

Supreme M 581

Chapter 581 Desperate Moves Part 2

"We haven't gotten this far just to quit with our tail between our legs." Ailia said.

"I need to continue being my master's favorite student at all costs. She has already killed all those who didn't pass her exams. There's so few of us left that she is bound to pick her heir soon, and it's going to be me."

She exchanged a meaningful look with her companions, they were all in the same boat.

"If we take Verhen alive, the damage will be split among five instead of seven, but a shorter life is better than no life at all. If the Wyrmling exposed us, our masters would have already called me and Pelion back. Luckily, beasts do not care for humans.

"Kieran must have angered it and Deraniel got caught in the crossfire because they were always together. I agree with Jaren, we must wrap this up quickly and get out of here before something else happens."

Since the other three agreed, Benyo could only follow. The group decided to complete the ritual as soon as the snowstorm peaked again, forcing the human foci of the spell to remain in their place.

Lith spent the rest of the morning shouting orders and making preparations. He conscripted all of Zantia's mages for his plan. Most of them were unwilling to serve under a new master, especially one who didn't explain to them what they were about to do.

They were either city healers or noble heirs.

"I may have not studied at one of the six great academies, but I took an oath as a healer and my family has loyally served the Kingdom for generations." The most annoying of them was Baroness Ternas, a minor healer.

"First you had the guards kidnap us from our homes and now you want to order us around as if we are slaves? There's a reason I didn't join the army. I demand to know why we are trapped inside the city hall and what purpose this assembly has."

There were too many whispers and nodding of approval to dismiss her request.

"Those are all excellent questions. Allow me to answer." Lith's eyes became two blue torches fueled by his mana as he unleashed his killing intent against the over one hundred mages in front of him.

The weakest among them almost fainted. They fell onto the ground, gasping for air. The terror invading their bodies had almost made them forget how to breathe. The others were covered in cold sweat, unable to take their eyes off Lith, like deer in front of oncoming headlights.

He grabbed Baroness Ternas by the neck, lifting her like she was just a rag doll.

"There is a crisis at hand and I need healers." He explained with a calm voice while a stream of lightning coursed through her body sending her in a seizure.

"You are here because quantity has a quality all its own." Lith healed her as the smell of ozone and burned flesh spread throughout the room.

"I didn't call you here for a debate. Opinions are like assholes, everyone got one. You are trapped here because you are untrustworthy." Another lightning, another seizure. Lith was careful not letting her faint nor tightening her throat so much that she couldn't scream.

"This assembly has a purpose you'll be made aware of when the time comes and not a second sooner. I need your obedience, not your trust." Lith healed her again, releasing a bit more of killing intent and making everyone fell to their knees, incapable even of looking him in the eyes.

"You are either part of the solution or part of the problem. Those of you who agree to help me will be compensated for their service. As for the others..." More lightning bolts and screams completed the sentence for him.

"Any more questions?"

Some of them were crying, others had wet themselves due to the mental pressure Lith's mana and hostility exuded. All of them fell in line and nodded like parrots even after Lith had left the room.

He couldn't afford to reveal any detail of his plan without it leaking.

There was no telling who was affiliated with the church among his recruits' families, friends, or neighbors. Friya helped Wyra, one of the few members of her guilds who she actually trusted, with her investigation about the church.

They promised the former staff of house Krame that they would be reinstated if they provided useful information.

Protector couldn't help either Lith nor Friya, so he flew among the clouds and did all he could to mitigate the storm. He couldn't stop such a force of nature, but he could at least delay it to buy the others the time they needed.

Thanks to Protector's efforts, the snow had almost ceased to fall. The Church of the Six was full to the brim of loyal worshippers who were scared of the storm as much as they were of the sudden disappearance of the healers.

Lith had spread the rumor that the Griever had turned into a plague, forcing all the mages in the city to work together to contain the disease. He wanted them to be so scared that they would ignore the risk of a new snowstorm and assemble in the Church.

It was the only bait he had to lure the Awakened in the open.

"Dear brothers and sisters, I'm very happy to see so many of you despite the harsh trials this winter has put us all through." Said the high cleric of the Church of the Six.

He was an average man, 1.67 meters (5'6") tall with brown hair and eyes. His voice was deep and confident. With his stocky build and round nose, he wasn't a good looking man, but his manners were calm and amiable, making people inclined to listen to his words.

He was good at manipulating the crowd. First, he would make them feel close to each other by reminding them of all the common injustices they suffered from, and then he offered them a conveniently simple scapegoat to blame and an even simpler solution.

All they had to do was to follow his words.

"I know the Griever is getting worse, but rest assured. None of it is your fault. Thanks to your sacrifice, the six Sovereigns are slowly recuperating. Giving up on magic for your daily activities makes everything harder, but it's for the greater good.

"By not contaminating the world energy with your mana, you will allow the gods to soon return among us. I know that they are pleased with us because several of you have been finally relieved from your tribulation."

"Glory to the Sovereigns!" The relatives of the victims of the Griever who had recently been 'healed' praised the high cleric's words. They were simply people not meant to contribute at the array who had been harmed only to keep the others in line.

"It's only due to the blind selfishness of the mages that we have to work and suffer every day! They continue to profit from their ancestors' betrayal using powers that don't belong to them for their own good.

"Each time they use a spell, the world energy gets depleted and our Mogar gets closer to its end!" The high cleric said. According to the church's beliefs, there was only a finite amount of world energy.

With the Sovereigns gone, it couldn't replenish itself. It was all bogus since energy couldn't be created nor destroyed, it could only be transferred or changed from one form to another.

"The day of reckoning is upon them. Soon the gods will return and punish them for..."

A sphere of light the size of a chariot appeared above the main altar. Those present fell to their knees, praying with all their might, with the only exception of the clerics who stared in horror as space was torn apart by the monstrosity they believed to have summoned with their ramblings.

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The sphere of light turned into a gateway, which apparently led to another dimension full of stars and planets floating in the middle of space.

A monstrous creature emerged from the portal on top of a fiery beast, turning the joy of the worshippers into terror.

The rider stood slightly over two meters tall and was covered in thick curved black scales. Both his hands and feet ended in razor sharp claws enveloped in black flames. A set of upside down membranous wing came out of his back, producing with each of their flaps a gust of wind strong enough to rival with the outside storm.

His face was a black slate with no nose nor ears, but his seven eyes made everyone recognize him on the spot. Each one of the six eyes on his face burned with a different color of mana which emphasized his pitch black vertical pupils.

The seventh one on his forehead was deep blue and without a pupil.

"Isn't that the All-Father?" Everyone asked while staring in horror as the scales over his mouth opened, revealing a mouth full of fangs and blue fire. The killing intent the rider and his mount emanated made them unable to move or even to avert their gaze.

Shivers went down their spines and the warm air inside the church became so cold that they could see their own breath steaming.

"Silence! You have relinquished your gifts, your free will, and your life. You have no right to say my name. Food doesn't get to talk, it only gets digested!" The portal behind the All-Father closed, and all the shadows in the room came to life, overwhelming their owners.

The worshippers were soon pinned to the ground by a distorted version of themselves. The dark forms had their faces twisted by an insatiable hunger, bright yellow eyes, and a white maw instead of a mouth.

"Fenrir, devour them!" He ordered to his steed, a huge beast resembling a divine wolf.

