

Supreme M 601

Chapter 601 Bloom Forge Part 2

"How nice of you! It's your second day leave and I haven't seen you except for collecting your packages and eating. Would it kill you to spend a few hours with us? Do I have to invite Kamila to have you grace us with your presence?" Elina wasn't happy with his time table and had no qualms rebuking him.

'Now I understand why some mages become Liches. How am I supposed to spend time with my family, practice magic, help my girlfriend, and continue my research all at the same time?' Lith thought.

'It's impossible. To achieve something, you have to sacrifice something else in return.' Solus said.

'You can always ditch your duty as a Ranger and your loved ones. You just have to content yourself in becoming like Zolgrish, who has nothing but his work and a demented assistant.'

Just the thought of it made Lith shiver. He was still fighting to keep his sanity and he knew that Solus's had been slipping for years. If he forced her to stay away from any form of human interaction, Lith knew that sooner or later she would snap.

He walked to Lutia instead of Warping, to take a minute for themselves and appreciate the scenery. Winter in Lutia was about to end, but snow still covered fields and trees. There was no one around, giving Mogar a peaceful appearance.

When he reached Zekell's workshop, the blacksmith looked really tired.

"I'm sorry, Lith, but even with Senton's help this work is huge. Smelting the Orichalcum is the easy part, same for the hammers since I can directly pour the molten metal into the mold.

"The problem is the chain mail set. I've never worked on something so tough and I need time to get used to it. I can either work on the chainmail or on the smelting, not both." Zekell had bags under his eyes and a raggedy breath.

"Can Senton take care of the smelting while you create the chainmails?" Lith asked.

"Yes, of course. I thought you wanted me to do it." Zekell knew that Lith only wanted perfection. Senton had worked with him for over a decade, but the skill gap between them was still huge.

"It's fine. Even I can do it, so I doubt someone like him will make any mistake. How many chainmails are ready?" Lith asked.

"Four, but their design is terrible. I'm ashamed of how bad they look, but I couldn't do better with so little time." Zekell lowered his eyes in embarrassment.

"You are dead tired and four are plenty. Take the day off, I have 18 days leave left. I have all that I need for my experiments and I prefer perfect materials for my real crafts. I want you at your best.

"Have Senton keep smelting, I have no idea how many times I will fail." Lith gave Zekell another crate and a few silver coins for his troubles. The blacksmith's eyes shined like stars, his body was full of energy again.

"No seriously. Take a rest." Lith placed his hand over Zekell's shoulder to check on his condition with Invigoration. The blacksmith was on the verge of collapsing.

Zekell nodded with a big yawn. A sprinkle of light magic had relaxed his muscles and burned the last shreds of stamina he had. Zekell was in for a long power nap.

Lith took four horrible chainmail that looked like they had been made by a child assembling spare keychains and stored them inside his pocket dimension.

'Eww.' He thought.

'Enough is enough. We have to think about the design too.' Solus was outraged. Her pride as a craftsman was horrified at the idea to work on something like that.

Lith was about to reply when his communication amulet drew his attention.

"What is it now? This is the busiest leave ever!" He groaned noticing that it was Quylla's rune.

"Lith how could you do that to me?" Her hologram looked quite pissed off.

"Do what? It seems I'm pissing off a lot of people these days so I need you to be more specific."

"Don't get smartass with me! Vastor told me everything since I'm his assistant. Why didn't you call me for help? You know I majored in Body Sculpting and I'm working my ass in the field." Quylla said.

"You are really cute when you're angry." Lith's reply managed to make her turn beet red from a mix of embarrassment and rage.

"Jokes aside, the case is complicated. I believe in your skills, Quylla. You know I always considered you a genius, but I need the help of an expert. No matter how good you are, you have graduated a year later than me.

"You have less than two years of practice. Even if you healed one person per day until now, you would be nowhere near Vastor's level of skill and experience. Messing with a person's brain is a serious matter and you know it."

Quylla took a deep breath. As a friend, she felt insulted, but as a Healer, she could only agree with him.

"Point taken, but after spending a week with Friya, how could you not even give me a call for a consult? I've seen you for just one day for almost two years. I miss my best friend." Her last words struck at Lith's conscience, making him feel guilty.

He also considered once again becoming a lich.

"I'm sorry. Do you want to join the team? With your talent, you could spot any issue Vastor or I could miss. Maybe even find an easier way to treat Zinya."

"I'd be honored to!" Her anger disappeared like a snowball thrown into the sun.

"By the way, you absolutely have to teach me how to create holograms. The level of detail in the patient's model was astounding." There was a bit too much enthusiasm in her voice, making even Solus wonder if she missed more Lith or his teachings.

"How is it going with Anathor?" Lith promptly changed the topic.

"Oh gods, you remembered! Very well. He finally mustered the courage to meet my parents. I was starting to think he was just playing with my feelings, but it turns out he was just scared. He almost fainted facing dad's gaze." She chuckled.

"Glad to hear that, but don't lower your guard. He might still be a jerk. You deserve someone who treats you right, otherwise you'll end up with a jerk like my current patient." Lith Warped back to Trawn before telling her about Zinya's background.

"Poor woman. Her situation couldn't be any worse. Between her husband and her condition, it's hard to tell which one is worse." She said.

"Any ideas?"

"Well, I read a lot of papers and I agree with your evaluation. Her case is as bad as she was missing part of her spine. What makes this case difficult is that the problem doesn't lie in a malfunctioning part of her body but in a complete lack of it.

"Creating an optic nerve is very dangerous. Things can go wrong when you create it and also when you link it to her life force. Both times you have to manipulate her brain. The slightest mistake could affect her personality, her memories, everything.

