with a stern expression.

“Aceline?” Loftha’s face flushed.

“Yes, and who might you be?”

“I CAN’T BELIEVE ITS YOU,” she vaulted over the couch, “-can I have an autograph!”

“A fan,” chuckled Igna, “-how very innocent, for a lady who bears such a standoffish personality.”

“Whatever,” she rolled her eyes, “-lady Aceline, why are you in the company of this man?”

“Cause we’re friends, I don’t understand the question. Igna’s a nice person, I think, I hope.”

“Oh, come on,” he swiftly stepped to Vanesa’s makeshift bed, “-think what you may, at the end of the day, I’m my own person.”

“Aw,” she mused her lips in a comforting manner, “-did I make you angry.”

No words said, he picked the mistress of sleep, who opened her eyes, recognized him, then slept. They crossed paths to the corridor, “-check the arcanum,” she whispered. The crowd diffused across the manor. The future empress would take to the showers than make for the bar. The star-stricken Loftha would glue to Aceline and head for the studio. éclair took to the kitchen, as for Igna and Vanesa, the study felt the better choice.

‘Why did she say check the Arcanum?’ the computer toggled, the book-filled interior brought a sense of calmness and inspiration.

‘Let’s check Hwan,’ the follower count of 50 thousand, increased to 70 thousand. Not that it mattered, the photos of the scenery, the true upheaval came from Thwan. After a few people discovered it, éclair updated the profile and posted a few messages as means to test the site. To his surprise, a few famous people from Odgawoan, most specifically, the official account of the town’s law enforcement, quoted a video from the interview, and wrote, “-us, from the department, are very grateful for the support.” Under which, other celebrities requoted said video and statement, “-we know the underworld’s involved in the town, it’s not news. I firmly stand behind the Viscount, he truly knows what’s important. On behalf of my team and I, thank you,” quoted Misty from the radio show.

The statement gained traction; they went on to ask countless hard-hitting questions on the official Greenlight page. The follower count went from a few hundred to three thousand, many of whom were celebrities. Even the news anchor quoted, “-glad to say Viscount Haggard answered the proposition and gave prospective. The department has exhaled a sigh of relief. As the people, we should be wary and call out those who don’t stand by their words.”

‘This is what she meant,’ a constant feed of messages bombarded the feed, ‘-I guess my words were heard, why, there’s no proof to say to back the sudden chance of fate.’ Therein, Julius linked a video from Lokka titled, “-our response to Count Oathtall.” There, countless vigilantes who’ve fought in the battle, covered in bandages, gave short clips of their experiences. The complication of the injured sufficed to built public favor. The medics credited the unwavering will to help, the nonchalant attitude towards a potentially deadly illness for the sake of human decency.

“Good work,” said a message, “-everyone from Apexi wishes thee well, cousin.”

‘Turned out better than expected. The massacre was our doing, our tracks have been covered. We need insurance, those who know too much must perish. 02 from Unit Zero’s worked for years in Cimier, might be about time to call him back.’

Headlights flickered at the vampiric gates, “-Master,” said éclair, “-they’re here.”

‘About time,’ he left the study, ‘-Raven’s have successfully taken control of Luon, or so I hope. If not, we might need to use force.’ Off the lift and towards the lobby, an injured Kul hung on a bloodied Asmodeus at the entrance, “-we’re home...” they said and fell.

Chapter 677: True Demonlord [8]

“To the room right away.” Blood dripped on the floors until the upstairs. Guests were stumped about what happened, éclair asked for Aceline to handle the rest. In the company of Igna, the injured were settled on beds beside one another, the door firmly locked. Kul’s injuries were mortal, the blood lost sufficed to faint any with the remote fear of injuries. Asmodeus wasn’t any better either. Tension rose, the mind shuddered, Origin’s connection to the companions broke into stress, the confidence stood on eggshells. ‘Can I save them; can I save them?’ the question stacked atop the shaky mishap of cluelessness from the monster curse. The doubt and frustration carried over, in when all seemed lost, whereby his trusted companions bled, ‘-focus,’ said a voice from deep inside, ‘-save them, heir to death, you’ve amassed knowledge far beyond the mortal realm. Bend reality to thy will, tis the privilege of he who has inherited of origin, death, and time. Set aside the fake limits, and parade thy true form.’

‘-My true self,’ a firm inhale instantly shook the pressure of failure, ‘-my other self, all-knowing as thou art, human emotions have bested thee without argument,’ red marred the right-pupil.

Knowledge known to only the watcher, I, master and inheritor of Origin, beckon thee; Mantia, Library of the all-knowing. Reality or fantasy, rules of the mortal realm, laws governing the all-encompassing universe, cower before he who holds the key to the truth, he who’s able to unwind the very fabric of reality, what I summon is my to rule, and what is rule by I shall obey, god, demons, spirits, angels, thou art helpless. Realm Expansion – Aronot; World Breaker.

An outward orb grew to stick against the walls and door, the room harbored a realm different from what was real. Shockwaves of intense energy tunneled outwards the manor to the nearby forest, the weather – cloudy and woeful, worsened. Thunder and lightning struck, the very ground shook, electricity stumbled.

“M-master?” turned Asmo.

“Say no word, my trusted companion,” the appearance didn’t change, “-I’ll alter the rules of reality to suit my taste.” The emotionless visage took one glance at the heavily injured Kul, *No injuries* the very image of the blood and wounds distorted to a colorless haze. *No pain,* the breathing softened. *Complete Restoration.*

“What happened?” jumped Asmodeus, “-my injuries,” he sat and stared about, ‘-where are we?’

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“Master,” said Kul, “-have you conjured Mantia?” she faced Asmo nonchalantly.

