

Supreme M 591

Chapter 591 Lost and Found Part 2

"I can believe my memories gave him an edge, but knowing and doing are two different things. Where did you find the mana crystals to make those things? They seem to be made with true magic."

Lith projected one of his little brother's favorites fairy tales to keep the children busy.

"As I already told you, after almost dying by the Valor's hands and receiving your memories, I understood how lacking my magical knowledge was. As soon as Selia and I settled down in our new home, I searched for a teacher." Protector said.

"Just like humans, beasts too don't spread the secret of Awakening unless it's strictly necessary to keep the balance among the races. The law is very strict, you can't even Awaken your own children if you aren't willing to put your life on the line for them."

"What do you mean?" Lith had no notion of the social rules among the Awakened ones.

"You are responsible for those you share our secret with. If your disciple breaks any law, you pay the consequences along with them. Since Awakened ones have a long life, only after a century the bond between master and apprentice is considered broken.

"It's never hard to know who gifted who with Awakening, since no one gives such a gift freely. Also, when the Council captures a criminal, they can be very persuasive."

Ryman's words made Lith think that Jirni would feel at home in the Council.

"Don't you want to be Awakened, Selia?" Lith asked.

"Honestly, I don't know. I prefer a good life to a long one. Not to mention that I should start to study magic and I never had a good relationship with books. I don't know how long Ryman has left to live.

"To me, outliving both my husband and children is a fate worse than death." She ruffled the kids' hair. They were two little angels now that they had stopped destroying the house and she wasn't forced to chase them around.

"Unlike humans, however, we don't hide our identity. I found my master, Faluel the Hydra, simply by asking the magical beasts of the Distar Marquisate for directions. Convincing her to teach me wasn't easy.

"A disciple takes a lot of time and effort. Being an Awakened isn't enough to be accepted by a master. You have to prove to be reliable, talented and to have an affinity with your future teacher. Because of your influence, I was interested in learning about healing and forgemastering.

"I had to prove my worth by doing all kinds of jobs for her for almost a year before she took me in."

"A year? I wouldn't have lasted that long. During that time, I completed half of my studies and I've made a lot of connections within human society." Lith said.

"An Emperor Beast wouldn't have taken you anyway. Back then, you were just a human. Even Scarlett considered you a dangerous anomaly. Faluel would have probably chased you away, if not worse." Ryman shook his head.

Selia was more interested in Lith's light show than in all that talk about Awakened and Lith's nature, which made him wonder.

To Selia, Lith asked: "What did he tell you about me, exactly?"

"After the scare he gave me with Lilia, I gave him only one condition if he wanted us to get back together. I demanded that there wouldn't be any more secrets between us.

"He told me all about himself, but he only told me about you what he needed for his story to make sense. I'm fine with it and I never pried further. He never shared with me your secrets aside from you being an Awakened, how the two of you met, and what you did together.

"Your parents are almost of my same age. We grew together in Lutia, so there's no chance one of them is an Emperor Beast. They would have never let one of their children suffer from hunger or illness as Tista did.

"I'm really curious, but if you don't want to tell, it's fine. Just consider that you are unlikely to find someone as open minded as me." Selia said pointing at Ryman.

Lith hesitated, not knowing to which one of his two hearts he should listen to. On one hand, he was certain that Selia wouldn't be too shocked if he decided to show her his hybrid form.

With an Emperor Beast for a husband and two little shapeshifting wrecking balls born from their love, she had proven to have an inhuman tolerance for weirdness. Yet they hadn't seen each other in a long time.

She had helped him a lot before he entered the White Griffon, but they had never got that close. He had never willingly revealed his hybrid nature elf to anyone except for Phloria.

Showing it to Selia before than to his family or Kamila, made him feel bad about himself.

"Thanks for the offer, but I'll pass. For now." Lith said.

Selia dismissed the issue with a shrug and fell asleep shortly after. Her body was aptly trained to rest as soon as the kids allowed her to.

"What kind of jobs did Faluel ask you to do?"

"Many things. I had to kill rogue magical beasts, human hunters that kept harming her forest, and sometimes even deal with Abominations."

"It sounds like she was making you do her job for her." Lith said.

"Mostly, yes. Each task was actually a test to see if I could be trusted with more power. Not all of those she pointed me at deserved to die. Humans are more complex than beasts. They are so grey that most of the time is really hard to tell if they are bad or just desperate."

Lith had the impression that Protector was now talking about him.

"After winter has passed, come find me. I'll introduce Faluel to you. She seemed to be very interested in your Wyrmling form and she is an invaluable teacher. Even with your memories, I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without her help. She provided me both the materials and the mana crystals."

Protector pointed at all the forgemastered marvels furnishing his house.

"What's a Wyrmling?" Lith asked. It wasn't the first time he heard that term.

"A hybrid between one of the draconic species and something else. She thinks you are one of them because of your scales and because you can use Dragon Fire." Protector replied.

"I can use what now?"

"Maybe you know them as Origin Flames. You know, the fire you breathe from your mouth? Not everyone can use them, which makes them special."

"Do you know why?" Lith couldn't believe his luck. He might have found a proper Awakened teacher and learn about Origin Flames, all in one day.

"Sorry, no. Not even Faluel can use them, so the first time she mentioned them to me was before sending me to Zantia."

Lith spent the night at Ryman's home. He studied the pseudo cores of Ryman's creations to appreciate the difference between his own results as self-taught with those of someone who had a master.

'It seems I'm really talented for Forgemastering. My work is in no way inferior to Protector's.' He thought.

Before leaving, he exchanged communication runes with Protector and Selia. He also gifted some of his toys to the kids. He had prepared a new set of fairy tales projectors and miniature models.

They were shaped like mages and magical beasts and could emit light of different colors as if they cast different spells. Lith could always make more and Selia needed a way to keep them busy when Ryman was away.

Chapter 592 Fanning the Flames Part 1

"Will you get back to Lutia now?" Lith asked, hoping for a positive answer.

"I don't know." Selia bit her lower lip.

"I'd love to get some help and company. Living in the middle of nowhere is really tiring, but I have to endure it for the kids. I'll think about it as soon as they understand that they can't shapeshift in front of strangers." She sighed.

Selia and Lith exchanged a long hug. She made him promise to come back before the end of winter.

"Remember that we are your friends, not just a deadline. If you come back only for the lizard, I'll never forgive you."

After saying their goodbyes, Lith used the Tower Warp to get back in the north and reach Belius with the army's Gate. He needed to leave enough traces of his passage to never make people wonder where he disappeared from time to time.

'I would love to work on my Forgemastering, but my talk with Kamila is long overdue. I can't delay it any longer without giving her a good reason. I can't just fit her in my spare time, I need to make time for her.' He thought while knocking on her door.

It was early enough in the morning for her to still be at home, but not so late that she had to rush to work. Lith had the keys to her apartment, but he wanted to make her a surprise.

He rang the bell several times before he could hear an angry voice coming from behind the door.

"Look, pal, whatever you sell, I'm not buying. I was in the middle of breakfast and..." Kamila choked on her words after watching through the peephole.

"I swear, this is the last time I make you a surprise. This is not how I pictured our reunion."

The door opened abruptly and Kamila hugged him tightly for a few seconds, making sure he wasn't hurt.