Its shoulder height reached two meters and a half (8'3"), making its rider's head almost touch the ceiling. Its whole body was covered by a flaming red fur and enveloped in a deep blue flame. It erupted with greater intensity from its neck, making it look like a mane.

The monster had two curved horns coming out of its forehead, right in front of its ears, eagle-like feathered wing coming out from its back, and its tail was made out of dancing blue flames.

Fenrir's howl made the ground quake and cracked the church's walls like they were just made of sand. All those trapped by their own shadows felt their strength being sapped as small spheres of light came out of their bodies and moved towards the All-Father.

Ailia and Pelion were watching at the show from a surveillance mirror. They recognized the spell as what Deraniel had called "Demons of Darkness". It was a variation of spirit magic they had never seen before.

They had yet to make a move because their minds were frozen in a stupor.

Everything had happened too fast and at the worst possible moment. They had no spell at the ready, and facing one on one an Emperor Beast wasn't a nice perspective. Yet they had no choice but to act.

If the Church of the Six collapsed, people would let themselves be healed, making it impossible for them to trigger the Third Eye array.

"He's not the All-Father, but just a pretender. We know it well because we are the Sovereigns!" Ailia and Pelion appeared from a Warp Steps. They unleashed a blinding light that dispersed the shadows and freed all of those present.

"Really? Wasn't that just a spell? Didn't you just come from a common room?" The All-Lith laughed unleashing a tier five spell while Protector did the same. The two Awakened had nothing to counter such a sudden and powerful move, so they Blinked to safety.

"Where the heck are you guys? We need help!" Ailia yelled at her communication amulet.

Everyone was now free to look around. Nothing in her demeanor or looks was very god-like. She sounded afraid and she was using a pricy yet common tool. Pelion quickly cast a tier three stream of lightning bolts while emitting a powerful blue aura.

"Air magic? This is insulting." Protector sighed. Even when he was still an evolved monster, air and fire were his natural elements. Manipulating them came as easy as breathing to him.

He had over thirty years of experience with it and five more since he had evolved into an Emperor Beast. By combining his will with Lith's, they didn't need to make a single move.

The closer the lightning bolts came to them, the smaller they got, until they disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"Nice trick! Do you work at birthday parties too? I'll show you what a real god can do! Fenrir, attack!" The All-Lith said making Protector snarl.

He hated corny speeches and even more getting hit in the reins by Lith's clawed feet like he really was a steed. Yet he didn't complain and directed his fury against the two Awakened by unleashing the tier four spell Flaming Tornado.

Using its light as a cover, Lith gave Protector the convened signal and breathed into it a burst of Origin Flames. Thanks to his elemental mastery, Protector made it so that the Origin Flames were stuck in the eye of his tornado without them damaging their surroundings.

The air element amplified the power of Lith's flames whereas the fire element of Flaming Tornado was sacrificed to prevent them from spreading outwards. The resulting effect was akin to a fire pillar produced by a Balor, but entirely made of Origin Flames.

The blue pillar destroyed everything on its path, making stone evaporate and turning wood into ashes. Ailia and Pelion used their defensive amulets, conjuring a barrier made of pure mana to shield themselves from the attack.

Yet no matter how much energy they poured into them, the boosted and focused Origin Flames were eating at it with a speed visible at the naked eye. The amulets became hot due to the stress their pseudo core was under.

Lith and Protector were doing their best to make it look easy, but neither breathing Origin Flames non stop nor keeping them under control was a simple feat.

"We need to get away!" Pelion yelled as the flames started to get past the barrier and ate at his enchanted clothes.

"How do you propose to do that? If we lose our focus, we are dead!" Ailia's prayers were answered by two Warp Steps opened by their companions, who pulled them back to the safety of their room.

"Damn!" Lith said. According to his plan, the other two Awakened were supposed to try and attack him from behind, where Friya was ready to ambush them. Unluckily, even the most perfect plan doesn't survive contact with the enemy.

"Cowards! Show yourself!" He said while both he and Protector used Invigoration to restore their strength.

'Plan B it is.' Friya Warped outside and then walked through the main door, enveloped in a golden light like a hero from the legends. With each of her strides, the shadows which had just started to come to life again screamed and died.

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"Begone monster! You don't belong in this world!" She said while pointing her rune covered rapier against the All-Lith. The golden light pushed the shadows back and made the killing intent which had oppressed the worshippers until that moment disappear.

"It is not by my will that I was summoned here. I only answered the call of humans who want to pay me tribute." The All-Lith replied.

"Tribute? You steal their freedom and treat them as nothing but food!" Friya couldn't believe that she was actually following Lith's script.

"Foolish girl! The same could be said of all religions." The All-Lith and his steed charged forward.

"Run away! I'll hold him as long as I can!" Friya flew forward, slashing against the rider. Her rapier produced a silvery sound as it clashed against the All-Lith's arm.

People stared in awe as the small figure managed to stop the two monsters alone. Many of them knew Friya and despised her for being Viscount Krame's henchman. Now their eyes were filled with tears of gratitude and their hearts with admiration.

"We should have never doubted our mages." Many said while helping those who were too weak to get up on their own due to the emotional rollercoaster they had experienced.

"Suckers." Lith said with a wide grin as Protector continued to step back, pretending that the fight was balanced.

"Is there something you can't do with those holograms?" Friya whispered while making sure that her back prevented the spectators from seeing Lith's human arm appearing where her blade made contact with it.

"I wish. I can't hold on for long." It was a lie. Only his eyes were covered by holograms, making them appear as if they were opened. Lith had simply reverted his arm to its human form upon contact.

They kept fighting spell against spell, claws against blade. Every of their move was dramatic and heroic, to the point it looked like an epic battle straight out of the legends.

It was all staged, of course. Their spells were flashy, made to appear powerful, but had no substance.

They were weaker than first magic, barely a light show. As soon as everyone got outside, the three mortal enemies stopped to plan their next move.

"I'd say that the Church of the Six is done." Friya said as both Lith and Protector reverted to their human form.

Ryman purposely produced a flash of light to blind her long enough for Lith to build and destroy a hologram that could cover his transformation.

"Indeed. I was expecting them to attack us during our little play, but they seem to be otherwise occupied." Ryman pondered while using air magic to reproduce the sounds of a heated battle and witty one-liners.

"At this point, they have no choice left but to activate the arrays now. Even if some of the spells' foci are out of place, they had enough to spare in case something happened." Lith used his army amulet to make sure that plan C was going smoothly.

A yelp and a "No!" accompanied an explosion big enough to make the whole building crumble. The alleged monsters had allegedly been defeated. The crowd still around the church exploded into cheers and applause as the three walked out of the debris.

The mercenary, the Ranger, and the hunter smiled at their audience. Lith even raised his hands while holding Ryman's and Friya's before giving those present a bow, just like they were actors.

The cheers and applause intensified.

"Good gods! How did you become a man who can see a whole city almost ripped to shreds and joke like that?" Friya angrily whispered.

"For them, us saving their city might be the most important day of their life. But for me, it was just another day's work." Lith's reply earned him a nudge in his ribs from both of his partners.

"We have no time to waste! According to General Vorgh they must be at the center of the array. If even plan C goes awry, we're screwed." Friya chanted her spells with astounding speed, urging Lith to do the same.

