

## Supreme M 461

### Chapter 461 Dawn Court Part 2

"I don't want you to take unnecessary risks. We have interacted with all three undead Courts in the past, so I can at least help you by not letting them catch you unprepared." Sylpha continued.

"Don't trust anyone unless they have offered you their hospitality. It's their most sacred vow and the only one they won't break. Only ask questions, never for help. Otherwise it would make you indebted to them.

"Do not bring with you anything that you are unwilling to part from. As your hosts, they may request a gift of their choice. Refusing would instantly end the negotiations.

"Always emphasize that you are speaking on behalf of the Kingdom, so that if they require compensation for their services, they will not be able to ask anything from you. Ponder every word and say as little as possible. Do you have any questions for me?"

"If the Griffon Kingdom knows about these Courts, why are they still standing?" Lith asked.

"I have no idea about the scope of their power or agenda, but they seem powerful enough to represent a threat. Having a country inside the country looks dangerous to me."

"For the same reasons every one of the three great Countries can't destroy them." Sylpha sighed.

"Some of their members exist from the time before even our Kingdom was founded. Not only do they are powerful and wise, but they also have made secrecy a form of art.

"I know from experience that they have functioning Warping arrays even inside cities like Othre, where is supposed to be impossible. The second biggest reason that makes it hard to spot them is that they do not interfere in political struggles.

"They do not seek temporal power. Their interests and our own rarely meet or collide. Between their limited numbers and the discretion with which they operate, finding one of their safe houses is just a matter of luck."

The more Lith learned about them, the less he liked the situation he was in. Undead on Mogar seemed to act more like an Earth's secret society rather than the dumb monsters he was used to see in horror movies or in Dungeons & Looting rulebooks.

'This is way worse than I thought. Even the Dawn Court sounds like a vipers' nest. I need to tread with extreme caution.' Lith grumbled.

'Don't you mean "we"?' It was the first time since they had met that Lith excluded her from his plans. It was enough to shock Solus's very core.

'No, this time I'm alone. I don't know who I'll meet and the more ancient a being is, the more likely is for them to be Awakened or at least have artifacts that can grant them senses akin to Life Vision. I can't risk bringing you along.

'I can't forget how everyone who learned about your existence reacted. Nalear, Scarlett, the Black Star. They were all either scared or anxious to study you. I'm more than confident to be able to kill a single undead, but a whole Court?

'I doubt they can't rip you off from my dead body once I run out of tricks. They have the advantage of numbers and experience. You have seen how powerful Kaelan is.

'I've practiced true magic from barely seventeen years and learned about tier four and five only two years ago. I can't compare with someone with centuries of practice.'

After the Queen ended the call, Lith didn't wait for Kalla's answer to prepare for his departure. He had the army give him a second uniform and entrusted everything he had on himself to Tista.

He only kept Solus's ring. He was unwilling to part from her for even one more second than was strictly necessary. The memory of what had happened when Nalear had severed their bond was deeply etched in their minds.

Even though this time they would just be apart, the unbridled rage that possessed him whenever he was by himself scared him. Solus was more than his moral compass and his life companion.

She was the sun that marked the thin line between sanity and madness that he had walked along his whole life. Lith wasn't a murderous brute, but the idea of having to fight alone against his inner demons while facing centuries old tricksters was far from appealing.

Kalla contacted him again a few minutes after he was done with his preparation.

"I've set you an appointment with Othre's Dawn Court. Beware, though, I have no one I can trust among their ranks." Kalla gave him the same advice Queen Sylpha did, before telling him the time and place where he would find her contact.

Lith was supposed to be on a small hill outside the city gates in less than five minutes. It was a safety measure to make it impossible for someone to follow him or to arrange a trap for the Court's envoy.

Lith knew he had no time to lose, yet taking off Solus's ring took him several seconds. He put Solus on Tista's open palm, his fingers refusing to let go of the smooth stone surface that had become more familiar to him than his own flesh and bones.

"Don't worry. I'll be back soon." He said to both girls while closing Tista's fingers over the ring. Lith had already lost too much time. He left the Association's building in a hurry and took off at full speed toward his destination.

Much to his surprise, his communication amulet drew his consciousness soon after he left Othre. Kalla's rune was blinking again.

"One last thing." She said after making sure he was alone.

"Don't worry about hiding your nature of Awakened one. Most ancient undead just need a sniff of our blood or a gaze to recognize us. So I told them that you are one of us and as such you are protected."

"Protected from what?" Lith asked. "Now that I think about it, it's surprising that during your travels no one tried to force you to share the secret of Awakening. I can understand that undead have a strong sense of kinship, but bad apples are everywhere."

"Protected from being kidnapped, forced to reveal your secrets, or having your family threatened. Just like the undead have their Courts, we Awakened ones have our Council.

"It doesn't care if we live or die, but whoever tries to force their way to Awakening is bound to die. The Council doesn't guard our lives, but treasures our secret. No one, no matter how powerful wants to cross the Council.

"Awakened ones are a race of their own and are merciless. Some of its members are almost as ancient as this continent. If they combine their efforts, wiping the Courts off the face of Mogar would require but the blink of an eye."

"How do I contact them?" Lith asked.

"They'll contact you when they will deem you ready." Kalla hung up, leaving Lith more amused than worried by that piece of information. After studying the history of the Kingdom, he had always suspected the Council's existence.

Over the centuries, too many mages had died or disappeared after announcing world shaking revelations about magic's true potential.

## Chapter 462 Rituals Part 1

Lith had no trouble finding the meeting place. With the incoming winter, the outskirts of Othre were deserted. Both humans and animals were completing the last preparations before the first snowfall.

Even though there was still time before the end of the fall season, the temperature would plummet after sunset. Away from the stone buildings, the dry winds coming down the nearby mountain range whipped at Lith's skin.

His breath steamed in the cold of the night while the air currents were so strong that he needed to conjure a wind barrier to protect his eyes and not get pushed off course.

Usually, Lith would employ Fire Vision to scout his surroundings, but given the nature of his hosts, it wouldn't be of any use. Dead bodies released no heat, only Life Vision could spot them.

The hill was the highest point within a few kilometers from Othre. It was a rugged and barren landscape, yet he could see too many lingering magical energies for it to be just a coincidence.

Despite it was almost the convened time, Lith was alone.

"I understand why you like this place. With a clear sky, there is no place to hide. You can spot anyone approaching from miles away." Lith said to a shadow near the summit.

"How did you know I was here?" The shadows opened, revealing a young man in his early twenties. He was a normal human being, of average height and build. The wind ruffled his brown hair while his deep green eyes showed only surprise.

"Magic." Lith replied. The black cape the youth wore would fuse him with the darkness as long as he remained still, but the cloth's magical aura was perfectly visible to Life Vision.

"Show me your invitation." The man ignored Lith's provocation and spoke with a kind, baritone voice. Lith raised his left palm and sent some mana into it. The runes Kalla had bestowed upon him a few weeks before produced a white light.

The youth took Lith's hand to watch them closely. His body shivered at the contact. The cape protected him from the cold even better than Lith's Ranger uniform did, but it could do nothing against killing intent.