“Yes,” *snap,* the orb shrunk to hover above his opened palm. “-Good to have you two back,” the oppressive aura released; lightning gave in favor of heavy rain. “-Tired,” he buckled, blood ran down his nose, “-are you two, ok?” they watched horrified by his emotionless state.

“Master, you’re bleeding.”

“This, it’s nothing,” the handkerchief stained red, “-we need to talk,” time seemed to slow, ‘-I know this feeling,’ vision grew blurry, ‘-mana exhaustion and fatigue.’ He dropped headfirst onto the door.

“Sister Eira...” said Loftha blankly.

“You felt something?” she returned.

“Yeah, a power stronger than yours.”

“I felt it too,” she mumbled, “-I would be impressed, well, it feels unnatural – I strongly wish to refute the surge, something must have happened.”

“Don’t look at me,” shrugged Aceline, “-from what I know, two housemates arrived with heavy wounds.”

“ACELINE!” echoed across the hall, the hurried step of two closed the gap, “-we need to get a doctor.”

She rose from her seat, “-what happened?”

“The master passed out,” cried Kul, “-we need to help him right away.”

“I won’t if I were you,” said Eira.

“I agree with the princess,” said a distant éclair.

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“Are you insane?” argued Asmodeus, “-he passed out after conjuring...”

“I get it,” interjected Eira, “-let me see him, I should be able to help,” a frozen crowd manifested from sprinkles of white-gems. A robe of majestic proportion went down her back, her eyelashes glazed in a light-blue hue.

‘Oh cousin,’ left alone in her company, ‘-you activated Mantia without precautionary measures. Changing the fabric of reality is a feat deemed sacrilegious by even the gods. They who attempt such foolishness are repaid handsomely by the backlash.’

Below, éclair stared angrily at Asmo and Kul. Arms crossed, “-care to explain?”

“We were ambushed. After discussion, a stranger foe approached us for revenge. We won the initial fight and drove towards Carter Lake. There, a strange presence halted our car and teleported us onto a clear street. It showed no remorse and fought, Kul went all out and lost, I managed to injure whatever that was after grave risk. If I hadn’t unleashed my aura, it would have ended Kul’s life right there and then. I couldn’t believe it overstepped my authority as a demon and drew blood. We barely escaped and ran for the manor.”

“You were defeated?” narrowed éclair, “-a prince of hell and a high-tier demon?”

“Don’t say it like that,” said Asmo, “-my specialty isn’t in battle, you know?”

“No, I don’t know,” the arms crossed, “-Kul, care to explain how a lady of thy prowess lost?”

“Reflection,” she mumbled, “-whatever it was had the cursed boon of the unlimited counter. I threw my best spell, it swallowed and returned with twice the strength.”

“And this being, was it affiliated to any parties?”

“I felt doubt,” said Asmo, “-which means, whatever it was had the power to best a prince of hell. Far as I know, only a few members of Hades’ entourage have such capabilities.”

“Should have known it. We’ll be on guard for the next few days. Stay here, far as we know, whoever it was could be on the prowl. The manor’s the safest place, I’ll inform the goddesses of what has transpired. What was discussed stays in this room, do I make myself clear?”

“Understood,” replied the two.

Meanwhile, after her evaluation, the Empress took the lift down, “-lady Eira, how’s the master?”

“He should be fine,” said she drenched in sweat, “-I might strain a little. Pardon me, tell Loftha I’m headed to sleep. You’ll handle the rest, I trust?”

“Yes, my lady, I’ll arrange for the safe return.” Stressed piled onto the butler, hours elapsed till lights out, the lively manor slept, with one exception. ‘-Two strong fighters were defeated and nearly killed. The attacker doesn’t necessarily need to be strong; the boon is enough. The Rogue Hero’s will, an ability inherited by the Godslayer, Scifer Rethem. I should council with lady Miira,’ he slipped into bed, the consciousness reawakened in another body inside the Shadow Realm. Here, the sun shone brightly, the news broadcasted over the radio. A pull of the curtain gave into a lively Rosespire, ‘-the castle, I need an audience.’

Outlines of dragons and a griffin posited on the idyllic blue sky. Questions about what happened completely blocked the outside world. A long walk up the noble district arrived at the castle, “-name and reason,” said a guard.

“éclair, the butler of the watcher. Relay this to lady Miira, our lord needs assistance.”

“Hold a moment,” said the beastman.

‘The lost souls of Arda sure have mingled into a peaceful town. The visages voice their mind loudly, who’d knew an alternate world would be birthed from his will.’

“Enter,” said the guard, “-the general said to meet at the chapel.”

A sloped roof building opened to arches, seats, and a venerated empty tapestry. Under it, stood a lonesome figure, blond hair in a befitting attire waited patiently. “éclair,” she called. An exchange of glances turned to her promptly asking what brought on the visit.

“Lady Miira, I know not if this is known to you, Prince Asmodeus and lady Kul were ambushed and nearly killed,” her expression somewhat deterred from curious to involved, “-the master risked his life and aided in the rescue of the two, he sustained injures himself while conjuring the power required to heal such strong entities. The Librarian of Nexsolium said the master altered the fabric of reality without precautionary measures.”

“He did what?” escaped, “-sorry, continue.”

“They were saved and gave crucial information,” the tone deepened, “-the attacker had the boon of reflection.”

“I see,” her expression wrote what he wanted to know, “-Alter any life-threatening outcome into one that is advantageous for the user, that’s the boon of reflection. It helped Scifer more than once, no matter how strong the opposition is, the passive ability would always twist the very fate of the user unjustly.”

“There’s my point, tis a passive ability. What Kul said, a vortex was summoned from which it doubled the attack.”

“The skill has an affinity to be passive and active. When the latter is toggled, the host is invisible, though, the drawback comes in heavy stamina and mana drainage. In a time of crisis, or before a strong attack is to be fired, the moment said skill is used, tis over, no turning back.”