This time, the Awakened would be prepared and have the home advantage. Lith chanted gibberish, giving Solus the task to provide for plan F while he took care of plan E.

He had to keep them both a secret, or the others would never let him hear the end of it.

'I'm completely against plan E and I wish you to reconsider.' Solus thought.

'This time it will be three against four. Four versus four at best, if we give away your existence. But what if they have prepared more arrays? I'm not going to risk the life of any of you. You mess with the Scourge, you get buried. Period.' Lith ended the argument before it even started.

Ryman opened a Warp Steps leading to their destination as soon as the chanting ended. Dimensional magic was mana expensive and Friya was the only one among them who wasn't an Awakened.

'She is the weak link. I have to make sure that nothing happens to her. Friya is a good person and I don't want to see Lith experience any more grief. The next time he snaps, it could be the last one.' Ryman thought.

The Warp Steps led them to a spot far enough from the array's epicenter to not make them visible with Life Vision, but close enough to check their surroundings for traps.

"All clear." Lith said after performing the array detecting spell and using both his own and Solus's mystical senses.

"Same. I can't sense any suspicious sound or smell." Ryman found the lack of enemy traps disturbing. He had checked for undead, explosives, and even hidden soldiers to no avail.

They flew toward the center of the array and soon they were able to see four figures high in the sky. The four Awakened moved rhythmically, using Invigoration to conjure more and more world energy.

It would ensure them the successful activation of Third Eye even if they lacked a few focal points. Due to the temporary relief from the storm, people might have left their homes. The four were arranged back to back in a circle, covering all the possible directions their opponents could come from without leaving a blind spot.

"They are here!" Benyo said. Things couldn't have gotten any worse. With only four of them, Third Eye would take a big chunk of her life force. To add insult to injury, the makeshift addition to the ritual would ensure its activation, but they were likely to lose the grounding array's effect and even more life force in the process.

'I hope there is a special place in the afterlife for idiots like you, Kieran.' She inwardly cursed.

"Let them come. Ready on my mark." Ailia said. Her face looked like it had been chiseled in stone. She had sacrificed too much to allow anyone to stop her. All of them knew the risks involved when they had accepted to become Awakened.

Back then, however, death seemed something distant, whereas now it was waiting for them around the corner.

"Now!" At her signal, a golden six pointed star appeared in the space between them. It soon grew enough to cover all the space around them for over 100 meters (328 feet). Silverwing's Hexagram was one of the most common training routines for Awakened ones.

Four of them could cast it quickly and suppress any enemy thanks to Invigoration providing them with endless mana. Lith's group suddenly lost their flight spell and gravity did the rest.

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"Nothing works!" Friya said. None of the items Orion had prepared for her could project its energy outwards. Under the seal of the Hexagram, only inner energies like fusion magic could be used.

She wasn't worried about dying. The enchanted armor she wore still worked and it would prevent the fall from being lethal. Yet without magic, they had no way to stop the four criminals.

"I know." Protector's voice was peaceful. He took a deep breath and the world stopped moving. He was the first one to disappear, quickly followed by his two companions.

"What the heck? They Blinked away!" Jaren couldn't believe his own eyes.

"Stop spouting bullshit! They are still inside the array. Had they attempted any spell, we would have felt it and countered it in a jiffy." Pelion could still sense Lith's group presence thanks to the enhanced mana perception the Hexagram provided to all four of them, yet he couldn't pinpoint them.

At least not until one of Protector's horns rammed at him with the force of a freight train. After almost being killed by a single move of the two Emperor Beasts, this time Pelion had come to the fight prepared.

The moment Benyo had spotted the incoming enemies, he had activated his armor's pseudo core to boost its defensive abilities at the expense of duration. The enchanted protection his master had Forgemastered for him was now five times stronger than usual.

Such a powerful effect came at a price, though. It would take less than two minutes for the pseudo core to exhaust its mana and when that happened, his armor would be no different from normal clothes for hours.

Fights were supposed to not last for long and Pelion would return home as soon as they were done with the Third Eye ritual. It was a perfect plan, at least on paper.

Despite the armor's boosted effect, despite earth fusion making Pelion's body as durable and heavy as stone, he was sent flying out of the formation. All of his precautions had prevented him from being skewered by the horn, but he still took a lot of damage.

His sternum cracked along with several ribs, making him spit a mouthful of blood as he fought to regain control over his own flight spell. Silverwing's Hexagram disappeared, making it possible for Lith's group to use magic again.

Lith and Friya jumped off Protector's back as he disappeared again.

"Where did he go?" Ailia didn't panic and kept her focus on her ritual. She could feel the energy accumulated in the air closing to its critical mass.

"He did another invisible Blink!" Jaren said while turning his head in every direction, hoping to spot the Emperor Beast's exit point.

"It's you who blinked, not me." Protector struck Jaren with one of his horns, sending the Awakened flying and following up with a tier four spell, Shadow Edge. A darkness infused air blade cut deeply into Jaren's defenses and sapped his strength.

"There's just the two of us left!" Benyo had several spells at the ready, but had no idea which one to use without exposing herself or her companions to the Emperor Beast's impossible attacks.

Lith darted toward her, well aware of her eyes blazing with mana.

'They are all using Life Vision. Dimensional magic is useless, I can only employ fusion magic to move faster.' He thought.

Friya stayed behind, casting one spell after the other. A Mage Knight's role was to support and protect their companions. She would join the fight the moment the others required her help, not a second sooner.

'How the heck can these guys use Silverwing's Hexagram? Even by combining their strength, it's supposed to be impossible. Speaking of impossible, how does Ryman Warp space without opening a dimensional door?' She wondered.

The answer was pretty simple: he wasn't Blinking, just flying with his wings.

Ryman was so fast that from such a close distance not even the Awakened's enhanced senses could follow his movements.

Now that he could use air magic again to support his wings, he had become even faster. In an aerial fight, anyone could fly, yet those born with wings had superior speed and maneuverability.

Seeing that Jaren and Pelion had yet to recover, Benyo clapped her hands and activated the tier four spell Chasing Lightning. Several golden magic circles appeared around her and from each circle erupted a bolt of lightning which resembled a snake in both motions and appearance.

The lightning bolts moved toward Lith in a zig zag pattern, slower than normal, but they were still very fast. Thanks to air fusion and his flight spell, Lith managed to dodge all of them, yet his efforts bought him less than a second of advantage.

Being true to their name, the thunderbolts turned around and chased after him. Yet even a split second was more than enough for Lith. He took the Gatekeeper out of his pocket dimension, infusing both himself and the sword with all elements.

Benyo could oldy unsheathe her own blade, an estoc, and use fusion magic too. None of the opposing teams could use tier five magic. The slightest mistake at handling spells with such a big area of effect would hurt their companions.

Benyo froze in place when she saw how fast Lith's blade moved.

'I can't dodge, I have to block it!' She lunged at the Gatekeeper's tip, to use it as a leverage point to deflect the much heavier blade with her own. Unfortunately, even though fusion magic boosted both of them, it made the gap in their physical abilities even wider.

To make matters worse, the Gatekeeper's ability to channel the elements made it faster, heavier, and sharper than most enchanted blades could be. When the two weapons clashed, Benyo almost lost the grip on her rapier and remained defenseless from her waist to her chin.