"How did you get here so fast? I wasn't expecting you here before noon." She asked.

Lith didn't reply. He silently stood there, returning her embrace. He had missed her warmth, the scent of her hair, and even the sound of her voice. The difference between speaking with her and her hologram was like heaven and earth.

"Is it too much to ask for a 'welcome home' and a kiss?" Lith's words made Kamila blush. He had just referred to her house as his own, as if to ask if he could live with her.

"Welcome home." She said before making him bend down to reach his lips.

"Come in. I want to hear all about Friya and Ryman." Kamila had no need to ask him about the events in Zantia because she already knew them from his daily reports. She was more interested in learning about his never mentioned before friend.

They had breakfast together, while Lith told her how he and Protector had met and how he had become his magical father figure. He always referred to him as a vagrant mage.

Exposing his identity as an Emperor Beast could endanger his family. Ryman had not betrayed Lith's secret and he was willing to do the same for him.

"Did you really fight together against your first Abomination when you were just twelve?" She asked.

"Yes. My parents learned about it only a year later."

"That man is crazy, bringing a child to fight that kind of monster." No matter how much enthusiasm Lith used when reminiscing all the times he had fought or hunt alongside Protector.

To her, he was just a nutjob who had endangered Lith's life multiple times.

"Without me, the Trawn woods would have been destroyed and maybe Lutia razed to the ground. He's not crazy. If we had never met, I would have probably died fighting the Abomination alone." Lith said.

"You can keep trying to make it appear heroic later. I'm almost late for work." Kamila put her jacket on, giving him a last kiss before going to the door.

"I would love to have lunch together, but I have barely ten minutes at random due to overwork. I'll be back for dinner. I want you to promise me that when I arrive home, I'll find you here and that you will not risk your life today." She grabbed the handle without turning it, waiting for his reply.

"I promise. Are you ready for our big talk?" Lith asked.

"I was born ready." She blew him a kiss and left the apartment.

'Not risking your life is a big promise. What are we going to do all day? Sitting on a couch' Solus chuckled.

'I'm not tired. I had plenty of time to rest during the last few days. The materials I have requested should have already arrived home. Time to Forgemaster us a few new toys.'

Lith used Belius's Gate to get to Derios, the capitol of Distar's Marquisate, and then Solus's tower Warp to arrive directly in the Trawn woods.

His parents were overjoyed to have him back home. They showered him with affection and rebukes.

"This is becoming disturbing, son." Raaz said.

"Why are you only getting missions where you risk your life at least once per day?"

"I'm the Ranger in charge of one of the most dangerous regions in the north, Dad. Not the captain of the sewing club. High risks mean high rewards. Speaking of rewards, I was expecting a few crates. Have they arrived already?"

"Yes, dear. I've stored them for safekeeping" Elina handed him several dimensional rings.

"Are you eating properly? It seems that stress has made you lose weight. Maybe you should change your career plans."

"Please, Mom, Kamila is already bugging me. She says that I endanger my life like she changes her clothes. I don't need to hear the same song from you and Dad."

"You should listen to her. Kamila is a judicious woman. Will you have lunch with us?"

Lith nodded in reply and then he and Elina came out of their home to pass the crates from her dimensional rings to his pocket dimension. After that, he went to the village of Lutia to meet with Zekell Proudhammer.

He was the village blacksmith and Rena's father-in-law. He had insisted for both Rena and his granddaughter, Leria, to keep the Verhen last name, making them Verhen-Proudhammer.

Lith's name was the best sword and shield any sane man could ask for.

"What can I do for you, dear Lith?" Zekell loved all the privileges he had acquired through his son's marriage and was always eager to help Lith however he could.

"I need to make me a few items out of Orichalcum. Do you know how to process it?" Lith asked.

"No. I never heard about it outside of legends."

Lith took out the first crate and a booklet about Orichalcum.

"I gave it a read. It doesn't seem much different from silver. Is it as easy as it seems?" Lith was so used to learn things with Soluspedia that every second that Zekell spent reading the booklet seemed to last an hour to him.

"We can give it a try. We'll need a few ingredients for..."

Lith opened the crate, revealing that the ore had been delivered with all the necessary for its treatments.

"Okay, then we just have to wait for the furnace to reach the right temperature. I'll reread everything again while we wait."

Wait. Lith hated that word. It usually implied wasting time he could use to do something else.

It took him less than a minute to pulverize the ore with magic, another few minutes to prepare the rest of the ingredient, and then he could only stare at the flames.

Chapter 593 Fanning the Flames Part 2

Lith already had a copy of the booklet inside Soluspedia, so he had no need to review the procedure again. Zekell had put a dirty silver ore inside the crucible to check the temperature of the furnace.

"Is it a problem if I use magic to speed things up?" Lith asked.

"Be my guest, but remember that metals can evaporate. Finding the right temperature could require even more time since I know nothing about magic and you know nothing about metals." Zekell shrugged without taking his eyes off the booklet.

Lith sighed.

'Even Fire Vision could be useless without proper knowledge. I need to start practicing now, or I'll need months to create even a single item. Here goes nothing.' He thought after checking that no one was looking.

Lith's throat became covered in black scales as he breathed Origin Flams inside the furnace. The blue magic flames overpowered the normal yellow ones, spreading an eerie light.

"What the heck have you done?" Zekell jumped off his chair, trying to save the situation.

The crucible, the coal, the silver ore, everything but the stones was engulfed in blue flames. Zekell took out the crucible using metal tongs, but even those caught fire. He kept his cool and took the crucible out of the furnace before splashing the tongs in a bucket of water.

"Is this normal?" Lith asked pointing at the flaming crucible.

"No, it's not. You should've... Oh, gods!" Zekell couldn't believe his own eyes.

His old, trustworthy tongs seemed now to be made of two different parts. One was blackened with dirt, time, and use, whereas the extremity that had been eaten by the flames was slightly smaller than he remembered it.

He touched it with his fingers, he even hit the anvil with them to make sure of his findings.

"This doesn't make sense. I get that your flames destroyed the dirt, but this? The metal seems to have been purified several times."

"What about this?" Lith used spirit magic to have the crucible float in front of Zekell.

The crucible was shiny as if someone had spent hours polishing it and the silver ore was reduced to a small clump of metal.

"By the great hammer! I've never seen such pure silver. This is bad." Zekell said.

"Why bad? Isn't the purer the better?" Lith asked.

"If you want to make an ornament, yes. If you need it for something that has a practical use, impurities aren't all bad. Pure metals are a myth. Sometimes, you have to add impurities to obtain the right balance between hardness and softness.

"Too much of the former and the final result will be brittle, too much of the latter and it bends just by watching at it."

Lith had his doubts, but he couldn't experiment with Origin Flames in the presence of witnesses. He spent the rest of the morning with Zekell, learning how to smelt the Orichalcum and how to turn it from as ductile as silver to harder than Damascus steel.

The procedure was relatively simple. First, they picked a crucible big enough to contain quite some ore, but not so heavy that Lith couldn't easily lift it even when full.

Zekell covered the bottom of the crucible with a special sand to prevent the ore from sticking, then he prepared a mixture of ore, wheat flour, lard, and ashes. The flour would provide the carbon for the oxidation of impurities and heat the metal from the inside.