“And, where could such skill be acquired from?”

“I can figure a guess, I’d say Lucifer’s doing, or one with the ability to steal another’s power. There’s one lesser-known to the godly realm, Perfect Recreation, an ability similar to Creation whereby the user can create and modify his abilities at will. I’ve heard of it in olden tales. Aside from what I’ve said, I can’t help anymore.”

“Guess I expected very little,” he pivoted for the door, “-have a great day, goddess. I’ll see what can be done about the situation. Do relay the information to the other gods.”

“Wait, Perfect Recreation shouldn’t matter, even if one has the ability, they can’t hurt or injure a god.”

“Tis the quandary, whoever it was bypassed the Prince of Hell and Lady Kul’s authority and demonic beings. If they were hurt, bet angels and gods aren’t far.” Trouble rose beyond the horizon, without a name and status to the attackers, éclair faced the foe blindly. The breach of security was soon explained by Loftha’s involvement, she utilized her authority over the state-level programmers in attempts to find Igna. Transportation, coordinated with a private arms company, handled the trip from Odgawoan to Melmark.

Out to the battlefield, heroes from the AHA were stationed on guard duty. The death count reflected poorly on the organization’s reputation. The vigilantes were granted their due in financial support. Meza, integral in the survival efforts, was promoted to leader of the Vigilante, and no, the AHA didn’t grant the title of hero.

“I don’t get why they didn’t...”

“Don’t push your luck,” added Meza in a way to say, ‘-mind thy tongue.’

“Come on, leader, we know, and so do they about the reason why...”

“Aptha, don’t push your luck,” added Jonl, “-I know what you mean. Look around, we’re surrounded by vigilantes, the atmosphere doesn’t seem right.”

“No, why should I remain silent?”

“Because I said so. Keep your head down and eat, we have a rough day ahead.”

Far from the happenings of the world, Igna’s consciousness fell into a world of pure bliss. Memories of the past collided against the present. ‘I unleashed more than I could handle without the acknowledgment from Origin. Whoever said those words felt familiar and foreign.’

‘You broke the barrier of reality.’

‘Huh?’

'Don't act clueless. The reason you're here is to pay the price of changing what was never meant to be changed. Kul was destined to die, and you saved her life, Asmodeus was destined to fall prey to a subjugation spell. Destiny has been thwarted by the will of a strong entity.'

'Speak peacefully to my other self,' the body separated, '-watcher of destiny, my will overshadows yours. Bow to I wish to happen, cause no more harm for reality is but part of me.'

'Origin, fake victim of reality refusal. Have thee sided to the boy's side in attempts to avenge our refusal of thy will?'

'No, the boy accepted me for who I am, nothing will ever sway my decision. Therefore, on the grounds of my authority, I order Igna to be released without penalty. The incident plays different from what the world dictates, and tis because his actions were to save companions, and not by my intervention.'

'If thee says so.'

Chapter 678: True Demonlord [9]

Keep your head down and move along. The world is a cruel place, the first to fall are those who stand out, and the ones who do stand out, have a chance of being maimed by betrayal or jealousy. Fight on until the day where you take your last breath because, at that moment, the truth will be clear, have you made a chance, or were you just another being who breathed, ate, reproduced, and accomplished nothing. The theme of today's blog was inspired by a man I've followed throughout the Arcanum. Dearest readers, I presume you have heard of the Humanitarian faction owned by the Oathtall family; they were in words and action, good. However, as I write these words, their actions, great or feeble, have been under close scrutiny. My physical state disallows movement. I wish I could see history unfold before my eyes. From the moment a prodigious chef surfaced on the Arcanum, fellow readers and I were awestruck. No matter the adversity, layered under anonymity, I found myself intrigued by the man's identity. Igna Haggard, a young born from Hidros, makes waves in the culinary world until certain undisclosed incidents forced him out. I'm sure the history is known to the best of followers; I wish but to gloss pass briefly for the sakes of newcomers. After, the chef, given the title of Alchemist, left said scene. Time waited for no one, and the sensational prodigy, Kyle Darker, took fine dining by storm. Matters went forward until Igna, reappeared on our radar as a guitarist. He covered and uploaded a video of one of the hardest guitar songs to ever be composed. The talent and good looks were there, still, by a cruel twist of fate, nothing came of the endeavor. The name would soon fall prey to the annals of history as a one-shot matter. With much happiness, I say, he returned on worldwide news, the unjust invasion of Arda divided the world's players as did it for independent kingdoms. Little more than a few weeks ago, a manuscript detailing the chronicles of Arda's rule, took the world by storm. Outrage bubbled over the Arcanum. Then again, as harsh and evil the depiction was, information soon was blocked by the Wracia Empire. None can get access to the book, and sadly, only a few thousand copies were printed before the company went into hot water. Those unlucky enough to purchase said copy would be subject to scrutiny from the church's loud influence. Hidros, worshippers of various deities, namely, Syhton, are viewed under disgusted lenses from those of the Empire, who worship the god of Kreston, Lucifer, and his acolytes. Not to stray from the topic – the same man, Chef, musician, and now noble, rose from amidst the chaos with flames of retribution. The anger and hopelessness of his kin fueled the wrath which was to become an unheard feat. Elders to young'uns, they knew about the man who defeated an army by name alone. Afterward, idol agencies fell from grace. Protesting fans rose against the tyrannical rule for