Lith hated being touched and without Solus to soothe his violent nature, he was ready to kill the stranger at the slightest provocation. He had weaved several spells on his way to the hill, and all of them were now prickling his skin, only kept at bay by Lith's will.

It was their threat that he was perceiving. Lith was placid like the surface of a lake instead. His eyes were ablaze with mana as he examined the stranger with Life Vision from head to toe.

Aside from the cape, he had only an enchanted item inside his breast pocket. Its aura was too weak for a weapon. After a few seconds, the youth nodded and let go of Lith's hand. He took a small mana stone out of his pocket, placing it inside a hole in the ground.

Dozens of runes lit up the hill's summit while two concentric magic circles formed in front of Lith's astonished eyes.

'I recognize the magic circles, this is a Warping array. Yet it even escaped Life Vision's detection. Dammit, I wish Solus was here. She would have no problem understanding what's going on here.'

Knowing that she would be able to access all of his memories later, Lith tried to memorize everything he could while keeping an eye on his host.

'Wait a minute.' He thought once the array was perfectly formed. The runes had left the ground and were now floating in mid air. 'I recognize some of those runes. They are the same that were engraved on the god of healing's altar.'

Lith tried to remember if the altar had any socket, but all that came to his mind was dust and cobwebs. He was too used relying on Solus's assistance to take note of small details.

"Don't bother memorizing this place." The youth said, misunderstanding the reason Lith was staring at the magical formation. "It's likely that the array will be destroyed as soon as we leave. Humans cannot be trusted." Disgust coated his last phrase.

At any other moment, Lith would have made a snarky remark about both of them being human. Without Solus, he could only think about how annoying it was all that chatter and suppress the desire to break his neck.

He followed the youth inside the magical formation, appearing inside a richly decorated room. It had no windows, making it impossible for Lith to understand their new location.

The furniture was made of inlaid secular wood while the ornaments, from the flower pots to the book ends, were made of solid precious metals. The air was filled with the sweet scent of flowers he had never seen before, yet Lith was certain to be underground.

Ever since he had refined the blue core, his body would naturally breathe in the surrounding world energy. The imbalance between air and earth mana told him that the room was surrounded by tons of rocks.

He kept using Life Vision, noticing that several unknown arrays covered the room. He used first magic to check if any element was blocked. Much to his surprise, everything worked just fine, even gravity and dimensional magic.

"There's no need to be so nervous, Awakened Verhen." Lith turned abruptly toward the source of the feminine voice. It sounded as sweet as honey and blissful as only first love can be.

It belonged to a red-headed woman in her late twenties. She was about 1.7 meters (5'7") tall, wearing a bright red silk satin evening dress emphasizing her pale skin and soft curves. Her emerald parure matched her green eyes, making them even more dazzling.

"I'm Sylla Ekna, Duchess of the Dawn Court. I offer you our hospitality on behalf of our Queen for as long as you wish to stay among us. Treat us with the same respect we'll give you and there will be no enmity between us."

Lith ignored her words and stared at her with Life Vision. She was weaker than Kaelarn, so he was sure he would be able to kill her if necessary. Neither her superficial kindness nor the miles of cleavage she was showing impressed him.

In life, she would have been considered far less beautiful than Friya, but undeath gave her smooth, delicate features and kept her body lithe. Every one of her movements was graceful and sensual, yet Lith knew he was in the presence of a predator.

"I'm Great Mage Lith Verhen of her Majesty service. I speak and act on behalf of the Royal Court of the Griffon Kingdom. I thank you for your hospitality and I hope that albeit we meet as strangers, we'll part ways as friends." He replied quoting the ceremonial Kalla had taught him.

Sylla's left eye twitched in annoyance. Not only did the human's indifferent gaze offend her to no end, but he had also avoided all the missteps that would have allowed the Dawn Court to kick him out or at least demand some of his blood as compensation.

Awakened ones were a rare delicacy.

"Please, tell me what can we do for you." She sat on one of the chairs, inviting him to do the same while the brown-haired man served them drinks.

Lith explained to her Othre's situation. He noticed how with each detail he provided, her annoyance was replaced by a gloating expression.

"You are lucky, I think we can help you. For the right price, of course."

## Chapter 463 Rituals Part 2

Lith took a deep breath and let Life Vision fade away. He had used it non stop since he had landed on the hill and the built up fatigue had already reached the point of giving him a mild headache.

Despite it was one of the first abilities he had learned as a kid, using Life Vision still put a heavy burden on his mind and mana. Unlike normal spells, Life Vision evolved with Lith's core refinement.

The more powerful he became, the more details Life Vision revealed. He was now able to read the mana currents natural beings produced, see the runes which composed arrays even when they were invisible, and gather basic information about enchanted items from a distance.

Not only was the mana consumption high, but also it required great focus to avoid sensory overload. Everything on Mogar had mana, forcing Lith to filter the useless information.

The task was particularly hard when he was in the presence of lots of strong magical signatures. Studying his host, the room, and its arrays while keeping his guard up all the time had brought him on the verge of needing to use Invigoration.

Unluckily, he couldn't afford it. Lith had already used it once to recover after the fight against the perfect Carpenter and another to save his companions. With each use, Invigoration would grant him less and less energy.

'The night is still young. First, I have to deal with the Dawn Court, then we need to rescue Manohar, and lastly take out the puppet master. Knowing my luck, I'll have to pave my way in blood, steel, and magic.' Lith sighed.

"Thanks for your offer, but the Kingdom is capable of dealing with this threat on its own. I came to you hoping you could share with me everything you know. The Crown will adequately compensate you for your assistance." Lith kept in mind the Queen's warnings and stalled for time.

According to Solus, since the last breakthrough, with every breath Lith would draw a bit of world energy. It allowed him to recover his strength faster than normal, even without using Invigoration.

"You seem to be unaware of Othre's situation. Our negotiations will not make any progress if you don't even know what we are talking about." Sylla business attitude was a breath of fresh air now that she had stopped being flirtatious.

"The Dawn Court has little hold on Othre. Trade cities are of no interest to us aside from the merch they provide. Othre belongs to the Night Court, our presence here is a mere formality to protect our interests.

"If you want to know what's happening, you should ask the Night Court, but they are unlikely to give audience to a mortal. Unless, of course, another Court backs their request and makes sure they get out of it in one piece."

"Let me guess. The Night Court will require something in exchange for its help. Maybe something that only your people can provide. It would make us indebted to you twice." At Lith's words, Sylla's ravenous smile returned.

She liked her prey smart. All that talking made her hungry.

"Exactly. While setting up a meeting is not a big deal, depending on their demands the Dawn Court might require something more exotic than money or magical treasures."

"Then arrange a negotiation table, please. As you surely know, I'm on the clock. If the Night Court sets too high a price, I can turn them down with no consequences, right?" Lith asked.

Sylla nodded in reply and summoned the brown haired man.

"Caspen, you know what to do." The youth gave her a small bow before leaving the room.

"Do you mind a personal question?" Lith pondered about his situation and the nature of his host.

'Worst case scenario, I'm not going back empty handed. Maybe the temple of Xhal hides a Warping array like the one that brought me here. If I'm right, it means that carving those runes leaves a permanent Gate that lacks a power source.' He thought.