The ashes served for both the oxidation and to make the impurities clump together. Much to Lith's surprise, the lard was used to help the ore form an ore bar and to help build up the heat.

Once the crucible was filled with the mixture, Zekell covered its surface with more ash, sand, and sytium. The sand would prevent the metals from volatilizing, whereas the sytium was a substance necessary to keep the silver and the Adamant in the ore together.

They put the crucible inside the furnace and Lith used magic and Fire Vision under Zekell's supervision to spread the heat evenly until the ore looked like honey with no lumps of unmolten material.

After pouring the liquid into a dry mortar, the ore quickly solidified into an upper part made of slag that looked like colored glass and a lower part made of metal. They separated the metal from the slag and repeated the process until it was pure.

Only then did they add the last ingredient, Darkestkhan. It would make the Adamant saturate the silver, giving to the metal ingot the properties of both metals.

After they had treated a few batches of ore, Lith noticed that it was almost lunchtime.

"Can we stop here? I need you to make me a few things for me." Lith asked.

"Isn't it a bit late for that? You should have told me way earlier. Without a mold, there's not much I can do and you didn't give me enough notice to prepare anything."

"Do you still have the mold for the silver hammers you made me some time ago?"

"Sure. Do you need a hammer?" Zekell was surprised by his request. It couldn't be a weapon since Lith only used swords, nor something merely decorative. It would've been a waste of Orichalcum and Lith was as thrifty as he was.

"More than one. I need to enchant them and failure is likely. I also need a chain mail and chain pants of Orichalcum. The shape doesn't matter. I'm going to make a better Skinwalker Armor." Lith said.

Zekell had enough time to prepare him a couple of hammers, everything else had to wait. Zekell would first finish to purify the rest of the Orichalcum and then work on the items Lith had requested.

'Orichalcum is definitely different from other metals.' Solus thought.

'Indeed. It's much lighter and durable of all the hammers we used to far.' Lith had struck Zekell's anvil with it several times, yet the metal didn't bend nor did it get scratched.

'Not that. I mean that it has a very thin mana flow of its own.' Solus's words shocked Lith.

He activated Life Vision, noticing that Solus was actually wrong.

'It's not really a mana flow. Orichalcum seems to be able to draw the world energy and channel it. There's no life force nor mana core.' Lith used Invigoration to put his hypothesis to test.

He discovered that he could now see inside the metal like it was a living being and even spot the residual impurities within.

'I wonder why we didn't notice that with Zolgrish's forge. Orichalcum is just silver and Adamant, whereas the forge he gave us is made of pure Adamant. It makes no sense that Orichalcum has better properties than Adamant.' Lith thought.

'Probably because we were both blinded by all the magic stuff stored inside his lab. The place was about to blow up, we didn't have the time to use Invigoration on the forge. Plus, after we escaped, we never took it out from our pocket dimension.

'Right after leaving Jambel we came to Zantia. We simply had no chance to give it a second look.' Solus replied.

'It seems we have so much work to do and only 20 frigging days at our disposal.' Lith thought.

Chapter 594 Necro Forge Part 1

Lith swung the Orichalcum hammer in his hands to check its balance, making Solus green with envy. She yearned to put her hands on it, but as long as she kept her ability to take physical form a secret, Solus could only watch.

Aside from being entirely made of Orichalcum, the hammer wasn't much different from the carpenter tools with a nail slot Zekell sold in his shop. It consisted of two parts: a straight shaft to hold it and the head. The head featured the actual hammer and the claw.

"The design is really poor." Lith sighed. In none of the stories he had read as a kid an enchanted item seemed out of a WellMert. He was solely interested in its properties, but the mundane look of the hammer made it underwhelming even for him.

"With no mold at his disposal, there wasn't much Zekell could do. Since we just have to perform experiments, we'll worry about the shape for last. Solus, can you make me a blacksmith lab?"

"Give me a moment." She replied, making the tower rumble for a few seconds.

A new door appeared in the basement. Behind it, there was a perfect replica of Zekell's workshop. Lith nodded in approval and looked at his pocket watch. He had six hours before he had to be at Kamila's place.

"Okay, no time to lose. First things first. Let's check out our Forge."

Solus took the Adamant Forge out of her pocket dimension, allowing both of them to appreciate the vigorous flow of world energy it induced in its surroundings. The Adamant was like a magnet for world energy.

No matter how good a mana conductor the Adamant was, it couldn't contain an indefinite amount of energy. Once it was saturated, the constant stream of new world energy would force the old one stored inside the metal to come out, generating an artificial mana flow.

It was a phenomenon very similar to Invigoration, when Lith made the world energy course through his body without absorbing it. That way the world energy wouldn't nurture his mana core, but it would replenish his mana and bring his body back to its peak condition.

"This is interesting. What if Adamant is just one of the many metals that don't exist on Earth? What if it's a metal capable of using some kind of Accumulation to refine itself over the centuries until it becomes Adamant?" Lith wondered.

He placed his hand over the forge and used Invigoration on it. Just like for the Orichalcum, he could see inside the block of metal as if it was a living being. To him, the forge appeared as if it was made of light, with very few impurities inside of it.

The impurities were thin black veins, tainting the otherwise pristine element. He attempted to take control of the Adamant's mana flow to expel the impurities, but they refused to budge even of a single millimeter.

Not even Solus's power, boosted by her tower form managed to do any better. They couldn't risk damaging it, so they put it back inside their pocket dimension and took out a new crate of Orichalcum ore.

"I'm really curious to see if Zekell is right. Maybe with Origin Flames we can skip the smelting phase and obtain Orichalcum faster." Solus proposed.

Lith put the ore inside a crucible and made his throat turn into his hybrid form.

"Wait a minute!" He choked on his flames and burned his own mouth.

"Everything in the tower is part of you. Did you make the crucible or crafted a real one?"

"I made it." Solus's wisp shuddered. With the Origin Flames' power, she had been seconds away from a world of pain.

After Lith made a makeshift crucible from clay with earth magic, he put it inside the furnace and breathed a small jet of Origin Flames. The crucible held, but Lith could see it getting thinner, forcing him to add new clay that would immediately ignite as well.

Solus had to use a few arrays to keep the flames in check and prevent them from attacking the furnace too.

"Origin Flames are hungry little critters. If I'm not careful they would spread everywhere." She said.

When the fire went out, the results were appalling. The clay had turned into high quality ceramic, which was useless to them, whereas the over 10 kilograms of ore had disappeared, leaving only a few droplets of silvery metal.

"The good news is that's pure adamant. The bad news is that there is so little that I can't even make a ring out of it. Sure, if I sacrifice a few crates I could get an Adamant ring, but to what end?"

"I have no blueprint for powerful rings, it would only be a waste of precious material. I don't know how much Orichalcum we'll need to make the improved version of the Skinwalker armor. 10 kilos is already a huge hit." Lith sighed.

"Let's work on the hammer, then." Solus said.

Their aim was to Forge a tool that would improve all of their future works. The idea was based on their studies on true Forgemastering when they were still at the White Griffon academy.

Back then, Lith had been forced to use a hybrid technique using both fake and true magic to Forge his creations, but now he could rely solely on the latter to step up his game.