the freedom of their loved idols. The backlash prompted Ansoft to host a concert of good faith to sway public opinion. There again, where Igna follows, misery wasn't far behind. A terrorist attack took the lives of innocents, if not for the man's efforts, there would have been more deaths. The news covered the incident intensively, a search should satisfy your curiosity. Moving on, Odegawoan's council hasn't relayed anything about the town's situation. Rumors speak of a monster invasion, the AHA has mobilized – information is scarce, or was until the video went around social media. The town truly is in dire need of help. I know I wrote about Igna Haggard, and I'm not afraid to admit, I'm a fanboy. Whatever I say or write will be read by a few, and in the greater scheme of things, my opinion doesn't matter. Still, I think it is useful to anyone who wishes to know a little bit about the story of a very interesting man. As a resident from the north, monsters are a pretty common occurrence, the outrage of the mainland's people seem fair, they live in relative ease and richness, while we, farmer folks, are to plow the land endlessly. Don't get me wrong, life is peaceful, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to teach what I enjoy. It fascinates me to hear and read about men of power. We know of hero kings and queens, demi-gods in human form, the elite who fought for the sake of our current lives, I know it all too well. Part of me thinks it's a massive lie. The heroes of old never existed. I truly feel a compelling force in the world we live in today. Take a moment and think, our time may be remembered as the time of gods, demons, and monsters, the age of magic. The latter's fallen out of the cultural norm whether we like it or not, signs of changing time. Our Emperor, the Federation, the Wracia Empire, nobles of Hidros, Sultrians, anyone of us could be seen as a hero in the future. I wholeheartedly believe in the mysterious man, Igna Haggard. Little is known about the personal life, what I've written is from extensive research, the Arcanum doesn't have enough to draw a profile. What we know is what he wishes for us to know, the Haggards, Phantom, Elon's Dynasty, and the Conglomerates – they rule the world from the shadows, I know it, I feel it, it's clear to see. I wish I knew more about the truth, what will come of our world, what will come of our days; who's more powerful, Haggard's, Patek's or the Imperial family, I'm afraid to say, only god knows, whoever said being to be, he knows the truth, and I wish I learned more. Here concludes the blog update, I'll see you guys next week, hopefully.

A pale-faced éclair sat before his computer. The date below displayed the 14th of November. 'last update, 29th of October. This blogging site is amateur, whoever wrote it was very observant. Still,' he leaned with pen in hand, 'I managed to track the location, and it's fair to say, the writer isn't alive anymore. Durei, 3rd of November, a magical reactor explodes and wipes out a whole village. The blast radius extended to about 8 kilometers – the devastation wasn't physical, instead, any mana containing bodies imploded on impact. The local reports say of machine malfunction. Can't imagine the pressure on Dostein's provincial council; at least the incident's taken the limelight from the town of dreams, or recently dubbed, the town of nightmares. Oathtall's tried long and hard to hamper our movements, they're using everything they can as in legal action. Too bad our army of attorneys have stumped their needless attacks.' Multiple tabs showed different parts and titles. 'Master has yet to awaken. Aceline flew to Hidros on order from Julius, Apexi's apparently restarting her radio show. Until the ordeal of Ansoft's resolved, I guess master would have approved. Idleness drives a person insane. I'm stumped, the goddesses didn't once take the time to check on his state. Draconis and Saniata are busy hunting monsters, or so they said. Those hyperactive petite bodies must be kept in check.'

Knock, knock, "-enter."

"éclair," said a serious-looking Asmodeus, "-we're ready to ship the produce."

“The deal went through?” he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Yeah,” returned the prince, “-after much enticement, our regulars are hooked on the white gold. We unknowingly roped in the head of the Jonia family.”

“The balance of power is already broken; we’ve taken control over Luon. We’ll be known as independent suppliers for the time being. Was a good thing we got in early with Jonia, they’ll handle the distribution.”

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“éclair, we still have the issue of the Hondo gang. They’ve taken control of Luon’s territory. We control only half of Stanley’s homage. The loans have been excused; we don’t control fear anymore.”

“It’s fine,” he replied, “-let’s focus on supply and demand. Have them taste the stuff, and we’ll slowly lower the demand, control the market. Cimier’s in deep against the Dark Guild, without the latter, they won’t ever be able to obtain the narcotics the client wants.”

“So, Luon’s moved from loansharking to distribution?”

“Correct. Prince Asmo, do take good care of the gambling den.”

“No need to tell me twice. About the master.”

“Fret not, he’ll awaken soon, our master is a tenacious fighter.”

“Say no more,” he left with a slightly confident grin.

‘Very impressed,’ the hall faded into the closed-cell of a room, ‘-he played the cards right and effectively place pawns around the chessboard. They work with or without his input.’

Fate was a cruel o’ thing. Soon as Igna fell into the comatose state; Princess Eira Haggard, officially married emperor Sultria VI. The reception was met with loud media attention, newspapers, and sensationalists, who fought to have a piece of the cake. The good news would bring the people’s morale up, the return of their ice-cold empress was a glow in the dark. Her matured expression and words of wisdom on the day of the marriage heightened her status in the palace’s hierarchy. The Haggard dynasty name was very precious and respected. Thus, her official title and name were to be; Empress Eira Haggard-Sultria of Alphaia else referred to as the Ice-Empress of Alphaia. Cold as it seemed, was an endearing nickname Similarly, the Duchess of Rotherham was crowned by the archbishop, apostle of Syhton, as the true and recognized Queen of Arda. There, the Haggards truly dug their heels into the world’s history.