'It's incredibly ingenious, since in its depowered state it escaped even Solus's mana sense detection. With all those runes, it's impossible to understand which ones form the array and which are just gibberish.

'It must be an ancient form of magic the undead have preserved.'

"Sure, but I expect you to answer one of my own." Her fluttering of eyelashes gave Lith the creeps. Sylla looked at him like Lith would at a skirt steak.

"You have a heartbeat and an almost human smell, so I was wondering, what kind of undead are you?"

"I'm a banshee." She replied with a flattered smile, like he had complimented her attire. "Caspin is my Vassal, but I can't grant him any power until he becomes one of us."

Lith nodded, pretending he had an idea of what her words meant. Aside from those from the Gaelic lore, the only banshees he knew were those from Dungeon & Looting rulebook.

'She sure doesn't look like a cursed elf maiden.' He thought while staring at her perfectly normal ears.

On Mogar, banshees weren't just women. Anyone who had been cheated on by their alleged one true love could become one. They needed to kill with their hands the person who turned their love into hatred and then commit suicide.

If their rage and despair were strong enough, it would lure a nearby banshee who could then decide to turn them into one of their own. Outside the three Courts, it was an event as likely as being killed by a meteorite.

Banshees fed on the life force of the unfaithful. They could either just kill them, or slowly drive them into madness. Their vengeful nature made them skilled seducers. For a banshee there was no greater pleasure than feeding on those who fell for their temptations.

Lith being both faithful and an Awakened made him a world class buffet in her eyes.

"Do you have an ear fetish?" She asked while leaning toward him while sweeping her hair to allow him to take a better look at the alleged object of his desires. She was now so close that their lips were barely an inch apart.

"Not at all." Lith moved his seat back to regain some personal space. "I was afraid you would ask for something juicier. How long will it take to get the Night Court's reply?"

Sylla's eyes turned black in anger when she realized her blunder. Hunger had got the better of her and made her waste her opportunity to force him to open up with her. Caspen's return helped her to regain her cool.

"It's already done, please follow me."

She led him through corridors filled with exquisite decorations. There wasn't an inch of floor or walls that wasn't covered by lavish carpets, golden embroidered tapestry, and paintings so beautiful that even someone as unappreciative of arts like Lith had no problem to recognize as masterpieces.

Sylla moved so fast that Lith could only steal a glance here and there before she opened a door and let him enter first.

The amount of mana filling the room almost blinded Lith, forcing him to shield his eyes with one hand.

#### Chapter 464 Foul Moon Part 1

The source of his distress wasn't the magical nature of all the items in the room, from the round black mahogany table to the silk covered armchairs.

Nor it was the densely packed arrays surrounding the area. Lith had seen much worse during his visits to the Royal Palace. Kaelarn was sitting on the opposite side of the round table in front of him, with the rejuvenated Count Xolver standing right behind his master.

Sitting on the left side of the table, there was a skeletal figure, which despite its rotten flesh and dusty clothes emitted a majestic aura like Lith had never seen before. The creature appeared like a sun to his Life Vision, making it easy for Lith to recognize its nature as Awakened one and Lich.

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City of Othre, Mage Association's meeting room.

Lith had left for a little more than two hours, but his few possessions already weighted like stones in Tista's arms. She would use Invigoration on them from time to time, using their imprint to reassure herself that her brother was still alive.

Jirni wasn't worried for him, yet her eyes refused to move from the sheathed form of the Gatekeeper which laid on the table in front of her. She remembered all too well how long she and Phloria had pestered Orion to Forgemaster the sword as Lith's birthday present.

Those were other times, when that blade was much more than a simple instrument to kill. For Jirni it had been a means to multiple ends. It was supposed to help Lith to stay alive amid the chaos of any battlefield.

To guarantee the happiness of her daughter, Phloria. To lay the foundations of a relationship that would bring glory to the Ernas household. Her fingers caressed the hilt of the sword, recognizing the markings of her husband's craftsmanship.

All of that was in the past, making Jirni love and hate that cold piece of metal at once. In her eyes, it held too many broken promises and wishes that never came true.

Kamila stared at her now empty hand. She could swear to be able to feel his warmth lingering on it. Her mind was fixated on the image of the camellia waiting for her in their hotel room.

She had brought it to Othre from her apartment a couple of days after she had moved there, unwilling to let it die because of Commander Berion's manipulations.

'I do realize we don't know each other for long, just like I'm aware that since this mission started we've been nothing more than roommates until this evening. Then why does it hurt that he left without saying goodbye? How much do I really care about our relationship?'

Inside her ring form, Solus had yet to metabolize how quickly they had parted ways. It wasn't the first time that she left the hand which for so many years had been her whole world, but it was the first time that he had willingly left her behind.

As soon as Lith had left the range of their mind link, the whole Mogar seemed to have changed in front of her. The colors were brighter, the lights warmer. On the faces of the members of the



Association, where she would usually see hints of deception and ill will, she saw only honest worry for the citizens of Othre.

Without Lith's traumas haunting her perceptions, without his paranoid, narrow standpoint on people echoing through her mind, there was so much more beauty in the world that she had ever thought possible.

Even so, it didn't bring her any joy. Without her partner, all the promises of happiness the future held sounded empty. Her stone body was now a prison. She could perceive the outside world, but she couldn't feel anything.

It was like being locked in a closed room, looking through cameras at what happened on the outside, with no way to interact. A silent witness.

'I understand why he went alone, but I still can't believe he didn't ask for my opinion. After all we went through together, doesn't Lith realize how important he is to me? If he dies, what will become of me?

'I could bond with Tista, but to what end? To watch her grow old and die? To become some kind of family heirloom? To watch others live their lives while the only thing that changes for me is the hand holding my destiny?

'What good is to me, if I regain all my powers, maybe even a human body, and have to spend eternity alone? To lose the only one who knows and cares for my soul?'

Solus was aware that unless she started spending mana, she could last months before being forced to bond again. Nonetheless, she felt like she was dying a bit with each passing second.

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Inxialot, the Lich King, stared in hatred to all those inside the room. Liches didn't actually have a king. The title was merely a consolation prize for getting the short end of the stick during the last raffle to determine who would represent the undead Awakened ones for Council duties.

Since the secret of the Awakening, in the form of the human newborn, had to be protected from his fellow undead, the Council had sent Inxialot to make sure the Courts abided by the rules.

Lith's life or death were irrelevant to him. The only thing he cared about was to prevent a bunch of idiotic immortal fools from becoming capable of competing with him for power and resources.

Otherwise he would have never left his lab for so long. He hated all the Courts the same way.

'Damn bastards. At least Council meetings last minutes, this shenanigan could take much more, maybe even hours! Did I put out the fire under my cauldron? I've been preparing that elixir for years!

'I don't know who, but someone is going to die for making me leave so many priceless experiments unattended.' Panic and rage came in and out of the revolving door that was his chaotic mind.

His mana flow was so vigorous that even Life Vision could see it circulate along the whole Lich's body. It seeped into every one of his rings, every fiber of his tattered robe, and even inside the staff he held.