During his research, he had devised two possible ways to create superior magical items with true Forgemastering. The first required for him to shape the pseudo core outside its future recipient and then merge them together before creating the necessary mana pathways to make it permanent.

The second one, instead, would have him create both a small pseudo core and thin mana pathways at once. Lith had to infuse both of them with more energy until they reached the desired size.

Each method had its pros and cons, at least on paper.

By creating a complete pseudo core, Lith had all the time he wanted to shape it with surgical precision and charge it with enough energy to fuel the effects he wanted to achieve.

The downside of such a method was that injecting such a big energy mass inside inanimate matter would encounter a lot of resistance and put a huge amount of stress on its recipient.

If he wasn't careful, most materials would shatter due to a mana flow too strong and sudden for them to handle. To make matters worse, the pseudo core was likely to be deformed in the process, and fixing it would require to inject even more mana, adding even more stress on the material.

Only then could Lith try to create the mana pathways necessary to stabilize the pseudo core. Too few and the mana would be dispersed, too many and the item would crumble.

Creating a small pseudo core and mana pathways at the same time, instead, would allow Lith to pile up the mana inside its recipient one bit at the time. It would give him the opportunity to not exceed the limits of the chosen material and fix any errors he might make in the early steps during the later stages.

The main problem of this method was that any late mistake couldn't be fixed. Also, developing all of the mana pathways along with the pseudo core at the same time was very demanding in terms of mana and focus.

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Lith had dubbed the two methods as Necro Forge and Bloom Forge respectively.

The former followed the same pattern Lith used to create his lesser undead. Back in Zantia, his plan E involved keeping a perfect blood core at the ready along with Trouble's corpse. An undead Balor was the perfect way to beat numbers with raw power.

Unfortunately, powerful corpses craved for the necromantic energies of a blood core and had no need for mana pathways, whereas inanimate objects rejected magic.

The latter method was derived by Lith's studies on the growth of the pseudo cores of mana crystals and of the mana core of plants. Once again, the main difference was that inanimate objects had no core nor room for growth to begin with.

"Let's start with Necro Forge." Lith said.

With a bleeding wallet, Lith took two cyan mana crystals out of his pocket dimension. He couldn't use blue crystals for a mere test run, nor he could risk using weak green crystals and fail just because he was a cheapskate.

He used Invigoration to fill his body with mana, then he drew several runes in the air to perform the true magic version of Bonding. It was a tier five Forgemaster spell that was used to fuse together mana crystals and items before enchanting the latter.

Once fused with inanimate objects, mana crystals would grant them a mana circulatory system, of which they were the literal beating heart, and an innate mana flow akin to a living being.

Each rune produced a mana filament as thin as a hair that would go through both the hammer and the mana crystals, bringing them closer and closer at each passage until they became one. The three objects started to float in mid air, orbiting around each other like triplet stars.

Lith had performed this process countless times. Each one of the magical home appliances or toys he made was fueled by mana crystals. He would consume low quality materials, make his family happy, and gain a lot of experience.

Three birds with one stone.

Then, it was time to create the pseudo core with Necro Forge. Even though Lith was a master at energy manipulation, shaping a complete core was something that only an Awakened could do.

Cores looked like spheres of energy, but they were so much more. Thanks to Necromancy, Lith had learned that a blood core defined how strong the undead would be, if it would retain any memory or conscience, and even the abilities they would be born with.

Creating a core, no matter if a pseudo or blood one, was akin to create a whole living being.

'The purpose of the hammer is to act as a temporary vessel for my mana. The problem of Forgemastering is that the stronger the spell you want to infuse an item with is, the greater the amount of mana that you need to succeed.

'If the maximum amount of mana a Forgemaster can handle is 100, their limit is a spell with a mana cost of 99. With this hammer, my limit might expand up to 150 while Forgemastering enchanted items.

'It needs a simple but powerful pseudo core with the sole purpose of storing mana.' Lith thought.

He shaped the pseudo core to resemble his own, but without all the complex patterns that linked it to his body. Thanks to Invigoration, Lith could look at his own mana core anytime.

Whenever he spotted a mistake or an imperfection, he needed but a thought to correct it. Next came the hard part.

Even though Orichalcum seemed to accept the pseudo core as a thirsty man yearns for spring water, even with the mana vessels creating a complex system capable of evenly distributing the incoming energy mass, Lith felt the core distorting the moment it made contact with the hammer.

The Orichalcum allowed magic to circulate almost freely, but the energy signature of the crystals rejected the foreign mana the pseudo core was made of. It was like transplanting an organ from a random donor and then beat the patient's body into submission to prevent graft rejection.

Lith took things slow and easy. He made the pseudo core slowly enter the hammer to have the time to spot and correct any deformation as soon as they formed. At the same time, he flooded the hammer's mana vessels with his own mana.

It reduced the resistance the core encountered by both weakening the opposing flow and improving the affinity the Orichalcum had for Lith's mana. The process required an enormous amount of energy that only an Awakened using Invigoration could afford.

Once the core was at the center of the mana circulatory system, Lith created the mana pathways. With each pathway he completed, the two different kinds of mana started to freely flow into each other until they merged into a single entity.

When the process was over, Lith was covered in sweat.

"I just want to take a bath and sleep. I used Invigoration so much that my entire body aches. The silver lining is that the procedure succeeded." Lith said.

"Well, imagine how hard it would have been without me fueling the magic circle in your stead. This is just a prototype, so I wouldn't count my chickens before they hatch." Solus said.

"Why so negative? Everything went smoothly and now all we have to do is to use the Orichalcum hammer to Forgemaster something to check its performances."

"I suppose we could do that. You always have a lot more time when you are single." Solus said while making the pocket watch float in front of Lith.

"Six-thirty already? Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Lith blurted out.

"We were in the middle of a six hours and a half experiment. I don't think you would have gracefully thanked me if I made you lose your focus."

Lith had barely the time to imprint the hammer to check if it worked, take a quick bath to wash away the stench of sweat, sulfur, and all the smelly stuff he had used at the smithy before Warping for his life to get at Kamila's home.

"Thank my paranoia for cleaning her apartment before leaving and for storing all the dishes from our favorite restaurant in my pocket dimension before starting my experiments." Lith said to himself while he set the table and made all he could to not make it evident that he had just arrived.

Even though he had used Invigoration after the bath, he needed to use it again to stop panting. He was at his second breath worth of energy when he heard the key turning and the door opened.

'Seven sharp. Kamila really is a military woman. I never thought the day would come where I would wish for my girlfriend not to be on time.' Lith thought.

Kamila looked at the dim lights and the steaming food on the table with a radiant smile. She put her military cap on the coat hanger in the hallway before asking to Lith:

"You are here, so you kept at least half of your promise. Did you risk your life today?"

He thought about it for a couple of seconds before answering.

"No. Worst case scenario I would have wasted a lot of money and materials."

"Then you kept your promise and made my day." Kamila put her arms around his neck before giving him a passionate kiss.

Chapter 596 Two Steps Forward and One Step Back Part 1

"You're really sweet, but you didn't have to prepare so much stuff. We are going to have a big talk, not a romantic date." Kamila said.