Lith's slash blasted away her guard and opened a diagonal cut from her left shoulder to her left hip. Chasing Lightning was almost upon him, he had no time to follow up with another attack.

"Thanks for falling into my trap, you moron!" Ailia and Benyo had a smug grin as the world energy that they had painstakingly accumulated up to that point was released. Ailia used Blink on her two missing teammates to bring them back at the epicenter of Third Eye.

The three arrays forming the magical formation became visible to the naked eye. The Awakened ones used their own mana to channel the gathered mass of world energy through the magical focus points scattered along Zantia.

The magic circles encompassed the entire city up to its tall walls, creating so much light that they would have been visible for kilometers if not for the ongoing storm.

'We managed to split the damage among five, yet it's just a partial victory. Activating the Third Eye during a moment of quiet means that there will be a lot of witnesses. Once we are done with those three, Zantia has to disappear.' Alia thought.

Wiping out a whole city was dangerous, but doing otherwise implied an even greater risk. Lady Tyris was bound to know about Kieran's trespassing in Zantia and if anyone recognized the use of forbidden magic, she would interrogate Deraniel.

At that point, their lives would end and all of their efforts be squandered. A snowstorm wiping out a city was uncommon but not unthinkable of in the north.

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The residual energy the Awakened ones had planted inside the victims of the Griever formed several dots in the sky that stabilized the arrays. Lith could feel his entire body going on fire as the cracks present on his life force were about to be burst open once again.

Yet the dots were too few to sustain any of the three arrays, which collapsed on themselves due to their inability to store so much world energy.

"That's actually my line." Lith unleashed the tier five spell Raging Sun he had kept at the ready for that precise moment.

A burst of violet flames engulfed the space around him with the strength and the heat of a volcanic eruption. Friya and Protector were safe from the spell, whereas all of Lith's enemies were close enough to be caught in its area of effect.

'I love it when a plan comes together.' Lith was smiling inside and outside.

Before going to the church, Lith had mobilized the city guards and the conscripted healers. Their role had been to forcefully heal the victims of the Griever, eliminating the focus points that the arrays required to function properly.

While he kept the Awakened ones occupied, the healers had dismantled Third Eye in his stead.

'Well, at least plan C succeeded. Maybe third time really is the charm.' Solus said. The enemies were still all alive, so she continued to focus in case the worst happened.

"Crazy bastard. He really pulled it off." Friya activated Full Guard and Dimensional Ruler. Her body was now surrounded by two auras, one blue and the other golden. She had already consumed a top tier potion, making herself immune to spirit magic.

The other two spells were meant to take away most of the advantages an Awakened had against a fake mage. Friya had heard many times from her parents about Nalear's abilities, so she knew what to expect.

Even with Raging Sun as the opening act, she didn't like their odds. They were still three against four, and no matter how fast he was, Protector couldn't deal with two enemies at a time. Yet she didn't hesitate and joined the fray the moment the purple flames dissipated.

Blood Desert. Panneia Tribe. Tasaar Quintus' home, now.

Tasaar was thinking about how to punish his foolish heir and what gift he could give Lady Tyris to apologize for Deraniel's trespassing inside her territories when the answer presented itself to him.

A delicate feminine figure walked out of a dimensional fissure right in front of him.

"Lady Tyris! To what do I owe this honor?" His voice sounded like someone had put his genitals in a vice. For a second, Tasaar's body couldn't decide whether to be aroused or terrified from the apparition.

Tyris's human appearance had a delicate oval face and perfect features. She was 1.76 meters (5'9") tall and wore the uniform of a Royal Constable that fit her like a glove, emphasizing her figure.

Her shining golden hair was braided into a waist long tress. There was no trace of her usual kindness within her silver eyes, so Tasaar's common sense made him settle for terror.

"Do you really think I'm that stupid?" Tyris voice was calm, yet the mana it carried made Tasaar fall to his knees and bleed from his eyes and ears.

"Your son and his friend trespass and a mysterious disease appears right in the city they were in. I could have overlooked their blatant violation of my laws if it was just a prank. Yet now it turns out that you sent him to practice forbidden magic on my turf."

A wave of her hand made all of the arrays protecting Tasaar's home collapse. The artifacts he wore turned into dust, even his prized Blood Scimitar.

"I swear I don't know what you are talking about!" He said as his bones started to break one after the other in a symphony of snaps and agony.

"You don't know? Then it's even worse. You are so stupid that you didn't even question Deraniel properly. Do you at least know what punishment awaits those who practice forbidden magic?" Her delicate hand lifted Tasaar by his head, threatening to squash it like grape.

"Death."

"Who is responsible for a disciple's faults?" Tyris's voice was unable to hide her anger anymore. Her question was accompanied by a roar of thunder.

"Their master. But Deraniel wasn't alone, Kieran..."

"I've already dealt with Lesalia. Unlike her, you were unaware of your disciple's plan, so I'll grant you a peaceful death." Her reply was the last nail in the coffin of Tasaar's hopes.

"At least spare my children." He wept.

"All but Deraniel." She nodded. "I'll leave them all of your riches and enough books to study magic, if that's what they want. Yet your legacy is mine!"

Tyris placed her hand above Tasaar's chest and stopped his heart. She waited for his mana core to disappear before moving on the second to last item on her to-do list. Deraniel wasn't going to be as lucky as his father.

Her only regret was to have wasted too much time with Lesalia. Thanks to the surveillance device she had enchanted Kieran's clothes with, the assassin knew all along what the six youngsters were doing, she simply didn't care.

To Lesalia, everything and everyone was just a means to an end. She never cared about the Council, nor the Guardians. Tyris had taken her time to show Lesalia how wrong she had been.

Zantia's sky, now.

The few seconds the forbidden formation lasted was enough for Xedros the Wyvern to recognize its nature.

"I knew it that following Faluel's disciple was a good move. With this recording, I can blackmail those pathetic humans and their masters to give me everything I want. It only takes a call to the Council to kill them if they refuse." A wide grin appeared on his scaly face.

"Where is that Wyrmling, though? How can a measly yellow cored human be so powerful? I smell human treachery here." Xedros wasn't aware of Orion's ring shielding both Lith and Solus, but he knew of the existence of such items.

The more the fight progressed, the more he was certain that Lith was using a cloaking device.

Meanwhile, several hundreds of meters below the Wyvern, the battle was still ongoing. To come out unscathed from Lith's Raging Sun, the four Awakened had to sacrifice something.

Pelion's armor was as good as dead and he had consumed all the barriers he had at the ready. Ailia had sacrificed most of her spells and mana to carve a path for herself out of that blazing inferno.

Jaren and Benyo had managed to Blink away in time, just to discover that Ryman was able to hit both of them almost at the same time.

'Curse their magical protections! With just my body I can't kill them with one hit. I need a weapon.' Protector thought. With tier five magic sealed by the proximity of his allies and dimensional magic sealed by Life Vision, Ryman's options were limited.

Keeping two Awakened busy by himself was the only way he had to give his companions the opportunity to take out their opponents. Otherwise, the enemy would exploit their superior numbers to buy themselves time and use Invigoration when necessary.

Chapter 586 Tactics and Strategy Part 3

Ryman assumed a hybrid form over two meters tall, which resembled a two legged humanoid wolf with feathered wings on his back. He was wearing Lith's prototype of Skinwalker armor and wielding an enchanted two handed mace.