Their first order of business was to host a private summit of the Federation leaders. Queen Haggard of Arda made her stance very clear, the Queen of Hidros truly respected and acknowledged the strong bond of the leaders. Easel Run Gard, stuck in an economic crisis, was troubled and unable to provide for their people or state. Elendor felt the cold reality of prolonged war, their resources would deplete sooner or later. Arda’s rebuilding costs and Hidros’s general trouble against the Empire showed a tedious task ahead. The smaller nation needed aid -Phantom would be forced to retreat from the frontlines, upkeep of an active army required a lot of money. The monthly cost barely allowed for the

company to survive. For the Federation to endure, each party needed to benefit from the alliance. Easel Run Gard made their voice heard clearly, if another attack were to occur, they'd fall. Hence ended the first day, the second arrived with great news. Lady Courtney Haggard brought along esteemed guests, namely, Elvira, Lord Elon, and Lord Amsey. Elvira, with heart and soul, said she would donate to help restart Easel Run Gard's economy. 2 billion Exa to be correct, Lord Elon nonchalantly agreed to donate twice the amount. Without wasting time, he turned to Elvira and proposed to pay for their services in warfare against Old Cray. Two of the four were satisfied by the proposition, Queen Gallienne and Queen Haggard were satisfied to mend relations. Amsey, stuck between bankruptcy and failure sat and watched. Time would tell if the actions would improve the lives of those under the federation's rule.

'I've been stuck in limbo; I don't feel anything anymore. If I stray and zone out, my thoughts will be devoured by the never-ending labyrinth of Faltho.'

"Stop complaining," said Origin.

"Not complaining, I'm just annoyed, that's all."

"About what? Tell me, other self, we're one of the same."

"About why we had to go on a quest to obtain an ancient page to break the watcher of fate's fury?"

"My fault, buddy," said a cheery tone, "-I didn't expect him to get so angry. I thought I could threaten people as you do."

"There's a time and place to use force, and another for finesse. Look at us now, we wander around a vast area of blue and clouds, the scene never changes, what are we even doing here?"

"To find the true, dearest other self."

Chapter 679: True Demonlord [10]

"What's the obsession with the truth, I'm honestly at a loss here. The realm we hover in is naught but an empty space of blue and white."

"My dearest other self, are you perhaps, angry at me?"

"Not really, I'm angry at what we've become. I swore to not get involved in politics, look at me, a noble. I swore to avenge Chef Leko and Alicia, look at me, I made amends. I swore to become strong, look at me, trapped in a realm of incertitude."

"Igna, my dear other self, the pain and helplessness you feel is my projection of how I feel. I'm at a loss too, what was the purpose of my coming, I felt the worldly realm and the compelling force of emotions. I still have no idea what to do or what to say really."

"That is the very definition of life. An open world where everything affects nothing, and nothing affects everything. People pass their days thinking of the future, some live in the past, and many forget the present. I've slowly come to embrace that I never talk about myself, I have thoughts and moments of doubt, weak acts. Habits take the better of me and I fall into a world of incertitude."

"What's eating at you?"

"I don't know, but something is. When I think about the companions I've made, I feel as if I'm alive. Push back time to when I was a boy on the battlefield, my priorities were survival and getting strong. I lived my prior life in search of greater power, and I somewhat achieved the goal. Now, when I think about strength, I see the lovely faces of my goddesses, my guardians, and the people of the Shadow Realm. I don't know why, strength isn't just me being able to crush the opponent, the meaning's shifted, you know?"

.....

"I know and I understand completely," said Origin, "-I feel the same way. To be honest, the reason I accepted the pact was to partly inherit the body of he who was chosen by Death and Time and acknowledged by Creation. The other deities or demons for said matter, aren't worth my time, neither is Zeus. They have bland personalities and childish convictions at best. The whole ordeal against the titans of old has taken most of the godly realm to stand united. The Supreme God and his ironclad rule have worked great. Who is to say about the future."

"I've known from the start. Do you think me daft; I knew you wanted to make the perfect being, and I accepted because you are Origin, the start, and end of all."

"We bought sought power from one another," he chuckled, "-in a way, the moment we joined, I knew I found the perfect partner. Someone's who's outside persona is one of an anti-hero and inside persona defects from evil to good, to then greater chaos, and then lawfulness. Honestly, you're the most emotionally unstable being I've seen, and I think, tis said unstableness that makes you emotionless."

"I've just grown numb to it. Whatever whims say, we do."

"I know right. You follow the wind per the listlessness of a dandelion. Quite impressive in its own way. So, you wanted answers about why the meaning of strength has shifted right?"

"Yes, I want to know the truth."

"It's simpler than you think. Igna Haggard is strong alone, but stronger with his companions. I know the cliché about united is strength will bug you, and it bugs me too, still, the moment the Shadow Realm became its own domain, the instinct of being a watcher forced a new passive quest on thee, to safeguard and evolve the dimension without prejudice. It feels right, and that's all that matters."

"Care to clarify?"

"I'm saying, it's the will of someone who's subconsciously inherited the authority of a god. You control land in which people are born, die, reproduce, basically, an alternate world. You're their gods, they venerate and admire their guardian. Think of it like Vanesa, Saniata, and Draconis, for they're thy children, don't you wish for them to get stronger and become better persons, don't you have the urge to protect them at all costs?"

"Partly, yes, it's my responsibility."

"Took the words right out of my mouth. It is your responsibility, instead of three children, you have a whole population to care for. Understand, being a watcher, and guardian of a realm is more trouble than due. Still, the moment of fear when they are in danger drives thee to use everything at thy immediate disposal. For example, the Prince of Lust and high-demon Kul. Defying the law of reality to

heal their wounds; the watcher of destiny said it to be sacrilegious. In the many possibilities of futures I've seen, this one is new and undisturbed."

"I saved them, what's wrong with that?"

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"You saved them using the powers of one who breaks the law of reality, a highly shunned offense in the eyes of the gods, but admired in the eyes of the demons. Thing is, the affinity for either side is somewhat of a strength. We stand at a crossroad, whatever thee chooses will affect your perception of the world."

"What are the options?"

"Acquire the title of Watcher of the Shadow Realm and relinquish the title to grow strong. Otherwise, disregard the title of Watcher and continue life as has been. Either choice won't affect much."