She would have liked to take a shower and change her clothes, but Belius's arrays made it impossible to use dimensional magic. Once outside the pocket dimension, the food would get cold. Even if Lith could reheat the delicacies with magic, they would still lose part of their flavor.

"We haven't seen each other for so long that we could as well take it as a date. My past is ugly, a bit complicated, and with a sprinkle of mortal danger, but it's all in the past. You aren't going to break up with me, are you?" Lith's paranoia got knocked into twelfth gear, making her laugh.

"Gods no. I would be a monster to do something like that after how I welcomed you back home this morning. It's just that I know a lot of bad things happened when you were at the academy. To be honest, I have a gloomy story to tell as well." Kamila sighed.

"Do you want to go first?" Lith asked while pouring her one of Maekosh's finest beers.

"No way. I've waited too long for this. You first."

Lith told her about his early days at the White Griffon academy and how he had unpleasantly met those who he now called friends. He was surprised to discover that once he removed the magical jargon, there wasn't much to tell.

At least until he talked about Kaduria's plague first and then Balkor's attack. Kamila wept when she learned about Protector's struggle against death to entrust his last words and love to Lith.

She had to stop eating to hug Lith when he explained to her at what cost he had saved the life of his friend.

Kamila still didn't like the idea that Ryman had endangered Lith's life so often, but after realizing how deep their bond was, she started to like him simply because of his love for Lith.

"Okay, that's enough for now." Kamila said after Lith finished to tell her about the fourth year.

"I've consumed a lot of tissues for Balkor already. If we get to Nalear, I don't think I would have the strength to continue our conversation." They had finished eating from a while, switching from beer to red wine.

"I really need to wash my face, but at this point, I might as well take a shower. I'll slip into something more comfortable while I'm at it. Go easy with the wine. I don't want to find you asleep when I get back." Kamila said.

As she closed the bathroom door, Lith moved the dirty dishes in the kitchen, dimmed the lights, and shapeshifted the Skinwalker from the uniform into the black suit they often used for their romantic role play.

Then, he took the dessert out of the fridge.

'Gods, I really didn't miss this part. See you later.' Solus grumbled while she cut their mind link and hid in a corner of her own mind.

Unfortunately for Lith, Kamila did slip into something more comfortable. A loose shirt and pants she used when she was home alone. Even her hair was fixed in a makeshift bun.

"Pervert! I told you I had a sad story to tell. How could your mind go straight to sex?" She wanted to sound angry but she failed to repress her silvery laughter.

"Shower plus 'something comfortable' equals sex. Math never failed me before." Lith said without even trying to hide his disappointment and making Kamila laugh harder.

"You're incorrigible." She sat on his lap, embracing him and giving him a short kiss before going back to her seat.

"Is it better now?" Kamila asked.

"Can you at least keep your hair down?" Lith turned up the lights.

"No. I want to make sure that you listen to my words instead of staring at my face." She chuckled. She actually needed quite a bit of willpower to prevent herself to skip the conversation and go straight to bed.

Talking about Zinya was sad, painful, and somewhat embarrassing for Kamila. Not because of her sister's handicap, but because what she had to ask for him made her feel vulnerable.

Also, Kamila knew how the request would sound to Lith's ears. Like an attempt to exploit him. No matter his answer, she knew that by simply speaking those words their relationship would change.

She was afraid because when things changed in her life, usually it was for the worse.

'It would be so easy to avoid the topic and pretend that nothing's wrong. These last weeks have been so hard, always thinking about how I can help Zinya in case she decides to divorce.

'Being overworked and lonely only made things worse. I missed him a lot and now that Lith is back, I only wish to cling to him and lose myself in his embrace. Yet it would mean running away from a problem I don't want to face.

'Zinya has already suffered for too long. If I keep not doing anything for her, now it wouldn't be because I'm helpless, but because I'm an egotistical coward.' She thought.

Kamila told Lith about Zinya, this time in detail. She explained to him her sister's current predicament as a prisoner in her own house, the cheating, the domestic abuse on her and the children, everything.

Lith's eyes turned into fiery slits brimming with mana as Zinya's story resembled more and more his own. His Earth father, Ezio McCoy, among his many flaws was also a cheater.

Back when Lith's name was still Derek, he had once found an e-mail his father had sent to his lover, where he professed her love to her and her children. Lith had no idea why they had later broken up, but he never stopped resenting his father for giving his affection to someone else's kids while he treated so badly his own.

His inner turmoil drew Solus's attention, who quickly returned fearing something really bad had happened.

'Dammit, that was unexpected.' She thought after checking Lith most recent memories.

"There's no need to get angry." Kamila had no way to understand the rage in Lith's eyes. She misunderstood it as aimed at her for trying to exploit his magic with a sob story.

Lith's reaction hurt Kamila deeply and made her think that, if he believed her capable of such a thing, he must've had a low opinion of her.

"I'm not asking you to do it for free. I have enough money to cover even Manohar's fares." Her voice was calm but cold, like when she spoke to Lith as his handler instead of his girlfriend.

"Wait, what? I'm not angry at you. I'm angry at that f..." Lith then demonstrated to have an extensive vocabulary and a venomous tongue. The streak of insults lasted for several seconds.

The teaspoon in his hand was now reduced to a small ball of metal. The twisted metal was both a source of shock and relief for Kamila. Relief because it proved her the sincerity of his words and indignation.

Shock because she knew Lith was strong, but she had never witnessed how strong he actually was.

"As for the treatment, I can't make you any promises. Body Sculpting is a very complex discipline and I didn't practice it ever since I quit my job as Assistant Professor. Worst case scenario, I'll find you an expert." Lith said.

Chapter 597 Two Steps Forward and One Step Back Part 2

"Don't worry, both Zinya and I know a lot about it." Kamila held Lith's hand, moved by his words. Usually, healers had god complex. Hearing him admitting his own limits was proof of how seriously Lith was considering the matter.

"The real problem will be convincing her to get treated and how to deal with her husband."

"I can assure you the latter will not be an issue." Lith had a psycho killer smile that gave Kamila the creeps and forced Solus to step in.

'You are Lith Verhen now, not Derek McCoy. You have no known reason for a personal vendetta against that kind of man. You are scaring Kamila out of her wits.' She thought.

Lith snapped out of his bloody daydreams and noticed his girlfriend's distress. He took a deep breath and wore his best mask for the occasion.

"Sorry, I got carried away. Still, dealing with a dirtbag is easy, but if the patient doesn't want to be treated, there's nothing I can do." He said.

Kamila sighed in relief. He was back to be the person she knew and loved. She even felt flattered for him taking her sister's situation personally.

"I know. That's why I want you two to meet. Maybe Zinya will change her mind if she knows that her Healer doesn't think of her as just a number on his personal record. Are you free tomorrow morning?" She asked.

"For you, I'm free the whole day."

"I wish. I'm in the middle of a bad case, I had to beg my supervisor just to get a few hours leave. Once we are done with Zinya, I have to rush back to work and we will not see each other before dinner." Kamila's shoulders slouched.

She had long since dreamed of becoming a Royal Constable, yet between the training and the fieldwork, she was already missing her job as an army handler. The pay was average and the work repetitive, but at least it usually left her quite a bit of free time.