It was another failed attempt at reproducing the Gatekeeper, but it had to do. Protector had never learned how to use weapons. He had dedicated all of his free time to magic.

Lith was eager to even the field. He charged at Ailia, who was currently the easiest target while unleashing a barrage of spells to prevent her from escaping.

Pelion had the same idea. He Blinked behind Friya, having care of remaining outside of Full Guard's area of effect. His hands were brimming with mana, ready to unleash a spell that she couldn't avoid from such close range.

Unfortunately for Pelion, he was well within Dimensional Ruler's area of effect. The golden sparkles of light which were filling the air distorted the space and made his dimensional door volatile.

Instead of closing, the exit point exploded. The resulting burst of flames burned Pelion's back and threw him off balance. Friya turned around, performing several lounges with her rapier aimed at his vitals.

Pelion took his greatsword out of his dimensional ring and a small explosion almost threw his weapon away. He managed to catch it by infusing himself with air fusion, but the desperate movement left him exposed.

The rapier hit him several times, draining Pelion's armor of its last bits of energy before piercing his shoulder. Pelion grunted, using darkness fusion to cut off his pain receptors. Between his burned hand and his wounded shoulder, he wouldn't be able to keep his focus otherwise.

"A greatsword? Are you overcompensating for something?" Friya said with a sneer.

Pelion was enraged at the idea of having been hurt by a fake mage twice, yet he managed to keep his cool and unleashed the tier four spell Wendigo's Wail. It was an unblockable attack that produced a cone of freezing air mixed with a shockwave.

The former would weaken and slow down the enemy, while the latter would stun them long enough for Pelion to deal her a finishing blow. The sparks of golden light coalesced in front of him, forming a Warp Steps which swallowed the spell and released it right behind Friya's back before dissipating.

It all happened so quickly that Pelion was still trying to understand how she could have deflected his spell when Friya resumed her attack. The potion she had taken made up for her lack of fusion magic while her swordsmanship outmatched the opponent's.

She never attempted to block the much bigger and clumsier great sword if not with her conjured tower shield. Her rapier danced like a snake against Pelion's guard and every one of her hits created a deep wound.

Pelion cursed his bad luck realizing that even when his attacks landed, they did little to no damage. Now that his armor's pseudo core had exhausted its energy, the difference in defensive abilities was overwhelming.

Light fusion alone wasn't enough to heal his wounds fast enough. Thanks to darkness fusion shutting down his pain receptors he didn't feel pain, but every new cut was making his stamina deplete faster.

He faked a lunge and the moment Friya retreated, Pelion flew back to buy enough time to use Invigoration. Friya lunged too, but despite the distance, she hit her target. The golden lights had coalesced again, forming a small Warp Steps right in front of Friya's weapon and another at Pelion's back.

She kept stabbing the air in front of her and her blade started to appear out of nowhere from impossible angles, forcing Pelion to use all of his focus just to remain alive.

"What kind of monster are you?" He said.

Friya didn't reply. She moved forward, making more and more golden lights surround her opponent.

Dimensional Ruler was a tier five dimensional magic spell which used Friya's great mana perception and her talent for space manipulation to open countless small Warp Steps all around her.

It allowed her to perceive anyone Warping near her and to make space instable at will. It was the reason every time Pelion employed a dimensional ability something had exploded in his face.

Friya could also use it as a means of attack or defense, but only within a short range. Like all dimensional spell, it was also very mana expensive, but she knew that time wasn't on their side.

They had to get the upper hand quickly, or they would be defeated.

Lith and Ailia were fighting in close quarters and things weren't going well for her. She had come to the fight prepared. Too bad that according to her predictions it was supposed to be a long-range battle where her group would outnumber and outgun their opponents.

After activating Third Eye, Ailia and her companions were supposed to become even stronger, whereas their enemies would be like fish in a barrel after suffering from a damage to their life force they weren't used to.

Even the worst case scenario she had prepared for didn't involve fighting one on one at close range. Lith was faster, stronger, and more devious than any opponent she had ever sparred with.

If she tried to buy some time to cast a spell, he would exploit her lack of focus to aim straight for her vitals, whereas whenever she focused solely on dodging his attacks, Lith would cast a spell toward her escape route and disrupt her rhythm.

'We've been fighting for just a few seconds and I'm already covered in wounds. Where the fuck are the others?' Ailia released all of the attack spells stored inside her rings.

The Gatekeeper was seconds away from chopping off her head and she knew it. The sudden barrage of spells forced Lith to step back and dodge, giving Ailia a full breath worth of energy from Invigoration.

Most of her wounds healed, yet the most important thing was that she had regained part of her stamina.

'Dammit! I was so close to finishing her off. The silver lining is that her rings should be out of energy now. I could use Origin Flames, but aside from giving away my identity, I would gain no advantage.

'Back at the church, her barrier withstood Protector's and mine combined attack. A simple blast of flames would just surprise her. She's physically weak, I need to exploit it!' Lith thought while he Blinked away.

The moment Ailia saw the dimensional door opening, she spun on herself like a top to find its exit point and counter attack, yet she found nothing. She then watched above and finally below, where Lith had just appeared at dozens of meters of distance.

'I expected him to stick at close range, but maybe he too is running out of strength.' Ailia was about to use Invigoration again, to not waste a single moment of that unexpected break, when Lith released the tier five spell, Stormnado.

The air around him became thick and heavy. Strong gales spread upwards the noxious fumes generated by his hands. Stormnado was a mix of air and darkness magic that conjured a thunderstorm of poisonous gas.

Lith had switched his position to make sure that even with its huge area of effect, only Ailia would get caught by the ascending toxic tornado he had unleashed.

Chapter 587 Tactics and Strategy Part 4

"Please, no." Ailia said even though she knew that the Ranger couldn't hear her.

She was a smart girl. Ailia could easily guess what was going to happen. The moment the spell hit her, Lith would be free to cut her down with his swords while she was too busy defending herself from the storm.

A mage couldn't be hurt by their own spell, so the Ranger could disregard Stormnado's effects and focus solely on attacking.

Jaren too understood that her friend had a few seconds left to live. He had no idea how a fake mage could hold her ground against Pelion, but he knew that the moment one of them fell, the rest would soon follow.

The Emperor Beast had no skill with his weapon, but each of his strikes had the weight of a mountain. The only time Jaren had blocked with his broadsword, not only did the blade almost break, but the impact also numbed his hands.

"Benyo, keep him busy! Ailia needs help." He yelled as he dived below to the rescue.

Benyo released a strong cyan aura and went all out. Up until that moment, Protector's strikes had been shallow because he had to shift his attention from one Awakened to the other, but now he could focus solely on her.

'There's a silver lining in being alone. Here goes nothing!' She unleashed a tier five spell, Shattering Star. The space around her was now filled by ice shards as big as a man, each one infused with several lightning bolts worth of electricity.

Protector dodged the magical hail like it was moving in slow motion, but then Benyo snapped her fingers and the ice constructs exploded into a heavy rain of smaller crystals.

The damage each one dealt was negligible, but they were almost impossible to dodge and sharp enough to cut through Protector's thick fur. They would also release a jolt of electricity so strong that they would cause a seizure even to someone using earth fusion.