Lith had no idea how others could be so calm despite being in the presence of such a monster.

## Chapter 465 Foul Moon Part 2

"I'm Duchess Sylla Ekna. I'll represent the interests of the Dawn Court and of its host, Awakened Verhen, during the parlay. Lieutenant Colonel Kaelan is the emissary from the Night Court, while Lich Inxialot is a neutral spectator on behalf of the Council."

The Banshee gave a graceful curtsy to the Lich first and to Kaelan later.

The vampire was aware of how volatile a Lich's behavior was, yet Sylla's breach of etiquette still angered him. So when the Lich kept staring into space without returning the greeting, Kaelan did the same.

It had been one of the ugliest nights in the last few centuries of his existence, and it kept getting worse by the hour.

His newest Vassal had managed to anger the only Awakened one for miles, someone even the Night Court was unaware of his existence. Kaelan had been forced to protect his investment and albeit his brief clash with Lith ended in a draw, he had suffered a humiliation nonetheless.

The news of Kaelan's inability to discipline his own dog had spread like wildfire in the Night Court, making him a laughingstock. No one cared about Lith being an Awakened, nor a guest of the Dawn Court.

The only thing that mattered to his peers was that Kaelan had left the gala while Lith remained. Any result but victory was seen as weakness by his Court. Later, some of his most prized connections with the black market had been slain after turning into monsters.

Being embarrassed in public and losing a good chunk of his influence inside Othre had made Kaelan's rank of Lieutenant Colonel inside the Court shaky at best. When he heard about the young Awakened seeking audience, he had volunteered to regain some of the lost face.

The presence of the Lich threw a monkey wrench in his plans. The mortal was in a hurry, so Kaelan's tactic was supposed to exploit such weakness to force him into accepting an unfavorable deal.

Squeezing mystical treasures from the Dawn Court would have made him regain his honor and forced the mortal to take part in the Courts' power plays, giving Kaelan the opportunity to achieve his revenge. Two birds with one stone.

Unluckily, Liches were fickle creatures and one of the few even more impatient than mortals. Stalling for time was likely to earn Kaelan a quick but excruciating eternal sleep.

'All is not lost. I just need to exploit the Lich's nature and that mad thing will do the dirty job for me.' The vampire thought.

"What do you want, human?" Direct approach was another breach of etiquette, but it earned him a nod of approval from Inxialot.

"I need to know who is behind the meat puppets that kidnapped Professor Manohar and where I can find him." Even without Solus, Lith's survival instinct was screaming at him to leave the room in a rush.

The Lich was the most powerful creature he had ever seen and to make things worse, he was an Awakened one.

'If he uses Invigoration on me, he might discover my second life force. I can't afford to arouse his curiosity, or I risk spending the rest of my life as a guinea pig.' Liches were the only greater undead Lith knew a great deal about thanks to Kalla.

He knew that there was nothing they wouldn't do to further their quest for knowledge. Breaking all the laws of the Courts and the Kingdom at once would be a small price to pay to get their hands on an anomaly like Lith was.

"You are asking a lot. How much is worth to you the life of one of the greatest mages..." Inxialot's head turned on the Night Court's representatives. His gaze made Count Xolver fall to his knees, unable to breathe.

Kaelan remained unfazed only because he was already sitting and his sweat glands were as dead as a doornail.

"I mean, the life of one of the greatest mortal mages and the location of one of the Griffon Kingdom's greatest enemies?" Inxialot eyes went blank again.

"They amount to nothing to me." Lith said with a wave of his hand. "On the other hand, the Griffon Kingdom is very interested in both matters and would pay you handsomely. If the information provided is reliable, of course."

"This is not a cattle market where you can check the animal before paying its price." Kaelan's voice perfectly hid his annoyance. The human was aware of at least some of the rules of the game.

"Then I'll settle for Professor Manohar's whereabouts." Lith replied. "If the first information proves to be true, the Kingdom will purchase the second one too." Lith pretended to be calm, but he was actually quite nervous.

'Dammit, I'm quite a good negotiator, but only as long as I know what we are talking about. If Kaelan asks for artifacts like the Small World, I have no clue how precious they are to the Kingdom compared to Manohar's life.

'As per my host request, I've left my communicator amulet at the Association. I can't ask further instructions from the Queen, and relying on Sylla can easily backfire if she treats my request as asking for help instead of information.'

"Fine." Kaelan replied. "Our request is for the Sword of Saefel, the Spell Hoarding Cube, and the following ingredients."

Even before reading the list the vampire handed to him, Lith's poker face crumbled. The Sword of Saefel was one of the royal treasures passed down by Valeron Griffon, the first King, while the Cube had to be a state secret, since it wasn't mentioned in any Forgemastering book of the White Griffon academy.

The list of ingredients was short, but the items ranged from "priceless" to "does it really exist?" in Lith's mind.

"This is daylight robbery if I ever saw one. Don't you agree, dear Duchess?" Lith hoped that asking for an opinion counted as information. The lip service was unlikely to be helpful, yet it couldn't hurt to try.

"Indeed." She nodded without changing her expression. She wanted the human to get conned, so that by helping him he would become one of their assets. Not even the Dawn Court could afford such an unreasonable price to leash just one human.

"This whole building is worth way less than what you ask for, Kaelan."

Lith crossed out all the ingredients he wasn't able to evaluate before returning the piece of paper. There was still enough to cover a few times the annual budget of the White Griffon's light department.

"The artifacts aren't for sale. This is what I can offer you." Lith was actually willing to raise the offer, but he wanted to keep enough leeway during the negotiation.

"Is this a joke?" Anger made some color return to the vampire's dead cheeks.

"No, it's me being generous." Lith replied. "The Night Court is indebted to me after your Vassal tried to steal my prey and then attacked me even after I showed him my references." Mana flowed to his right hand, revealing Kalla's runes.

"As his master, you should take responsibility for his actions. Accept my offer, tell me what I want to know, and I'll consider the matter between us solved amicably." Lith noticed how important were formalities to the Courts.

He hoped his earlier incident with Kaelan might give him an edge.

### Chapter 466 Foul Moon Part 3

"Quite the contrary." The anger disappeared and the vampire's tone turned stone cold.

"My Vassal wronged you, but your retaliation was too extreme. He has lost most of the abilities the Blood Blessing granted him and he might not be able to turn into a vampire anymore. My price takes into account the compensation you owe me. Take it or leave it."

It was a lie. Xolver's blood core had just been weakened, even though none of the Night Court understood how. Only Awakened ones and Abominations knew about the existence of different kinds of cores and how did they work.

"I owe both of you nothing. Your Vassal tried to manipulate me and my property, while you inflicted me an injury that almost cost me my life while facing those flesh monsters." Lith had no qualm adding a lie of his own.

"Gentlemen, please." Sylla interrupted their quarrel. "Let's keep your personal business outside the parlay. Otherwise it will take hours to reach a compromise."

Inxialot was already tired of all that chatting even before it started, so when he heard the word "hours", his mind spun at top gear to figure a way out of that nightmare.

"Both parties have suffered too great a damage to trust each other." Inxialot spoke for the first time since his arrival.