"Then go to bed, you need some rest. I'll join you as soon as I'm done with the kitchen and a long, cold shower." Lith said while plates and cutlery floated in mid air to be cleaned by a mix of soap, water, and darkness magic.

"Thank you very much. You have no idea how much freeing my sister from that monster's clutches means to me." She said while hugging him tightly from behind.

'I know it all too well.' Lith could feel his rage trying to manifest outside his mind, but he kept it at bay and said:

"There's no jury in the world that would convict me if I pounced on you now. It would be a clear case of self defence."

"Pervert." Kamila chuckled as she gave him a good night kiss before disappearing in the bedroom. She really did feel very tired, but the worst thing was that things had already changed.

'Whatever I do, I'm afraid that Lith might think that I'm bribing him with sex or sweet talk. Gods, I'm so happy he agreed to help us, yet I'm so scared about how things will turn out.' Kamila's stomach was churning out of stress.

Meanwhile, Lith took a very cold shower to calm his nerves. The idea of facing a man who resembled his first father made his blood turn into magma.

'You did well not suggesting her to kill this Fallmug guy. I think it would have scared her to death. Remember that a lot of people have a problem with your switch personality.' Solus thought before asking:

'Why are you taking so long with the shower?'

'To give Kamila the time to think and me an excuse to think she is already asleep. This is not how I pictured my first date with her after my return. This is damn awkward.' Lith thought.

Lith was regretting both his earlier attempt at seducing her and his stupid sex jokes, but back then he had no idea Zinya's situation was that bad. He thought it was just an unhappy marriage.

'Tomorrow I'll need your help to not level the neighborhood.'

'Don't worry, we'll deal with this problem like we always do. Together.' Solus thought.

The following day, city of Xylita

Lith and Kamila reached the Sarta Household in a matter of minutes after walking through the city Warp Gate. His flight spell brought them quickly to their destination. Xylita wasn't located in the Kellar region nor the Distar Marquisate, so Lith had no authority as a Ranger nor as a Baron there. It was the reason he was wearing the deep green robe that identified him as a Great Mage.

Power was something that even the most stupid people respected.

"You have no idea how much I'd like you to go full Othre on them, but I can't afford to play hero. Whatever we do, it will be Zinya to pay the consequences." Kamila said after looking at Lith's stern face.

He was wearing the same expression he had while fighting Thrud's meat puppets and even though it was addressed against her, his bloodlust was almost tangible.

"Don't worry. I came here to visit a patient and kick ass. And I'm all out of patients." Lith replied making her laugh.

Kamila stepped forward and knocked on the door. It was her problem, so it was up to her to face it.

Vylna, the housemaid and current mistress of the master of the house, was surprised seeing Kamila come back so soon. Her expression turned into a smug grin as she prepared to repeat to Kamila her master's words.

Then, she went pale and choked on her rehearsed speech, leaving Kamila flabbergasted.

"I'm back to see Lady Sarta." Kamila said while wondering why the housemaid stood there with both her eyes and mouth wide open.

She had no way to know that a huge mass of spirit magic was slithering around the housemaid, making it hard for her even to breathe. The pure and unbridled killing intent it was imbued with made the experience utterly terrifying.

Lith's eyes returned to normal when Kamila turned around to check on him.

During that short moment of respite, Vylna's survival instinct took the wheel.

"Please, come in. Lady Sarta is in the tea room, like always." She handed to Kamila her master key.

"Thanks. You don't need to accompany us. I know the way." Kamila walked double time, eager to check on her sister. Yet Lith remained behind, never averting his eyes from the maid's even when the door suddenly closed behind him by itself.

"I usually don't prey on the weak. It's cruel and pointless since you have nothing I want. Yet if you stand in my path, if you do anything to harm those close to me, I will end you." Lith raised his hand slowly as if he was about to grab her throat.

Vylna was paralyzed by fear, almost suffocating due to the mana that pressed on her from every side.

"Feel free to eavesdrop or call your master. Becoming a Great Mage means receiving a Royal Pardon. All I need is a good reason to use mine." Those words sent a hot liquid trickling along Vylna's legs.

It wet her shoes before forming a stain on the carpet.

Chapter 598 Overlapping Images Part 1

A royal pardon was a get out of jail free card for any crime non punishable by the death penalty. The Crown granted a few of them every year to their most loyal servants for their outstanding results and becoming a Great Mage was one of them.

As Vylna realized the mortal danger she was in, tears filled her eyes, forcing her to blink. When she opened them again, Lith had disappeared as if she had been talking to a shadow the whole time.

"Please, be nice to her. Zinya went through a lot and I think that bastard of Fallmug might have taken it out on her after my last visit. Let me do the talking." Kamila said, too worried to notice that she was alone.

"Don't worry. You lead and I'll follow." Lith Blinked behind her. Thanks to his enhanced senses, he had no problems hearing her words from a distance.

Kamila unlocked the door, hating that house more with each passing second. The tea room was exactly as she remembered it. A mix of order and hypocrisy.

The white sofas and armchairs looked like they had never been used. The center of the hardwood table in the middle of the room had been carved out and replaced by a crystal slab.

The vases decorating the room along with white cotton doilies were still there, yet all the flowers had disappeared. Zinya was sitting on the same chair she had used during Kamila's last visit.

Her face was turned toward the sunlight coming from the glass panelled east wall, as if she was looking at the sky.

"Zin, I'm back." Kamila said.

"Kami, you shouldn't be here. The last time Fallmug was so enraged by how you strong-armed Vylna to enter the house that now he doesn't buy me flowers anymore. Why do you insist on making my life miserable?" Zinya said.

Her voice was filled with sorrow and it cracked before she could finish her phrase.

"Don't say that, Zin. You have always been a terrible liar. What did he do to you?" Kamila ran to her sister, hugging her. They both wept, bringing to Lith's mind the memories of when he and Carl did the same after one of them had suffered a heavy beating.

"Forgive me, Kami. I didn't mean those things. I just want to hear my children again."

Memory and reality overlapped as the ground trembled.

'For a moment, I hated her because she reminded me of my mother. Always whining about how giving birth ruined her life and blaming us for Ezio's behavior. When she accused Kamila, I thought she meant it, but she had just been instructed about what to say.' He thought.

"He beats her legs so that even if they have guests, they can't notice the bruises. That's why she didn't stand up during your last visit." Lith said with a stone cold voice as he turned around.

Kamila noticed his gesture and lifted Zinya's gown up, revealing many black and blue spots shaped like a horsewhip.

"How did you know?" She asked, her voice full of shock and fury.

"My brother, Orpal, would do the same thing to me when I was a child."

Kamila lowered Zinya's gown, allowing Lith to get close to her.

"Zinya, this is Lith Verhen, my boyfriend. Lith this is Zinya, my sister."

"Nice to meet you. Do you mind if I heal you?" Lith needed all the help Solus could give him to take the edge off his voice and not raze the house to the ground.

"The pleasure is all mine. As for the healing, please help me."

Lith chanted a quick gibberish before placing his hand on Zinya's shoulder and using Invigoration on her. All of her bruises and injuries disappeared. He found some poorly healed fractures and fixed them too while he checked her condition.

"You really are as good as Kami says. It's been ages since I had no difficulties breathing." The naïve happiness she expressed while blurting out the gravity of the damages her ribcage had suffered, made Kamila go pale and Lith grit his teeth.