"Can't be but notice the title of Watcher. The Watcher of all, Origin. The Watcher of Destiny, and now, the Watcher of the Shadow Realm, what does it mean?"

"How can I describe it. By the standard of a mortal being, there are two otherworldly beings of which they prey and fear. First, angels, the good, and devils, the bad. Above are the gods and demons. Those ignorant to the godly realm are content by such a hierarchy. Remember I spoke of the levels of the domain? How a human can't hurt god because of their standards?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Above the Supreme god, comes Creation, and Death. Needless to say, Creation can't be hurt either way one looks at it. Above them come an undisclosed title for in their name alone speak of their destiny, the Watchers. Technically speaking, Creation is a Watcher too. Even I can't give much description to the title, tis not set in stone, they have a duty and they follow it. They can be either powerful and weak, depends on which type of being they are. One thing runs along commonly, they protect their possession relentlessly. We've met the Watcher of Destiny, quite the interesting fellow."

"Don't omit information, my gut says being a watcher is more trouble than due."

"Yeah, not in the way you think. Watcher's duties are given by themselves. They're independent beings working above the law of reality, and even above truth itself. They're like me in a way that they don't affect much, and if they do affect, it is very little or massively great."

"Good on you to add more things to think about," he gently shook his head. The duo hovered about the great land of clouds and vast blueness. Origin, in the lead, turned left and right knowingly. "What's the benefit of being a Watcher?"

"There's none," returned Origin, "-it's just a title, you won't get powers unless the tomb of Athnak sees thee worthy."

"Hold on a moment," he stopped, Origin carried a few meters and turned, "-something the matter, other self?"

"Tomb of Athnak. Origin," the eyes narrowed, "-you planned this, haven't you."

“Whatever do you mean?” asked he in a jovial dramatic fashion.

“Come on,” he smiled, “-my other self, direct witness to the many schemes, must have one of his own. The voice I heard to break reality was yours – I’m sure the Tomb of Athnak is at the end of this maze. I’m no fool, dearest other self,” he hovered to wrap his arms around Origin’s shoulders, “-we’re one of the same, come on,” they exchanged smiles and fist bumps.

“Guess I was found out. You’re right, I purposefully angered Destiny to send us here.”

“What powers await us?”

“The ability to alter reality,” he smirked.

“Isn’t it a sacrilege?”

“No, don’t misunderstand. The conjuration of Mantia has another hidden purpose. The realm is a representation of the knowledge I have amassed. And within it, if not for me, you’d be lost without a guide or semblance of know-how to evade the grasp. Yes, in a way, dearest old self, Mantia is a borrowed power.”

“What about now?”

“Tis insurance, I want us to be more powerful. And as the one who proposed the title of Watcher, I’ll assign your goal, and never-ending conviction, how does it sound?”

“Depends on what it is.”

“I want the Shadow Realm and its residents to never be put in harm’s way. I want the realm to grow into the strongest domain ever spawned from a god’s will. What I want, from the bottom of my borrowed heart, is for a repeat of Asmodeus and Kul to never happen. What I say is, protect your allies before us, I can’t bear the pain of losing another.”

“Didn’t see this coming,” he exhaled, “-Origin, are my emotions too much to handle?”

“Give me a break with the sarcasm. Other self,” brief and to the point, “-memories of the past life, the countless death, the howling scream of those you’ve killed, that damned sword and gun, it’s a cacophony of never-ending sorrow. I want the voices to find peace, and for that to happen, you must become a watcher and protect those I care about. Emphasis on I, for I care about our companions deeply too.”

“I’m sorry, didn’t think it be so harsh on thee.”

“Think nothing of it, I’ve poured my heart out, we share a commonness, lying to one another is impossible.”

“I know,” he nodded reassuringly, “-why do you think I trust thee so much?”

“Understood, about Athnak, he’s the first watcher and watcher of watchers. He grants to title alongside its powers, think of him as Creation but way stronger. Once acquired, Mantia will become yours and transfer to the Shadow Realm and merge to Kronos’s sickle, forever binding the symbol of power to said realm. You understand the risk involved right?”

“We’ll forever lose the ability to control time?”

“No, means the domain will exist beyond time, on the same level to the godly realm, well a bit lower.” In before his eyes, the blueness shuffled and crumbled to a piece of hovering land. Here, stone bricks were layered in various shapes and sizes. In the middle stood a tablet, underneath which wrote Tomb of Athnak, in ancient writing.

“Welcome, seekers of the truth,” said an omnipresent voice, “-I see Origin has come in the company of a stranger being. Say, child, what doth thee wish?”

He threw a look of concern towards Origin, who in turn, nodded to say, ‘-don’t worry.’ Annoyed by the lack of answer, “-I’ve come to acquire the conviction of a Watcher.”

“FOOL!” shuddered the ground, “-speak not of our title so frivolously. I say again, what doth thee wish?”

“T-” Origin lifted a hand, “-Athnak, Watcher of watchers, word speak naught, feel the boy’s conviction, look deep, and thou shalt see.”

“Nonsense. Approach boy, lay thy hands on my tablet, I must confirm what he says.”

A shrug led to the cold rough-faced edifice, ‘-here goes nothing,’ the palm rested square-flat.

“UNBELIEVABLE,” the stone broke and vanished, “-I grant thee thy wish!”

‘What the hell?’ a vortex began to swallow the air, “-Origin...”

“Have a good trip,” he waved.

“FOR THE LOVE OF-” *slurp* in one end and out the other, “-WHAT WAS THAT!” the overarching sensation was of a fast slide.

“That, my other self, was the indication and test to being called a Watcher. Look at thy left arm,” the mark of Undrar reappeared to merge with, Origin, Kronos and Death. “-Tis proves you’re the Watcher of the Shadow Realm.”

“Really?” the eyes shimmered, “-I don’t feel anything,” he returned blankly.