"According to article four of the Courts' code of honor, to prevent hostilities from escalating is required to perform the Foul Moon, so that blood wash out the blood and peace can return."

"With all due respect, Lord Inxialot, article four states that the Foul Moon should take place in case of an irreconcilable difference between members of the Courts. This is merely a business treaty between an Awakened and the Night Court." Sylla didn't like the sudden turn of events.

The Foul Moon was an ancient trial by combat that hadn't been invoked for centuries. It required a fight to the death between peers, which meant Sylla and Kaelan. She had no intention of risking her eternal life for a mere mortal, no matter how tasty.

"You are wrong." Inxialot rebuked with a glare that silenced any further objection.

"They are not discussing business, they are seeking reparation, since I have yet to hear a single counteroffer.

"Article four, section three, sub paragraph one. If the probatory member of a Court assaults a guest from another, to avoid the conflict to spread to their respective Courts they must meet in a duel. Unless both their patrons are willing to take their place, of course."

The Lich was indeed right. It was an obscure codicil, which sadly had never been repealed. The silver lining was that Lord Inxialot could propose the Foul Moon, but only one of the offended parties had the right to put their lives on the line.

To Sylla, Lith asked: "What's our esteemed guest talking about?"

"Long story short, if you win, you get what you want and pay nothing. If he wins, you die and he gets to keep your corpse as a trophy." Inxialot chimed in without giving her the possibility to reply.

"Against which one of them am I supposed to win?" Lith pointed at the vampire and his Vassal.

"The proto vampire." Inxialot used spirit magic to nail Count Xolver to the wall and clear any doubt.

"Let me get this straight, your Lich-ness. If I kill that poor excuse of a noble, his master will give me the information I need, right?" Inxialot nodded.

"What if Kaelan decides to seek revenge on me?" It seemed all too easy, Lith preferred to stay on the safe side.

"If he decides to ignore the result of the combat, he will have to put his life at stake. The Foul Moon is a sacred ritual. Plotting against you would be an unprecedented violation.

"Any of his underlings exposing his treachery would be entitled to obtain his position within the Night Court, while his superiors who are afraid of his rise would be authorized to kill him and split his resources among themselves."

'So, I don't have to trust something as unreliable as his honor, but rather the greed of his rivals, within and outside the Night Court.' Lith thought. 'It's not much, but what choice do I have? I can't leave empty handed without a perfect excuse for the Queen.

'I don't know the value of some of the listed ingredients, but I'm pretty sure the Royals would rather lose Manohar than give away the jewels of the crown. Sooner or later, a man dies, whereas an artifact is forever. What if...'

"Lieutenant Colonel Kaelan, if you allow me to call my Queen, I'll ask her what I can offer you to have both sides satisfied with the outcome. Neither I nor the Griffon Kingdom wants to spill blood. The choice is up to you."

"That's impossible." Sylla shook her head. "Amulets and their calls can be traced. It would endanger the Dawn Court."

"And the Night Court has no reason to grant you any leniency. Not only do you refuse my generosity, but also you dare to speak like you're doing me a favor? Either you have the authority to accept our terms or you don't."

The Night Court had no intention to help the Griffon Kingdom from the beginning. The unreasonable demands were to force a lose-lose situation on them. If Lith accepted, the Crown would be weakened and blame him for it, whereas the Night Court would grow in power just by sharing the details of their customer.

If he refused, the Kingdom would lose its Royal Healer, their enemy would escape, and Lith would be branded as incompetent. Kaelan had made sure there would be no happy ending for his enemy.

'The human is out of luck. The Lich is doing exactly what I expected, and Sylla is either too afraid to speak or she just wants to corner him as much as I do.' He inwardly smiled.

Kaelan's arrogance made Lith think again about his options.

'He should know I'm way stronger than his thrall. Why even bother to save him just to toss him away like this?' Lith thought.

"Duchess, what are the rules of the Foul Moon?" He wanted to understand if the gap in magical prowess could be overcome with powerful equipment, since Lith had nothing but his clothes.

"It's a contest of pure might. No weapons nor protections are allowed. If you win, Kaelan will not be able to harm you or your propriety without risking his own life, but if you lose, you'll die a horrible death." She replied.

Even though Lith couldn't see the trap, he could still smell it. It was all too easy.

'No matter if I accept or refuse Kaelan's rip-off deal, my career in the army and the Association will be over. The Foul Moon actually solves two problems at once. It's much better to face a single opponent head on than watching my back every night.

'I'm not strong enough to kill that vampire, yet. Since I can't force him to leave me alone, at least this way I can prevent him to gang up on me with the help of other members of the Night Court and give him a good scare.'

"Count Xolver, I challenge you to Foul Moon."

As he feared, a smug smile appeared on the faces of both the vampire and his Vassal.

#### Chapter 467 Foul Moon Part 4

"I accept." Xolver replied. "Yet I'm no match for my opponent, so I request for a champion."

"I knew the Night Court's members are just overgrown ticks, but since when do you even accept cowards among your ranks?" Inxialot hadn't tricked Lith on purpose. In his mind, running away from a challenge was something unthinkable.

His words wiped the smile off their faces, while Lith's mind finally connected the dots.

"Wait, does a fight between peers means 'of the same rank in the Court' or 'of equal strength'?" He asked.

"The latter, of course." Sylla replied with a wolfish smile. "You should have asked for my help. He who lives alone dies alone. You have no friends here and you knew it."

"Bah, don't worry, kid." Inxialot sneered. "Awakened ones are the strongest race after Liches. Everything else is trash."

"When will the fight take place?" Lith asked while using Invigoration to return to his peak condition.

"As soon as the arena is ready, and unless someone wants to die by my hand, it will happen within the next few minutes." Inxialot struck the ground with his silver staff, causing the whole room to shake.

While Sylla and Kaelan shouted orders in their respective communication amulets, Lith started to cast what he had always considered the most useless of all the trump cards at his disposal.

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Unknown location. Underground dungeon of the master of the meat puppets.

Krishna Manohar had long come to terms with inferior minds having no originality. When he regained his senses, he didn't need to look at himself to know that his arms had been amputated.

The Professor knew his body so well that he noticed how his balance was all over the place the moment he opened his eyes. His waist was chained to the wall, and so were his legs.

The room he was trapped in was a marvel in its intricacy. The walls and floor were made of metal, the air was kept thin and dry to the point he kept yawning for oxygen.

'Well, at least this is new. Usually, they just break up my arms. Someone here is very paranoid. I can understand why they took my hands off, but what is this room for?' He thought.

Unlike the master of the mansion, Manohar was unaware of Awakened ones' existence, so the design of the cell made no sense to him. An Awakened wouldn't need their mouth or hands to cast, so the metal served to make it impossible to use earth magic, while the dry air blocked fire, air, and water magic.

With no humidity, there was no water to manipulate, while fire would quickly burn the low oxygen content of the room and make the prisoner faint.

Manohar was still dizzy from all the lightning bolts which had struck him a few hours earlier. With no hands, he had to use first magic to treat his minor wounds and the symptoms from the amputation.