'This is wrong. No one should be happy just because they stopped suffering. That's not life.' Lith thought.

"I have bad news, Kamila. Zinya's problem doesn't lie in her eyes. She completely lacks the optic nerve."

"The what?" Both sisters asked. Most Healers knew nothing about anatomy, let alone laymen.

"It links the eyes to the brain. Without, it one cannot see. It's a big problem, like missing a whole arm. I hoped your sister's case would be simple, but for something like that, I need to consult an expert.

"I won't mess with Zinya's brain until I'm 100% sure I know what I'm doing."

"I never said I want to be treated!" Zinya's voice was full of fear.

"Really? Do you want to stay here? With that man?" Lith was angry, but Zinya wasn't afraid of him. His outrage wasn't cruel like that of her husband. It sounded more like a fellow victim who had yet to give up on hope.

"He took your children away from you, your legs, and your sister. How long will you allow him to feast on your soul?" Nonetheless, his words hurt. Tears streamed down Zinya's face again and Kamila put herself between them.

"Zin, I know I'm asking a lot of you, but please, reconsider your decision. Lith went a little overboard, but he isn't completely wrong. Before you had no choice, whereas now I'm offering you one.

"We have waited for a long time, but things only got worse. Fallmug got worse, his violence always escalating. I've lived the past few years afraid to receive a call telling me that you died at his hand.

"If you can't find the strength to do it for yourself, do it for the kids and for me." Kamila said.

"I know you're right, Kami, but I'm too scared. What if Lith fails? Even worse, what if he succeeds?" Zinya asked.

"We'll think about it when the time comes. Right now, all I need is your consent. I need to know that you are willing to fight this battle with us."

"Be honest with me, Kami. Is this world really worth fighting for? Or is Mogar just full of misery? I never understood how people like me can be born just to suffer whereas people like Fallmug are free to destroy everything they touch without suffering any consequence.

"I'm too old and too tired to fight, Kami. It's not worth it." Zinya shook her head.

"Yes, Mogar is unfair. Every world is unfair." Lith said with a stone cold voice.

"The only way to survive is to make life unfair to your advantage. If you don't fight for yourself, no one will." He placed his hands to the sides of Zinya's head, activating two tier five light magic spells, Scanner and Chisel.

He used the tendrils of mana Chisel created to connect the life force of her brain with that of her eyes, using mana as a temporary conduit. Zinya's pupils moved around the room as light and colors flooded her vision.

"Zin?" Said a beautiful woman in front of her. Zinya couldn't believe her own ears, the woman sounded like her sister. She raised her hands, touching the woman's face and recognizing her on the spot.

"Is that really you Kami?" Zinya asked.

"Yes, Zin. It's me. I've brought you your favorite flowers." Kamila took a bouquet of fresh silver wattles out of her dimensional amulet. Their vibrant scent filled her nose and their color was a marvel to her eyes.

Chapter 599 Overlapping Images Part 2

Zinya started to cry again, but this time out of joy. She appreciated even her newfound vision turning blurry because of tears. Anything was better than the eternal night she had been trapped in.

"Zin, only you can decide if Mogar is worth fighting for. Even at your age, there are so many things you can still experience. There are so many things that I want to share with you.

"I won't force you to do anything, just know that no matter your choice, I'll always be by your side." Kamila said.

Zinya turned her head to look at Lith's face. She didn't know much about magic, but she had guessed that the moment he would remove his hands from her head, she would lose her sight again.

"Your trick is quite a low blow. How can I say no after you showed me all this? After seeing the pain and anguish in Kami's face? Yet I'm grateful you did it. I've been stuck in this cage for so long that it had trapped even my mind.

"If you think you are likely to succeed, I'd be grateful to have you as my Healer. You are the first man I've ever seen, so I have no idea if you are handsome or not. Yet the way Kamila describes you fits like a glove. You're terrifying and kind at the same time." Zinya said.

"I'll take that as a compliment. If there's one thing you have to learn is that in life there's no such thing as a low blow. Only victory and defeat. Prepare for my next trick." Lith conjured an ice mirror in front of Zinya, to allow her to watch at her reflection.

"Is this my face?" She said.

"I'm so pale and thin. I must look terrible." Zinya moved her eyes from the mirror to Kamila, trying to make a comparison.

"Believe me, for someone in your situation, you look gorgeous." Kamila said.

"I just wish the children were here. I'd give everything to see them, even just once." Zinya sighed.

"First things first." Lith took a piece of paper out of his pocket dimension.

"This is the legal form that grants me the status of your personal Healer. I'm aware you are illiterate, so you can just draw an X where Kamila points you to. Then, we'll need three witnesses. Kami?"

Kamila ran out of the room with a huge smile on her face.

'I can't believe Zin accepted to get treated so fast, nor that Lith would bring a legal document that grants him the authority to protect her. This is all too good to be true.' She thought while knocking to the neighbor's doors.

It took her less than a minute to come back with two men and one woman. They all signed the document and then Kamila showed Zinya how an X was shaped.

"Just a few words before you leave." Lith said while never leaving Zinya's side.

"If you think even for one second to go back on your word and deny to have signed the document, remember this. The moment you do that, you'll become my enemies and I'll treat you as such.

"If anything happens to Lady Sarta, I'll hold you responsible for it in front of the Law and the Mage Association."

His voice was calm, yet the three started to shake uncontrollably. Lith wasn't using killing intent to not scare Kamila, but his gaze was more than enough to scare normal humans to death.

There was no warmth in them, just a silent promise of pain. They nodded and gave him a deep bow, their heads almost touching the floor before rushing out of the door.

"I'm sorry, but I can't keep the spell up any longer without the risk of hurting you. Your body can't handle so much mana at once." Lith said, waiting for Zinya to nod before he interrupted his spells.

Since everything had been settled in a matter of minutes, they had the time to enjoy tea with some pastries together. Kamila loved seeing her sister's real smile, instead of the fake one she had worn during her last visit.

Seeing Zin eat and talk so much filled her heart with happiness. All of her questions about their personal life, especially as a couple, not so much.

'Oh, gods! I've never introduced one of my boyfriends to her before. This is so embarrassing.' She thought while Lith dodged a question about having children.

When they left, Kamila was still on cloud nine. There were so many things that she wanted to tell Lith, but there was no time. He had to Warp them to the city's Warp Gate to not make her arrive late at work.

"I'll see you tonight!" She said with a radiant smile before leaving.

Lith called the greatest expert of Body Sculpting he knew, Professor Zogar Vastor.

"What a pleasant surprise, Lith. What can I do for you?" Vastor replied immediately, as always. Unlike Manohar, he often did freelance jobs and unlike Manohar, he was reliable.

Lith has learned everything he knew about Body Sculpting from him and he had seen Vastor perform miracles with that spell. Lith explained to him the situation and requested his help.

"I would be glad to help, but you caught me in a bad moment. The Academy is about to open and I'm swamped preparing my lessons and filling old paperwork. Can you wait for a couple of days? I should be free by then." Vastor said.

"Yes, of course. Thanks for your help, Professor. I'd like to show you the patient's status. I think it might help you understand her problem." Lith placed his amulet on a table and started to focus.