“Oh,” he chuckled and laughed, “-this is why I chose you,” he buried face in hands, “-I swear, ahahaha.”

Chapter 680: True Demonlord [11]

“Am I missing the joke?”

“Not really,” replied Origin regathering his breath, “-I expected something big to happen. The blank expression matches the initiation more than I could have hoped. You’re now a Watcher of the Shadow Realm.”

“And, what is that supposed to be?”

“Let me explain. We go back to Mantia, the summoned realm into the real world. When the barrier is expanded, it allows for the host to draw knowledge from the library and apply it to only that limited barrier. As Watcher of the Shadow Realm, by the symbol of power, is what I expected. Athnak saw the eligibility to be granted dominion over space and time. In other words, the reality is what you wish it to

be. There's a catch, for the Watcher's power to manifest, you must first expand Mantia, which has merged with the Shadow Realm. Your domain is stronger than before, and there's no one to take it away. Mantia is yours fully, congratulations other-self, you've grown stronger by doing nothing again."

"I thought so," eyes to his palms, "-I'm always granted power at the least expected time. There's no cause or reason to it, whatever happens, happens. The question which bugs me, how strong am I compared to deities?"

"I can't say," paused to check the reaction, "-not going to take no for an answer?" the arms crossed in thought, "-here, this should do fine. Depending on the rank of the Domain, Watcher of the Shadow Realm, thee might be able to forever seal a god's power, steal said ability, and do whatever thee wishes on conditions Mantia's been expanded. Partial or Full expansion will work either way. Forgot to mention, once's the realm is deployed, there won't be a need to cast spells, just think, and it shall appear. The use of a personal domain expands a person's greatest expectation. I've efficiently given you my never-ending knowledge and the power to rule over reality. What say you, other self."

"Awesome," he smiled, "-thank you very much, Origin, I can't repay the favor."

.....

"Who says repay," they hugged, "-we're one of the same, what's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine. We share, we cry, and we fight. If you die, I'll die, and if I die, you'll die."

"Should we head on back?" inquired Origin.

"You excited to go?"

"Hell yeah," he cheered, "-I want to see what sort of chaos thee'll cause," the friendly tone promptly halted before a portal, "-remember what I say. Swear to protect the Shadow Realm and the people closest to us. I don't ever want to see them be hurt. Use whatever means is necessary, turn the world against us if tis the price, their safety is the only payment I ask."

"Understood," they elbowed, a subtle light swallowed their figures to a pinch of dust.

Shivers went from the legs to the neck, the fresh sensation of the cold morning air being inhaled, the eyelids opened slowly to the sound of gunfire. '-What's happening?' eyes rubbed and off the bed, the curtain parted grandly to a jarring sight. The gates broke, the lovely yard of which éclair had cared for so long laid in a pool of dust and debris. The bodies of many unknowns were on the ground, '-an ambush?' reality settled, the distant sound of helicopters rattled his instincts.

CLICK! a figure barged into the room, blood poured down the head, the right shoulder rested emotionlessly, it barely hung, "-save the master's body," panted the figure, "-we must save the master..." it lent forward and buckled.

"Hey, hey," rushed forth, "-watch your step," he caught the injured lady, "-Kul, talk to me," he tapped her bloodied cheeks, "-Kul, wake up damn you."

"M-master," her eyes shone in recognition, "-good morning, took your time," despite the pain, she pulled a smile and coughed, "-trust me, you need to run, this guy is the worst enemy we could have faced..."

“Do you know my name?” the eyes dowsed in bloody-red, *Mana Control: Healing Element Variant: Restoration.* ‘-my mana capacity is back to when I lived as Staxius. This is what I’m talking about,’ the healing hue restored Kul without hassle, her injured mind suddenly cramped and eased.

“Master...”

“Welcome to the world of the living,” said he, *Come Forth: Portal to the Shadow Realm.* “-I have a lot of questions, though, I’ll content myself with this act. Go to the Shadow Realm and ask for Goddess Miira to prepare for potential injured allies. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes sir,” she rambled on with a singular thought, ‘-master’s stronger.’ The cacophony of the impending battle approached, connection to éclair was ruptured. ‘Who’s brave enough to attack us?’ the ajar door opened fully to the scent of burns. ‘-The lift’s a bad idea.’ The mere thought and the right pupil bleached white thus came the ability to see and gauge the invaders. ‘Very meticulous in their advancement.’

Guardian Spirit of mine, Vengeance, I, thy master, beckon thee!

“How might I serve?” it knelt.

“Do you have the ability to create a portal to the Shadow Realm?”

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“No my lord, I can only teleport myself.”

Then, per the title granted by Athnak, I, Igna Haggard, Watcher of the Shadow Realm, grant Vengeance the authority to teleport whoever he wishes to the realm of mine.

“Are you sure my lord?”

“Definitely, here are my orders. Find and rescue my companions, spare none. Aceline and Vanesa are the priorities.”

“What if I encounter monsters?”

“Fight only if thee can destroy them, if not, retreat. I have my doubts the enemy’s far stronger than we imagine.”

“Shall be done, my lord,” it vanished.

Ancient-Magic: Teleportation. ‘About the invaders,’ he reappeared in the scorched corridor, “-Greeting gentlemen!”

“HUH?” fully-gear'd soldiers posited towards the lift jumped, “-who stands there!” the weapons faced back immediately.