When the pain stopped hindering Manohar's mind, he continued using first magic while studying the restraints trapping him. As he expected, they weren't regular chains.

Even if he was unfamiliar with their design, the Professor could feel enough mana coming from them to support multiple enchantments.

"This may take a while." He sighed.

"Awake already? It's not only your mind to be amazing. For a human, of course." Said a familiar feminine voice while opening the cell door.

"Can you drop the evil overlord act? It stopped being fun before I was even born. It makes you look even more pathetic than you already are."

"Tough talk for someone in your position." Hessie, Lady Lanza's personal housemaid, walked to the center of the room with a soft, cruel smile on her lips. There was nothing bashful in her gait anymore.

She stood as straight as a Queen, looking down on Manohar like he was a thief locked in a stockade.

"I feel ashamed for falling for your act." The Professor said. "The only excuse I have is that I checked you for both slave items and meat puppets. How did you come up negative to my tests?"

His professional curiosity was piqued. According to Hessie's personal file, she had no magical talent. Her history was clear and with no gaps. Yet there she was, exuding such strong mana that Manohar's neck hair was standing up.

Her eyes were still chestnut, so she wasn't remotely controlled like a meat puppet.

"Easy. I took over her body months ago. Your spells detected nothing because there's nothing to detect. I'm Hessie now, or at least what's left of her."

"Are you saying it's not just shapeshifting?" Manohar had never been so happy of being kidnapped. The lady in front of him was as crazy as interesting. She would make an incredible specimen.

'If I manage to capture her alive and if those buzzkills of the Crown don't execute her on the spot.' He inwardly smiled. Manohar lived for the challenges.

"Enough chit chat. There's a reason why you are still alive..."

"Because you need my help." Manohar interrupted her. "Let me guess. After seeing me at work you understood how sloppy and crude your methods are, so you want me to teach you how to do things properly."

Hessie's eyes were reduced to fiery slits, brimming with mana.

"How dare you belittling my work, you insignificant runt? My art is perfect, or better, it was supposed to be. I want to know how did you extract my puppy alive from its host!" Her anger made the Professor's condescending attitude turn to hilarity.

"Art? Perfect? Are you really such an idiot? Your magic is messy at best, if not wasteful. I hoped you were like Balkor, a genius like me but that because of poor personal choices ended up swamped with too much scut work, slowing your research.

"If you think that junk is perfection, then you are barely at a fifth year student level. Once I used my diagnostic spell, I found at least twelve major flaws and as many ways to safely remove the specimen. Off the top of my head at that."

Manohar was so disgusted that he stopped talking and started chanting.

"What do you think you're doing?" Hessie released a bolt of darkness magic from one of her rings, but Manohar easily dodged it despite his restraints. His movement revealed a set of arms made of light that had remained hidden behind the Professor's back up to that moment.



The chant ended and the chains fell onto the ground with a metal clattering. It was the tier four Forgemaster spell Clean Slate, an exclusive of the elite of the army, the Association, or in Manohar's case, of the Queen's corps.

It generated a combined pulse of light and darkness magic that would temporarily short circuit the imprint on a magical item. In the case of the chains, without an owner, the lock was released.

Before Hessie could recover from the surprise, the left arm formed a fist and struck at her like a ram, sending her sprawling on the floor.

"Light magic used for offense? That's impossible!" The first magic composing the hard light construct was enough to allow Manohar to channel his spells, but its offensive force was just slightly superior to that of an average man.

"Just because an idiot can't do it, it doesn't mean that something is impossible." Manohar said while Hessie stared at him with a mix of fear and awe.

#### Chapter 468 Impossible Magic Part 1

Ever since the dawn of magic, the light element had been known to be useless in battle. It had no offensive spells and aside from healing small wounds, the exhaustion that spells below tier four caused on their patients made them a double edged sword.

Light magic experts always protested that such claims were ridiculous. There was no element weaker than the others. Yet aside from legends and fairy tales, no one had ever won a battle with light magic.

At least according to official history. There were many reports about magical beasts well versed in the use of the light element who were capable of using it for attacking. Scarlett had decimated the Talons' headquarters using light magic.

Lith would have died from Gadorf's Purge spell, if captain Yerna hadn't stopped him. Yet some secrets were closely guarded. Despite having lived for centuries, the person inhabiting Hessie's body had never learned how to perform even a trick like the one Manohar was using to compensate for his lack of arms.

The Mad Professor chanted his next spell, leaving Hessie with no choice but to summon her minions while she got out of the death trap of her own making. Because of the nature of the room, all elements besides light and darkness magic were disabled.

She could cast lightning, but it would be deviated by the metal in the room. If Manohar wasn't already floating, he would only need to jump to avoid the bolt before it was neutralized by the lighting rods hidden below the floor.

It was a safety measure to prevent an inmate to strike all their captors at once if the electrical current was trapped in the metal instead of being discharged. To make things worse, the cell also made it impossible to use even arrays, which left Hessie with only her body as a weapon.

'Once I'm back inside my mansion, I can use my arrays and my puppies to kill him. It was a mistake taking him prisoner, Manohar is too dangerous to let him live.' She thought.

Unluckily, her reasoning was based on a false assumption. She had never captured him. Manohar had allowed himself to be taken. When he noticed that the lightning array wasn't lethal, he was presented with a dangerous choice.

Resisting the array would have given the meat puppet the time to free its companion and take over the guards. Manohar would have lost his specimens and all the leads they had.

Playing possum, instead, would have had the same consequences, but it also meant letting the meat puppets do all the hard work and bring him right inside the enemy base.

After days spent literally chained to Jirni with nothing to do but wait, the gala with Mynna had helped the Professor to make up his mind in a split second.

'I don't fear slave collars nor meat puppets. I know how to jam and remove them. I'd rather risk my life than waste another single day with that brute of a Constable. I need to get back to my research!'

Had been his last thought before losing consciousness.

'Thank heavens regenerating limbs is much easier now. Without Lith's spell, I would be forced to turn this place upside down to find my arms.' Was his current trains of thoughts.

Contrary to Hessie's expectations, Manohar didn't rush outside the safety of his prison. He cast an array detecting spell before unleashing a powerful earth magic shockwave that cracked all of the revealed arrays' lines of power.

It wasn't enough to destroy them, but that had never been his aim. The Professor remembered the materials Hessie's thralls had purchased and she had confirmed to him that she had been there for just a few months.

Setting permanent arrays required time, resources, and a talent Manohar doubted such a self-proclaimed genius could possess. His detection spell had only confirmed his theory, making his next move child play. At least for the Mad Professor's standards.

Temporary arrays had much lower requirements, but needed a fine balance to prevent their effects from interfering with each other. He had just dealt them enough damage to compromise their alignment.

If his enemy activated them, they would either fizzle or blow in her face.

A few perfect Carpenters arrived, their vortexes at full force to drain any incoming spell at the cost of their lives. The first one charged inside the cell like a mad bull, Hessie's will was absolute.

Manohar sneered as a giant sword made of pure light impaled the creature and those following it like a kebab.

"Seriously? Are you really a one-trick pony? I figured out the weakness of those things the first time I extracted my specimen. They can nullify spells of tier three and below, but tier five is another story.