He conjured a real size hologram of Zinya's head, peeling off one layer at a time until only the eyes, the brain, and the skull remained.

"Good gods. That's almost as good as visiting the patient in person. Almost." Vastor said while recording everything to look at it later in detail.

"It's a difficult case indeed, but it's treatable. I'll send you all the reading material my assistants can find. The rest I'll explain to you in person." Vastor hung the call.

Lith informed Kamila and then went back to Lutia.

'I've done all I could for Zinya. I've even alerted the local authorities of her situation and added her to my patient list at the Mage Association. I have a lot of free time until evening, time to try Bloom Forge out.' He thought.

Zekell was still smelting the first batch of Orichalcum, so there wasn't much else Lith could do. He wanted to put to the test both the Forgemastering techniques he had created before working on the new Skinwalker Armor.

'One of them is bound to be better than the other. Another thing I could do is a replica of Orion's cloaking ring. That way Solus and I could move separate ways when necessary without anyone noticing her.'

'Excellent idea! Yet isn't an Orichalcum ring wasted for a single spell?' She asked.

'No, if it allows us to make a better and more powerful ring that completely hides your life force. Safety is priceless.'

Once they got back inside the tower, Lith took out the second hammer and performed the Bonding spell to fuse it with two cyan magic crystals. Only when the mana circulatory systems of the hammer had stabilized did the real Forgemastering begin.

Chapter 600 Bloom Forge Part 1

Bloom Forge was the polar opposite of Necro Forge.

Instead of creating a perfect pseudo core from the start and merge it with its host, Lith would create a small pseudo core and the mana pathways necessary to prevent it from dissipating at the same time directly inside the hammer.

It was supposed to require less focus and mana compared to Necro Forge. The mana pathways would allow Lith's energy to mix with that of the mana crystals during the Forgemastering process.

It would reduce the resistance that the pseudo core experienced when interacting with the mana vessels, and by starting small, all mistakes Lith might make could be tweaked as he shaped the core. Bloom Forge was far from perfect, even in theory.

Lith had already predicted that the more the Forgemastering process progressed, the more difficult things would become. Neither the pseudo core nor the mana pathways could exceed their ideal form.

Bloom Forge had a threshold past which any mistake would mean an unredeemable failure.

Necro Forge's difficulty peaked at the very beginning of the Forgemastering process, when Lith was at his prime, and decreased as the pseudo core merged with the item. Bloom Forge, instead, would start easy and become harder with every next step.

The second issue was that taking care of the pseudo core and the mana pathways at the same time would require a lot of focus from Lith. Since he would only grow more tired with time, he would face the most delicate steps while he was at his weakest.

"Are you ready, Solus?" Lith asked.

"Ready. Commencing to power up the mana circle." The space around their Forge was surrounded by a blue pillar of light. It was made of the world energy Solus extracted from the mana geyser below them.

Lith positioned the Orichalcum WellMert hammer on the center of the obsidian table that was his Mana Forge and then placed his open hands at the sides of the hammer's shaft, so that his palms touched a mana crystal each.

He used true Forgemastering to create a pseudo core the size of a pinhole and several mana pathways as thin as hair. At the same time, he activated Invigoration to check the development of his experiment and be able to look at his own mana core, using it as a blueprint.

'So far it's much easier than I expected and better than Necro Forge.' Lith thought.

'I just need to take things nice and easy. The core has already started to exchange mana with the crystals, making it easy to expand.'

By simply taking his time, Lith discovered that developing the core was the easy part. As its energy grew, so did its affinity toward the hammer. The process required a steady flow of mana, but it would not encounter any resistance.

Giving the core the right shape was quite difficult, instead. The lack of resistance made so that the slightest slip of the mana would create a bump or a cavity, making the pseudo core defective.

To make matters worse, if he developed the mana pathways too slowly, the core energy would disperse. If he developed them too fast, the mana coming from the crystals would flood the core and deform it.

Lith used his knowledge of mana cores to find a workaround. He would treat the pseudo core as a developing mana core and the mana pathways as its host body. He would first grow the core until it gave signs of instability.

Then, he would strengthen and enlarge the pathways until the pressure they exerted almost compressed the pseudo core. At that point, he would focus again on the pseudo core again, rinse and repeat.

'Bloom Forge is even slower than Necro Forge, but it allows me to enhance the power of single enchantments better. Necro Forge, instead, is limited by the massive resistance it encounters during the early steps, but by shaping a complete pseudo core from outside, it allows me to harmonize multiple enchantments.' Lith thought.

'It seems is quality versus quantity.' Solus pondered.

'For now, yes. Consider that so far, we only created one of the simplest pseudo cores for the hammers. We have yet to see how the hammer itself changes the rules of the game.'

When even the second hammer was ready, Lith was once again covered in sweat and tired for the repeated use of Invigoration. The only reason he was still able to stand was thanks to his bond with Solus.

The mana geyser empowering her would also send energy coursing through his body and grant him uncanny recovery abilities. He was still hungry, though.

"Damn, I skipped lunch. It's a good thing that yesterday I had a full night's sleep, otherwise my experiment would have failed." Lith said.

He took a quick shower before consuming a full course meal and napping for an hour. Before using either of the hammers, he needed to rest enough to let Invigoration bring him back to his peak condition.

Ever since Lith had refined a blue core, he would absorb world energy through his nose and skin with every breath, like a much slower version of Invigoration that didn't lower his max energy cap.

Also, as long as he was inside the tower, the effects of the mana geyser would make him both physically and magically stronger. The two combined effect made so that even a single hour of sleep would greatly rejuvenate his body.

Solus spent that hour weighing and caressing the hammers. They were quite ugly, yet everything about them was oddly familiar to her. Lith had already imprinted them with his mana, but she could use them because their bond made their energy signatures almost identical.

"By my maker, I wish there was something, anything, I could Forgemaster." She sighed.

"Unfortunately, with a deep green mana core I'm too weak. I can manipulate the energies of the tower and those from the geyser, but they are not my own. I want to infuse my essence, using anything else would be pointless."

She took the adamant Forge out of her pocket dimension, hitting it with the Orichalcum hammer in frustration. The silvery sound they emitted scratched at the wall in the back of her head, the source of her recently found memories.

She froze, staring blankly into space. Then, she hit the Forge again as the echoes of the impact caused her body to shiver and purple flames to fill her mind. Another hit made her remember something.

A delicate hand inside a black glove, holding a much better looking silvery hammer with its surface covered in runes of power. There was something she was working on, but it was blurred behind recognition.

Something silvery as well laid between the hammer and the blurred object. Purple flames danced inside a furnace, but Solus couldn't distinguish any of its features. The furnace was too far and it became more distant by the second until she snapped out of her reverie.

Solus hit the Forger multiple times, but the memory was lost once again and no matter how many tears she shed or how much effort she put into hammering, nothing could bring it back.

When Lith woke up, he was still very tired, but now Invigoration had recovered part of its effectiveness. He found Solus to be quite dispirited despite their earlier success.

"Is everything alright, Solus?" He asked.

"No."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Not now, thanks."

Lith decided to not pry further. After reassuring Elina he had missed lunch only because he had been engrossed with his work, he went to Zekell's blacksmith.