“Don’t you dare point those toys at me,” *Blood-Arts: Crimson Threads* a subtle whiff passed their step, the rifles, cleanly sliced through the middle, broke into pieces. The fearful sight forced a reach for the pistols, *Blood-Arts: Extria,* the flow of blood inversed and instantly killed the invaders, ‘-they’d have given no information.’ *Blood-Arts: Bloody Mary,* the crimson liquid poured from every pore till the long-awaited halo of the blood-king. As for the bodies, he faced away, and it turned to dust. ‘-What’s truly happened here?’ focused towards the basement, ‘-they haven’t invaded there yet, there’s a

strange barrier in place. Illusion, éclair must have used it to fool the invaders. My art-gallery's been safeguarded, how very nice of him, I ought to reward the man later.' No time wasted, the ground rumbled by the sound of massive tires under behemoths, 'they're a state-level insurgency. Which faction, can't tell.' The front door, once majestic and intricate, remained a broken relic of what used to be. Enemies arrived in full, the helicopters blatantly surveyed the area.

'Who has the prestige to call such an attack on a resident. Unless it's a raid from the police force, I don't see a reason. Or maybe a rivaling gang... questions, hypothesis, no answers.'

"Master," reappeared Vengeance, "éclair was slain in battle, he's back to the Shadow Realm. Lady Aceline is safe, the butler used his strength to teleport her to the domain."

"Good thinking on his part, what about Vanesa?"

"Sadly, the young mistress was taken hostage by the first attacker, by éclair's account, she used her abilities to halt the invasion and buy time."

"Enough, they've overstepped their boundaries. Take command of a squad of Ombres, and wipe out Scouters and the nearby reinforcement. Contact me after the control center is found, take the leader hostage if possible, cut his limbs, if need be, I want the fucker restrained. They've moved against my property, and against my companions. Not to mention, my lovely daughter used herself as bait to save what I worked hard to protect. I'm a bad father," despite the composed way of speech, the intent fueled a burning desire to avenge, Vengeance's mind overwhelmed by his master's unfiltered ire.

Imminent steps out of the manor were accompanied by the overhanging feeling of nausea. Mana exuded by each stride; the face dulled to nothingness. The spirit disappeared to do his bidding.

CRASH, a meteoric proportioned boulder landed meters away, a crater spawned smoke and a desolate figure, "How strong can that guy be," it complained. Igna watched and waited, "he's back for more, I swear, Kul had to do and die first," few shakes of the head, and the man clambered to the invaded yard. The militarized vehicles aimed and waited for further orders. "Oh, I'm in trouble."

"Asmodeus," said Igna, "quite the landing."

"Master," he smiled, "Kul managed to wake thee up, she's amazing."

"And you?" closer examination showed torn clothes and stretch marks from mortally healed wounds.

"Depends, man, the attack came so suddenly I don't even know where to start."

"Leave the talk for later," he moved in front of the prince, "where's Vanesa."

"Over there," he pointed above the chopper, "the entity's held her hostage, I tried to rescue to no avail, we can't help her, are you sure about this?"

"Don't forget who I am," the face straightened, 'damned fools,' *Blood-Arts: Extria.*

Meanwhile, up in the skies, "you'll be sorry when pops awakens."

"Shut up child, I care not for weaklings. None in this realm shall be able to defeat or even lay a hand on me. Mistress of Plague, thou art a pitiable sight, such a covenanted title granted to a listless baby."

“Oh no. Better brace for impact.”

“What do you mean, child?”

“Look below,” she pointed with her feet, “-pops is back and looking at us, you’re dead.”

“Impossible, he can’t reach-” the eyes widened, *CRASH.*

“Do people not realize how stupid it is?” said Igna before a newly made crater.

“POPS!” she smiled, “-WELCOME BACK.”

“Good to see you,” he threw her to Asmodeus, “-retreat, I’ll handle the mess from here on.” *Snap,* the portal swiftly evacuated the companions, the bicolored pupils gave to totally white and marred by spots of red, “-for the transgression of attacking my property and my associates, thee must face judgment.”

“Impossible!” refuted the entity, “-how did you reach me from such low grounds?”

“I used Vanesa’s blood to pull thee both. Must I explain my actions to a dead man?”

“Ha-ha-ha-ha. Who the hell are you?”

“I’m the one who destroys those in my path.”

Watchers, spectators, names ring high and low, us, unknown to the world’s reality, unknown to the world’s knowledge, have lived in utter solemnity for millennia to come and go. Watcher of the Shadow Realm, beckons my might to be fully materialized without prejudice, reality is but my playground, neither god or demon shall overcome my authority, face me in stride, face me in fear, reality’s what I wish it to be for knowledge is the true strength: Realm Expansion Shadow Realm Variant – Rantiam.

A nonchalant smirk told what awaited, two wormholes sustained above and below the manor’s location in the shape of an upward and downward umbrella, noticeable for miles on end, before joined to wrap the entire hill in a mist of grand proportion.

Leader of the insurgence peeped with, “-what’s the matter?”

“I don’t know,” replied the entity, “-we’re trapped inside a barrier.”

“Not a barrier, uncultured vultures. Tis the manifestation of who thou dared hurt,” the hill flattered to a desert-like scape. The sun, represented by a child’s drawing, shuffled from side to side, “-Doth thee wish to battle?” inquired Igna.

“COCKY BASTARD,” the entity charged.

He waited and said, “-back at you.” *Left arm, break* the sound of crushed bones solicited a cringe by the crowd.

“MY ARMS!” it yelled, “-MY AUTHORITY AS GOD SLAYER, WHAT’S BECOME OF IT.”

“The stolen powers?” he stood still, “-try again, you might nick me.”

“DON’T LOOK DOWN ON ME!” he clawed up and dashed.

Both legs, break.

“-AAHHHHHH”

“Don’t you understand, I control reality itself,” blocks of void matter circled above the right shoulder, “-watch me carefully.” *Insurgence’s vehicles become toys.*

“Huh?” they watched cluelessly.

Die with the harshest pain known to men.

Said day, the screams of the attackers would forever be seared, “-head on back and tell thy leader, cross paths against me or my companions, and death shall awaits.”