"If the ability of your creatures is weaker than the one of whom guides the spell, it becomes useless. That's how I extracted your dear 'puppy', you idiot. I never failed to control one of my spells, and I have no intention of starting today."

Hessie stared in horror as the flesh of her creatures entered Manohar's body and gave him back his arms. Their life force was consumed as well, replenishing his own.

'This man is a real monster.' HESSIE thought. 'I must force him to run out of mana before he tears my house apart!' Unluckily for her, the Professor's bright purple core and his relentless practice of magic made his mana reserve almost as insane as he was.

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Dawn Court branch, Outside the city of Othre. Now.

When Lith had heard the word "arena", his mind had pictured a place similar to the Earth's Colosseum. The place the Dawn Court reserved for ceremonial battles was akin to a huge theatre instead.

The fight would take place on a circular raised platform made of white stone, that only a thick cylindrical energy barrier separated from the front row of spectators. Comfortable armchairs were evenly spaced on a balcony that surrounded the center stage.

The arena had a diameter of 40 meters (130 feet), which together with its high ceiling allowed the fighters to have plenty of space to battle on both the ground and the air.

Lith had been spellcasting non-stop from the moment the challenge had been issued. When his opponent arrived, he had yet to finish his spell.

'Damn, they are afraid of the Lich as much as I am, if not even more. I need to stall for time.' He thought.

To Inxialot, he asked: "How can you be sure the Night Court will not send one of its strongest members?"

"The Foul Moon requires peers. You being a human and an Awakened one at that, makes everything harder." Inxialot sighed. They had waited for almost two minutes after he Warped them to destination at the end of the parlay.

"They need to choose someone whose practice of magic and time as undead match your age. Then, the Dawn Court has to verify the champion's identity."

"I don't practice magic for seventeen years. How is it fair?" Lith lied through his teeth. He needed only a few more seconds.

"I don't make the rules, I just administer them. Otherwise I would have killed you all and went back home already." Inxialot snorted through his exposed nasal septum.

A clap of his hands made the barrier even stronger and signaled the start of the fight. Sylla, Kaelan, and Xolver were sitting next to each other. They all wore the same relaxed smile, like the fight was already over.

'I wonder if their sudden friendship and how fast the Dawn Court checked my opponent's background are related.' Lith thought. Duchess Ekna had been crystal clear. Lith had no friends there and he had no intention of making any.

Chapter 469 Impossible Magic Part 2

Lith's opponent had the appearance of a brute. He was a man at least two meters (6'7") tall, with long black hair and beard. His muscular body reminded Lith that of a professional wrestler.

Unbeknownst to Lith, his opponent was a vampire named Zarran. He was Kaelan's blood spawn and one of his favorites. His grey eyes moved quickly from Lith to the Lich while waiting for the start signal.

Usually, Zarran would disregard such formalities, but since the referee was capable of turning him into a memory with just a thought, the vampire decided to stick to the rules. Or better, the rule.

Once Inxialot clapped his hands, there were none. The rattle of bones and rings was his cue. Even if they weren't Awakened, vampires could use air and darkness in their true magic form. Zarran took off, darting toward his opponent like a falcon on its prey.

Lith clapped his hands a split second after Inxialot. His breathing was steady, his body so stiff to resemble a statue. Right above the fighters, covering the whole arena, appeared the very fist impossible array Lith had learned when he was just twelve years old.

This time it wasn't meant to impress the White Griffon academy's board, it was a terrible weapon. One of the golden points of Silverwing's Hexagram lit up and Zarran's flight spell disappear, turning the falcon into Newton's apple.

Lith waved his right hand, conjuring a stone pillar that intercepted Zarran's fall and sent him crashing against the barrier. Contrary to Lith's hopes, the magical formation dealt no more damage than a real wall would.

'According to Inxialot, the sum of this guy's years of magical practice and his time as an undead should be around twenty years, if the Courts bent the rules. He's too buff to be a magician, I bet Kaelan chose him because he's a pure vampire.

'Instead of sending a half baked fighter, I would have picked a professional too. Alas, I'm no pushover either.' Lith inwardly sneered as he waved his left hand.

A stream of lightning intercepted Zarran while he bounced off the wall, turning his pale skin black. Both the fighters wore no armor. Lith had been forced to remove his Ranger uniform for a white shirt made of the finest silk he had ever seen and night black pants so soft they would put cashmere to shame.

Zarran was bare chested, with only a pair of leather pants to cover him.

'At least the Dawn Court knows how to dress. These clothes are coming home with me.' Lith knew that worrying about saving a few coins was ridiculous during a life or death situation, but since such a thing was just Monday to him, his wallet was entitled to speak.

Zarran landed with the grace of a cat. His face was twisted in a mask of rage.

'Master Kaelan told me the Awakened is supposed to be a brutal fighter. According to our information, against the meat puppets he relied on brute strength and magical tools, yet now he stands still. It must be related to the secret behind the array.'

Zarran thought. Vampires took damage from electricity based attacks, but thanks to their undead nature, their movements wouldn't be hindered by them. It wasn't the nerves moving their bodies, just like their strength didn't come from their muscles.

Hence Lith's lightning had not disrupted Zarran's focus. The vampire extended his arms, releasing a scatter shot shower of darkness bullets. Their speed was slow, but from that distance and inside an enclosed space they were fast enough to be deadly.

If Lith focused on dodging the daggers, the opponent would have an easy game overpowering him physically, while focusing on the enemy would leave him exposed to the incoming spell.

Zarran moved forward almost as fast as the dark daggers, using them as a cover while approaching the enemy. Lith stood firm until the daggers almost reached him. Then, he took a deep breath and had the array neutralize the spell as he unleashed a barrage of Plague Arrows.

He mimicked Zarran's strategy, leaving him astonished.

'It's impossible! Arrays are supposed to work both ways. Why does it negate only my spells? First air, now darkness too. It's bound to have some limits.' Zarran thought while dodging as many Plague Arrows as he could.

Much to his surprise, Lith didn't press the advantage. Instead of charging forward, he used earth magic to turn the stone floor into sand, messing with the vampire's footwork. The strong kick that was supposed to propel him away from danger plunged into the ground instead.

Zarran cursed his opponent and enveloped himself with a shroud of darkness. Multiple Plague Arrows struck him from head to toe, sapping his strength. Thanks to his last ditch effort, the damage was halved.

Unlike humans, vampires only needed to expend part of the energy stored inside their blood cores to heal from any injury. It wouldn't even sap their life force, only make them hungry. Zarran was well fed, so the exchange had only hurt his pride.

The audience was stunned as well. Most of them knew Silverwing's Hexagram, but had no idea what it was capable of. Only Awakened ones could master impossible arrays and usually their opponent ended up dead.

The only exception was Inxialot, who was having a lot of fun. Not because of the fight, which was trivial and amateurish to his eyes. He loved watching the shocked expression lowly animals made when they realized the depth of their ignorance.

"I told you so." He turned his head of 180° to look straight into Xolver's eyes without having to move. "Liches are the strongest, then Awakened. Remember that if your champion loses, your life is forfeit as well."