Protector cursed his naivety and conjured a small tornado around himself to escape from the jaws of death. Shattering Star ended up inflicting him only scratch wounds, but it had never been meant to win the battle, only to stall for time.

Benyo smirked at her turtled up opponent and cast more spells while using Invigoration. She considered Emperor Beasts dangerous only because of their physical abilities. Due to their primitive brains, their magic lacked finesse.

Or so Benyo thought until she noticed that the tornado didn't deflect the ice crystals, so much as capturing them. She could feel the Emperor Beast's mana flooding her spell and make it his own.

The shards grew in size by the second and so did the electrical current they held. When Protector released half of them, they had become ice lances which moved as fast as bullets.

Benyo had no defense that could stop that kind of firepower and was forced to Blink away. The moment Protector spotted her exit point, he released the other half while he called the first volley back.

Benyo was ready to Blink again, but the ice lances hit her barriers like a truck, making her lose her focus. By the time the second volley arrived, all of her protections were exhausted.

The first spear pierced through her lung, the second through her stomach, and the third through her shoulder. Each one opened a gaping hole into her flesh, so big that Protector could see through them the events unfolding at Benyo's back.

The number of holes in her body increased until it was turned into a burst of blood, skin, and guts.

"I'm sorry, but you left me no choice." Protector said as Benyo's remains were scattered to the wind.

"I was willing to spare you if you surrendered, yet you kept fighting despite everything was lost. I can't afford mercy when you willingly threaten the members of my pack." Then, he had the wind blow under his wings and turned into a blur.

"Ailia, Blink behind me!" Jaren said the moment he was sure that the Emperor Beast wasn't following him.

Ailia did as instructed, but unfortunately, so did Lith. The two Warps opened almost at the same time, making it impossible for Jaren to distinguish friend from foe.

"Me and my big mouth!" Since he couldn't attack, Jaren weaved several barriers in front of himself, just to be safe.

Lith had run out of tier five spells, so he had to resort to the tier four spell Death Call. Four long arms made of shadow came out of his body, ignoring both of his enemy's defenses.

From such a close distance, neither of them could use magic without the risk of harming their partner rather than their enemy. To make matters worse, they soon discovered that, even two against one, they were physically no match for Lith.

Both the Ranger and his blade were infused with the power of the elements, doubling the effects of fusion magic. After exchanging a quick glance, Ailia and Jaren Blinked away at the same time, hoping that whoever Lith ended up chasing would buy the other enough time to turn the tables.

Pelion wasn't faring any better. Dozens of deep cuts covered his body and the blood loss was draining his stamina by the second. Dimensional Ruler prevented him from using dimensional magic to escape and all of his means of attack had been neutralized by Friya's combination of spells.

Full Guard allowed her to move her conjured tower shield wherever it was needed, and the golden light surrounding them made her rapier appear from his every side, as if he was surrounded by several opponents.

Trying to get at least a second of respite, he unleashed all of the spells he had at the ready and those stored inside of his magical rings. Friya did the same, but whereas she had several means to defend herself, Pelion only had earth fusion and his enhanced body.

He infused the amulet at his neck with what mana he had left, generating a barrier made of pure energy that saved his life. Friya used her tower shield to block as many attacks as she could before it crumbled, and then she Blinked behind her opponent while Pelion was blinded by the light generated by the spells exploding on his barrier.

Pelion wasn't naïve and was expecting something like that. His enhanced senses alerted him in time. He managed to turn around in the nick of time and block Friya's sword with the hook shaped hilt of his own.

He ripped it off from her hand and used his free arm to grab at her neck.

He was now out of mana, making it necessary for him to finish her quickly. Unfortunately, while he so skilfully overpowered her arms, her leg found her way to his gonads.

Friya kicked them hard and fast enough to send them keeping company to Pelion's tonsils. With his pain receptors functioning again, he doubled over in agony and Friya's knee welcomed his face as her elbows struck at the back of his head.

Meanwhile, in the sky above Zantia, Xedros was considering the idea of going down and save the three Awakened youths remaining.

'If those weaklings die, I will never learn their masters' identities. Dead men tell no tales and can't be blackmailed!' He thought.

Chapter 588 Punishment and Rewards Part 1

A small rift opened in the space near Xedros. It was so thin and delicate to be almost invisible.

"What are you doing here instead of stopping the ritual?" A feminine voice holding the fury of a storm asked.

"According to the rules of the Council, every Lord is responsible for protecting their territory from trespassers and from Awakened who employ forbidden magic. Yet you are here not doing anything. Any last words?"

"Lady Tyris, I..." Xedros attempted to say before her punch crushed every single bone in his body and sent him crashing against the nearest mountain, a couple of dozens of kilometers away.

'It seems I'm late. Yet the air is still pure. The forbidden ritual didn't succeed.' She thought while she descended to the ground.

Jaren had gotten the short end of the stick. He had just walked through his dimensional door when Lith's blade lunged at his neck. He managed to dodge it only to be caught by the four shadow arms conjured by Death Call.

The darkness magic flooded his body draining Jaren of his vitality. The combined action of the four limbs made him lose his focus along with all the spells he kept active or had at the ready.

With no more barriers protecting his enemy, Lith's blade had no problems to sever Jaren's head from his neck. Ailia was quickly recovering her strength while she cast her strongest tier five spell.

She was so focused on haste the completion of the spell, that she almost didn't notice Protector approaching to her position at breakneck speed. This time they were far enough to allow her enhanced senses to spot him thanks to air fusion and Life Vision.

Ailia was about to unleash her Collapsing Moon spell against the Emperor Beast when two golden rays of light descended from the sky, piercing Ailia's and Pelion's heart.

At the same time, Lith's group noticed to be inside an impossible array, which generated a spherical barrier around all of those present, corpses included.

'This is General Vorgh's energy signature, but I don't recognize the one behind the golden rays.' Lith thought.

'It seems the reinforcements have finally arrived, but I don't understand why they put us inside- Never mind.' Solus's thoughts didn't make any sense to Lith until a huge explosion destroyed the Awakened ones' corpses and cracked the barriers sealing them.

"You are lucky, son." General Vorgh said.

"A lot of mages don't want their treasures to be stolen. Sometimes a dead enemy is more dangerous than when they were alive."

Lith actually had no such problem. Solus would always warn him if a pseudo core was going awry, but he had no reason to tell that to Vorgh.

"Thanks for your help." He said while giving him a small bow. Solus preferred to keep her eyes on the magical staff Vorgh was wielding and try to understand its secrets.

"No, Ranger. Thank you. I'm sorry we arrived so late, but casting such a long range Warping array requires time and skill. I suppose you already know Spellbreaker Tyris Griffon."

Tyris waved her hand at Lith's group while she kept open the dimensional corridor from which Vorgh and other Spellbreakers were rushing out.

"Where are the rest of the enemies?" Vorgh asked.

"Dead or still inside their homes." Lith handed him the list containing the names of all the officials and nobles who were likely to have helped the Church of the Six to spread its influence.

"Well, cleaning up this kind of mess is way beyond your paygrade. We'll take it from here. There's anything else I need to know?"

"Yes. I stopped those rogue mages with the help of my friends and I'd like for them to be compensated. They are Friya Ernas and..." Lith turned around just in time to bit his own tongue.

"Don't worry. The Griffon Kingdom doesn't discriminate against his loyal citizens just because of their race. Both Lady Ernas and the Emperor Beast will be rewarded for their efforts." Tyris said.

Lith had almost noticed too late that Protector was still in his hybrid form.

'Fuck me sideways! Protector doesn't know them, nor must he like being caged like an animal. Lucky for us, the army seems to know about shapeshifting abilities. Otherwise things could have gotten awkward.' Lith thought.

Vorgh dispelled his array, making the barrier trapping Lith's group disappear.

"Who are these guys, Scourge? Friends or enemies?" His voice sounded like a snarl. Protector's lips were curled, revealing his snow white fangs and showing he was ready to resume fighting.

Protector was too young to know about the Council or the Guardians. Since Tyris wanted to appear as a cyan cored human, even his senses perceived her as such.

"Friends." Lith said stepping in front of him and shielding Ryman with his own body. Just to be safe.

Friya was still confused about the quick development of the events. At first, she had been annoyed by someone stealing her prey, but when Pelion's corpse had exploded, making even her bones tremble, her rage had been replaced by gratitude.

The emotional roller coaster resumed when she saw Tyris. She had no idea who that Constable was, but seeing another Tista was a big blow to her pride.

"Thank you very much, Lady Ernas. Your family truly is a pillar of the Kingdom." Tyris said while shaking her hand.

"Thank you for your kind words." Was all that Friya managed to think of that didn't sound like a pick up line.

"It's never easy to reward an Emperor Beast. Your needs are often very different from human's."

"I didn't come here for a reward. Just leave me alone and I'll consider us even." Protector said. There was something off in the woman in front of him, and he didn't like how the other Spellbreakers were looking at him.

He chose to remain in his hybrid form to not give away his human appearance.

"If that's your wish, I can promise you that no one will disturb you. I hope you will at least accept some gold as a token of my appreciation." Tyris handed him a bag containing a few hundred gold coins.

Protector was tempted to refuse it, but with another kid incoming that money would make a huge difference. He wouldn't need to work for a long time, allowing him to focus only on his family and magic.

Also, Selia could use a bigger home, and both of them some help with the kids. He nodded at Tyris and made the bag disappear inside his dimensional amulet after checking that none of the coins was enchanted.

"What can the Griffon Kingdom do for you, Ranger Verhen?" Tyris shook his hand too, coming a little too close for Lith's comfort. Her beauty was stunning, her hair smelled like spring had finally arrived, and her smile had melted countless frozen hearts in the past.

"I would like to apply for leave again. Two missions completed in as many days and an entire city saved from forbidden magic should grant me at least that much." He replied without hesitation.

Tyris's smile reminded him of Kamila, making him yearn for his girlfriend's company.

"That's a given." She chuckled. "You'll be awarded 10 days leave for your meritorious acts and another 10 days for being the top ranker in the Ranger corps. I was asking if there's something specific you might desire.

Chapter 589 Punishment and Rewards Part 2

"Please, refrain from asking more titles or annuities, because those who rise too fast draw on themselves the wrong kind of attention." Tyris said.

"Then I'd like to keep the Balor's body for myself. Also, I think I'll spend my leave practicing Forgemastering. Can you provide me with these metals?" Lith handed her a very short list, but each material was accompanied by a big number.

"I can assure you that all of your requests will be fulfilled, except for the adamant. It's too rare and precious to waste it for the experiments of a novice Foragemaster. No offense." She replied.

"None taken. What's the next best thing I could receive?"

"Money and Orichalcum. Gold is a mage's best friend. Whatever your project is, you'll need it. As for the Orichalcum, it's a natural alloy of silver containing traces of adamant. It's the perfect material for most artifacts and with the proper treatment, it can become harder than steel. Is it good enough for you?" Tyris asked.

"Yes, thank you very much. I would also like to learn the metalworking techniques you mentioned earlier."

'I can't depend on Zekell forever. Especially for the items I need to create with true Forgemastering.' Lith thought.

"Everything will be delivered to your door. But I have to order you to remain here until the situation settles." Tyris made him snap out of his reverie.

"Removing so many nobles at once will make the city chaotic. Once Count Cestor's treachery gets exposed, the citizens of Zantia will lose much of their trust in the nobles who have failed them and they will shift it on the heroes who saved them.

"Your presence will help to make the transition as quick and painless as possible."

Lith was happy at the idea of spending some more time with Friya. Leaving right after completing his mission would mean treating her as if she was just a means to an end, whereas she was his friend.

'I can't believe I'm thinking about this in a non sarcastic way.' Lith thought.

'One step at the time. Progress, not perfection.' Solus said. In her eyes, Lith had many important people in his life, yet he appreciated only a few of them.

Solus too was afraid of the possibility that he could die and reincarnate somewhere else. However, what really terrified her was the idea that to achieve his goal, Lith would lose everything and everyone else in the process, making it a hollow victory.

"I'll take my leave. Scourge, Ernas." Protector opened a Warp Steps and disappeared. The arrival of the army and all the magic employed during the battle had lured quite a crowd of onlookers.

Lith approved of Protector's choice. He had left before more humans could see him and had pretended to not know Friya.

'I guess that during the past five years he has learned some common sense.' Lith thought.

Friya and Lith had to provide a full report of all the events before returning to Viscount Krame's mansion. They were both starving and craving for some rest.

"Shouldn't you call Kamila? I bet she's jealous of you spending so much time alone with a gorgeous woman." Friya said during dinner while sweeping her hair behind her ear.

"Don't worry. Tyris and I are barely acquaintances. Also, I never remained alone with her, so my reputation is safe." He replied with a sneer.

"Son of a..." Friya didn't like her joke being turned against her and punched him on the shoulder. Pain radiated from her wrist the moment her fist struck him. She had hit softer brick walls.

"I noticed that you didn't bring any member of your guild with you at the Church of the Six. We could have used some help." Lith said.

"I know, that's why I had them waiting outside in case things got out of our hands. Yet I couldn't risk them meddling with your play. They would see Protector's beast form and your holograms.

"As much as it pains me to admit it, I don't trust them with my own secrets, let alone with yours or those of your friends." She sighed.

"They could have panicked or tried to blackmail the two of you. If there's something I learned during the last year, is that it's better to hire mages from minor academies rather than those from the great ones.

"The former never got the opportunity to learn a specialization, so they are full of hope and ambition. People like Wyra are loyal and grateful for the opportunity to gather merits.

"Once she gets enough, she can join the Mage Association and search for a teacher. The latter, instead, are bitter because of their failure at learning any specialization, dimensional magic, or even Crystalsmith.

"Very few of them have the confidence to study again on their own and their wounded pride prevents them from asking for help."

"By the way, what was that golden light you used? That guy was huge and used that strange magic, yet you handed his ass to him." Lith asked.

"How the heck did you have the time to pay attention to my fight? Do you have eyes even behind your head?"

"I was just looking out for you." Lith lied. Solus could see all around them and then share her memories once a crisis was resolved.

"That was one of the dimensional spells I created. Even during our time at the academy, I knew I could never be a Healer as good as you or Quylla, nor a Mage Knight as good as Phloria.