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Hessie's Mansion. Now.

The person wearing Hessie's skin was royally pissed. Manohar was a walking wrecking ball, crushing her minions and arrays in a matter of seconds after they met in battle.

'He's too fast. I need some time to revert to my real body, this one doesn't stand a chance against his impossible magic.' She thought.

The Professor was now surrounded by a swarm of shields made of light as big as a man, which blocked any incoming attack, be it physical or magical in nature. Even in Hessie's body, the puppeteer was still a master magician with centuries of expertise.

The problem was that while the Carpenters kept their vortexes active, weaving spells was worse than a waste of mana. They would poison her creatures and kill them. At the same time, the moment they turned their vortexes off, they became sitting ducks.

Without the boost from the constant consumption of world energy, Manohar would let his personal army of hard light constructs mow the Carpenters down like ripe wheat and focus his defense to block all of her attacks.

She had even employed a War Mage tier five Raging Sun, only to have it enclosed by his energy shields and snuffed out like a candle.

Manohar was winning by a landslide, yet he kept his guard up conjuring spells non stop and keeping them on his fingertips, ready to be activated. He couldn't risk losing his concentration, otherwise both his spells and mana would be lost.

Even though Hessie was forced to admit the gap between their talent, she had still centuries of experience to even the field, now that she finally understood what was happening.

### Chapter 470 Impossible Magic Part 3

Dozens of her minions had died to buy her time, but it had been worth it. She completed an array that sealed light magic in a space of ten (33 feet) radius around the Mad Professor, turning both his swords and shields into fireflies.

"Let's see who is the one trick pony now." She said with a smug expression while watching the Carpenters surround him.

'I'm going to retrieve my body. Kill him at all costs. Overload your bodies with mana and self destruct, if you have to.' Hessie sent the telepathic order and walked away from the dungeon.

After regaining her cool, she had realized that it was pointless to play by her opponent's rules. He was alone in her house, the only thing she needed to win was to play it smart. Skill and preparation could kill even the strongest genius.

Manohar couldn't agree more with her. It was the reason why only one among the spells he had prepared was based on the light element. Too bad none of them could deal with his current predicament.

'I hate arrays.' Manohar inwardly griped as he dodged bone claws the size of a great sword coming from every side. 'They may be slow ass, but one of them is enough to turn tables. Life is so unfair!'

So whined the man blessed by endless talent, a bright purple mana core, and an unlimited research budget.

The Mad Professor was still alive only thanks to the Mage Knight Full Guard spell, which left him with no blind spots, and Marth's strict training schedule to force Manohar to stay out of his lab long enough to clean his mess.

Together with his stubbornness, they allowed him to only sustain flesh wounds while weaving the tier five spell he was in desperate need of. He wasn't like Lith. He couldn't turn off his pain receptors, nor use silent magic.

Manohar could only perform movements small enough to not disrupt his hand signs, with a rhythm that let him not stutter a single magic word. All while the Carpenters sealed off the space around him by the second.

One of the creatures stabbed the Professor's left shoulder, leaving a gaping hole the size of a muffin and made his arm fall lifeless by his side. Manohar snarled the next magic word like it was a curse, gritting his teeth for less than a heartbeat before finishing the chant.

Unluckily, it was too late. Not only did the claw went through and through, causing major bleeding, but it also stopped Manohar's movements long enough for its companions to pile up on the helpless human.

A Carpenter grabbed Manohar's right arm, crushing it like a twig. Another used its clawed hand to stab his chest. And then it finally happened. The Mad Professor's shadow came to life, taking the form of a blue eyed colossus.

It was over three meters tall (10'), with a spiky back like an urchin and slender arms that almost reached the ground. Its hands had four fingers, each one as long and sharp as a blade. It had no legs. The lower part of its body was just a thin line connected to Manohar's.

It was Balkor's tier five personal spell, Death Ruler, which Manohar had reverse engineered after reading the god of death's notes found in one of his old labs. The Mad Professor's body had fallen limp not because of the wound, but because his mind had left his physical shell.

The Death Ruler freed his human body by ripping to shreds the nearest Carpenters with its claws. The pieces tried to reassemble themselves, but the darkness energies poisoning them spread like a plague, turning them into rotten flesh.

After that, the shadow colossus struck at the ground. Black vines sprouted from the point of impact, eating the energies which composed the array and his enemies alike. The Death Ruler didn't stop his rampage, growing in size with each fallen enemy.

Their vitality wasn't destroyed, but stored for later use.

The moment the array crumbled, Manohar's human body was showered with the life force equivalent of a small platoon. Light magic was unsealed, so his organs and bones could be repaired at the expenses of the Carpenters' bodies.

The Mad Professor had no time to eat, he was eager to return to his lab.

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Dawn Court branch, Outside the city of Othre. Now.

There were plenty of reasons why Yurial Deirus had developed his own version of Silverwing's Hexagram. Lochra's array could selectively negate all of the enemy's spells, but it was far from perfect.

The greater its area of effect, the harder it was to keep the six elements in perfect harmony. Even in its small, first magic form, it took so much to cast it to make it useless. Also, negating a spell required from its caster to spend as much mana as its target contained.

According to Yurial's estimates, between the mana expenditure to keep it active and the amount required to nullify the opponent's spells, his energy reserves would deplete faster than his enemy's.

It would take him barely a minute to run out of mana, and one on one at that.

Against multiple enemies, it would be more than suicidal, akin to madness.

Yurial's Hexagram, instead, could only negate one spell per element, and the mana would be stored rather than countered. The accumulated energies could be unleashed at will to trigger a powerful gravity field.

Silverwing's Hexagram heavy requirements made it useless even for Lith. Unless he knew in advance that he would face a single opponent in an enclosed space with no way out or external interferences, of course.

Even with all the aforementioned conditions met, it wasn't as easy as he made it seem to the audience. The sheer focus required to keep all the six elements perfectly balanced over the whole arena while keeping Invigoration active, prevented him from moving a single step.

Yet without his Gatekeeper and his armor, he wasn't confident of being able to defeat an opponent with endless stamina and unknown skills. If even Xolver had forced him to use fusion magic, there was no telling how strong a real vampire could be.

Zarran released several streams of lightning and it took Lith a full Invigoration breath to negate them all. Lith's fingers twirled in the air as the sand obeyed his command and sealed the vampire's limbs.

The grains of sand stuck to each other turning back into stone, yet Zarran was able to break free by consuming a good chunk of his blood core. It didn't simply enhance his strength, it made him shapeshift into a giant hybrid between a human and a bat.

The creature was 2.5 meters (8'2") meters tall, with membranous wings connecting his hands to his hips. Ten centimeters long razor sharp talons replaced his nails as a thick dark brown fur as hard as steel covered the rest of his body.

His open mouth was now bigger than Lith's head, with fangs long as short swords. A single flap of his wings let Zarran take the sky and escape from the sand's grip.

'This explains his horrible taste in clothes.' Lith thought while weaving multiple spells at once. Zarran was circling above his head like a shark around its prey.

'Fighting on the ground without magic is a lost cause. I must strike from above fast enough to escape from his spells and force him to move. Without the array, he's just a human.'