"I'm very good at my specializations, but I'm aware I'll always be the Vastor of our group. Instead of moping, I realized that I wasn't called 'Master of Space' for nothing. I had my own thing and did all I could to get good at it.

"Now I'm a full-fledged dimensional mage, like Professor Rudd." Friya was brimming with pride. To her, dimensional magic was just like her guild.

Friya was tired of being second in everything she did. She wanted to carve her own path thanks to her talents. Even though the jury was still out on the guild, Friya was certain that dimensional magic would become her true field of expertise.

She was explaining to him the effects of Dimensional Ruler, leaving Lith wondering if he would be able to handle such a spell, when the butler entered the dining room.

"Regent Verhen. Lady Ernas. Please forgive my intrusion. Your friend is back and he is asking for you." He said while giving them a deep bow.

Most of the house staff was so grateful to both of them for saving the city and their jobs that they treated them better than their own master.

"Let him in and bring another serving." Lith had yet to finish to speak that Ryman walked through the door with an embarrassed look on his face.

The butler did as instructed and left them alone.

"Did Selia kick you out again or did you just miss me too much?" Lith asked.

"Neither. I forgot to give you your enchanted items back." Ryman took out both the mace and the pseudo Skinwalker.

"You can keep them. You already have imprinted them, plus they are just failures." Lith dismissed the issue with a wave of his hand.

"Also, I need a favor."

Lith nodded for him to continue while Ryman sat at the table with them. Ryman looked at the great number of silverwares near his plate with wonder. He took a fork and a knife at random, making Friya giggle.

Chapter 590 Lost and Found Part 1

"I need a ride back home. Xedros, the Lord of the Kellar region, must have gone away for some important reason. He isn't home and he doesn't reply to his amulet. Can you help me, Scourge?" Ryman asked.

Xedros the Wyvern was actually laying on the side of a mountain with most of his bones broken. Tyris had decided to spare his life, but that didn't mean she was willing to let his act of defiance go unpunished.

Not only did her fist crush Xedros's body, but it also had tampered with his life force, making it impossible for him to heal with Invigoration. It would take him days to fix the damage his life force had suffered and months to get back to his peak condition.

"Yes, don't worry. I was going to visit you and Selia anyway." Lith said.

The army didn't need their help often, so the three of them spent most of their time relaxing and sharing pointers about magic. Friya had many things to teach them about dimensional magic, whereas Lith had a lot to teach them about everything.

"How the heck did you learn the basics of all the specializations?" Friya had shed blood and sweat to train her three specializations.

"You have your guild, whereas I have no life." Lith shrugged.

Three days later, Lith and Protector left Zantia. Friya was sad to see them go. Protector's kindness reminded her of her father, Orion. It didn't take her long to grow fond of the wise yet socially awkward Emperor Beast.

The two of them Warped until they reached the nearest mana geyser.

"Why are we here? I thought we would take a Warp Gate." Protector asked.

Lith didn't reply as Solus changed to her tower form, allowing them to get inside.

"It's bigger than I remembered it." Protector looked around the familiar yet unknown place.

"What do you mean? It's your first time in here. I expected you to at least be surprised." Lith asked.

"Your memories, remember?" Protector tapped the side of his head with a forefinger.

"Well, I bet you don't know this." Lith snapped his fingers and a slight tremor spread throughout the tower. The space around them stretched and deformed as they crossed thousands of kilometers in a heartbeat.

"By the Great Mother." Protector recognized the all too familiar Trawn woods.

"I can't let the army clerks register all of my movements. If I had to vouch for you to let you use a Warp Gate, the Griffon Kingdom would easily guess your true identity. I don't have many friends and most of them have free access to Gates." Lith said.

"Thank you, Solus." Protector gave her a deep bow, making her blush.

"I hope you get a body soon. Fire and stone are not enough to express who you truly are. Whoever did this to you either loved you so deeply that they couldn't stand the idea of losing you or was a heartless monster."

"You're welcome, Protector." Solus regretted not being able to show him her physical appearance. She considered Ryman as one of her oldest friends, just like Lith did.

'I only have one secret and I'm already sick of it. I don't know how Lith manages to keep so many of them and honestly, I don't care. I want to come clean with him' She thought.

Ryman's home was just a few hundred kilometers from Lutia. It took them just a few minutes to Warp to destination. When Lith saw Selia, her physical appearance shocked him.

She was supposed to be in her late-thirties, yet she looked even younger than the last time he had seen her. She seemed to be barely past her twenties. She was still 1.7 (5'7") meters tall and her skin was tanned from the years-long exposure to the sun.

Her black hair was now longer, reaching her shoulders and giving her more gentle looks. She wore a leather hunting jacket over a green shirt, green cargo pants, and brown hunting shoes with a soft outer sole, to limit the noise made while she moved.

Lith could tell by her round belly that she was past the six months of pregnancy. Her sharp eyes and rough attitude hadn't changed though.

"It's about time!" She snarled while giving the children in her arms to Protector.

"Do you have any idea how hard is it to chase around those two pests while I'm bloated like this? Make yourself useful and fix us something to eat while we entertain our guest."

Her eyes became much kinder when she looked at Lith.

"Oh, gods! I would have never expected that the famished runt that once came begging at my door for help would get so tall. Give aunt Selia a hug, Scourge!" She extended her arms and embraced him before he could even answer.

"Scourge?" Lith asked.

"Ryman never calls you Lith and I think that Scourge is a fitting name for a great hunter." She replied while not letting him go.

The house was a mess. Toys were left around on the carpets and furniture. Most of the walls had been scribbled on, and Lith could see the traces of Selia's efforts to scrub them off.

Yet it wasn't the chaos reigning in the hallway which gave him the second shock in less than ten seconds from his arrival. Their home was almost identical to his own. It even possessed most of the enchanted home appliances he had made over the years.

"Selia, I missed you so much. Especially at Nana's funeral." He returned the embrace the moment he snapped out of his reverie.

"I missed you too." She sobbed due to the joy of their reunion and the hormonal roller coaster she was experiencing.

"It's all that wolf's fault! I wanted to come at your graduation, but he said no. That the time wasn't right and all that cheese." Selia wanted to swear, but she had learned the hard way how fast children were at copying their parents' bad habits.

"I don't want to sound rude, but how can you look like this? Why does the house look like this?" He asked when she released him from her embrace.

"It's all thanks to your memories." She gave him a big kiss on the cheek.

"Not only did you save that wolfhead's life, but you also taught him more about the world and magic than he could ever achieve on his own. I asked him to do for me what you did for Elina and to make all the cool stuff you do."

Balkor's attack had happened during the third trimester of his fourth year at the White Griffon, giving Protector most of his knowledge about regrowing limbs, Forgemastering, dimensional magic, and even magic crystals.

"I can't do all the things you can, but at least I know the basics." Protector squinted his eyes and used a small blast of darkness magic to clean the walls.

The moment Ryman let them down, Lilia and Leran ran towards Lith. They were respectively 4 and 2 years old. With Ryman's red hair and Selia's sharp eyes, they were the spitting image of their parents.

They seemed to be curious about him, but instead of asking questions, they sniffed him for a while before shapeshifting their hands and bare feet into claws to better climb his legs.

"No claws with the guests! Get down immediately!" Selia's pants were riddled with holes. Now Lith could understand why she was so edgy. If Aran had magical powers, Elina would have gone insane without his help.