"Asking Vastor for help was the best thing you could do. I'm forwarding you all the papers on similar procedures I found."

Watching at the double digits appearing on his communication amulet, Lith was glad to have such a dear friend. Quylla had done a thorough job, giving him everything he needed.

He also was once again glad of having Soluspedia. He only needed to write all that stuff down with water magic to save himself two days worth of reading.

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Lith and Solus needed only a few minutes to put on paper all the information Quylla had sent them. After that, Soluspedia did the rest. Once something was stored inside of it, they knew its content by heart, as if they had an eidetic memory.

Lith and Solus discussed together all the possible approaches to give Zinya sight, taking into account the degree of risk/success rate each procedure involved.

'Even though none of those who have the fewest failures have shared their spells, they all described in detail how they work. Thanks to true magic, we can follow their lead and even combine their techniques together.' Lith thought.

They spent a few hours using holograms to simulate the procedure. Lith created a replica of his own optic nerve while Solus would tweak and twist the hologram at random, to cause complications he had to deal with on the spot.

All the while he actually used Scanner on both himself and Solus while using Chisel on the hologram. Triple casting tier five spells while keeping the hologram active proved to be quite tiring.

"Dammit, this is hard. I made over thirty attempts, succeed twelve times, partially succeeded five times, failed eleven times, and killed Zinya at least four times!" Lith said.

"Calm down. This is the first time we deal with such a complex case. You got too used to true magic making healing the impossible possible. Don't forget that you are working non stop since you returned home. Follow your own advice and take the day off.

"Tomorrow we'll practice the procedure until we are satisfied with the results. Now it's too late and you are too tired. There are less than two hours before you have to be at Kamila's place." Solus's wisp rubbed against his shoulder, spreading her mana around him in a warm embrace.

"I think you are right." Lith replied.

"I'll take the day off as soon as I'm done with the Skinwalker." He Warped inside his Forgemastering lab, taking the WellMert hammer and the keychainmail out of his pocket dimension.

He placed them over his obsidian Forge while Solus demonstrated an outstanding creativity in mixing English and common language insults to express her feelings about Lith's stubbornness.

First, he used Invigoration to go back to what was now his peak condition. With just an hour nap and after practicing the medical procedure many times, Invigoration wouldn't last for long.

"Necro or Bloom Forge?" Lith asked.

"Neither! Go to sleep dammit!"

"Necro it is!" Lith said, making her emit a loud and unladylike groan.

Lith had acquired the blueprints for the Skinwalker Armor when the Crown had elevated him to the status of Great Mage. They had even provided him with all the ingredients needed to make a new one.

Yet only now that he also had the Orichalcum at hand he had the opportunity to improve its properties. Tista had already received her own as a reward for her services in Othre, whereas the rest of the family had no need for it.

Not after Lith had given them all of his Skinwalker prototypes and Forgemastered for them magical protections in the form of rings, bracelets, or necklaces.

"Whenever people ask me why I joined the army, I always have to spew a bunch of lies about how much I love the Kingdom. The truth is that it's much better than the alternative. I get to rake merits, rewards and get paid for it.

"To obtain ingredients, I would be forced to travel Mogar with my own money and risk my life. Not to mention the necessity of doing missions for the Association to obtain the blueprints.

"This way, all expenses are covered and I get everything I need delivered to my door. Every time I solve a mission, the army rewards me with ingredients according to its difficulty.

"Sure, usually they are not as precious as Orichalcum, but it would still be hard and expensive to get them on my own." Lith said while taking the ingredients for the Skinwalker out.

It required the skin of a polymorphic monster species known as Skinwalker, hence its name. It also needed a bit of slime goop as a stabilizer, powdered petals of Magma flower as a power core, and a Thunderbird's plume to boost the base material's defensive properties.

Thunderbirds had sturdy feathers as hard as iron, and their affinity to lightning granted them a natural electromagnetic field capable of weakening most attacks.

The last ingredient to Forgemaster a Skinwalker Armor was the pseudo core of a dimensional storage item that would be merged with those generated by the rest of the ingredients.

First, Lith used the Bonding spell to fuse a blue mana crystal with the keychainmail.

Then, Solus powered up the Forgemastering circle as Lith refined the ingredients one by one. The skin, the powder, and the feather were all flooded by his mana. It revived and amplified their magical nature while destroying their physical vessels.

They produced a rainbow colored, a red, and a yellow pseudo core respectively. After Lith was certain that all the residual magical energy had been extracted from the ingredients and assimilated by the pseudo cores, he generated the last one.

A Skinwalker Armor required a dimensional subspace to store the clothes that it would reproduce.

Lith had Forgemastered countless dimensional items over the years, so he threw the dimensional core just a glance to make sure it was perfect. Lith raised his arms, bringing the four pseudo cores close to each other, until they started to emit sparks.

At that point, he refined the slime goop. Slimes were incredible creatures, with amazing vitality and capable of adapting to any environment. The goop didn't produce another core, but a fine mist that filled the Forgemastering circle.

The mist harmonized the different energies of the pseudo cores, allowing Lith to merge them into one. Then, keychainmail and the pseudo core started to orbit around each other.

The Orichalcum started to resonate with the mystical energy, making the pseudo core grow in size and power.

'Fuck me sideways! That never happened before. It must be due to the interaction between the Orichalcum's artificial mana flow and the Thunderbird's amplification field.' Lith thought.

He stimulated his own mana core, boosting its energies until his body started to ache from mana overloading. Solus called upon the energies of the mana geyser, filling the Necro Hammer with mana to allow Lith to exceed his limits.

The armor rejected the pseudo core until Lith struck the Forgemastering circle with the hammer, producing a silvery sound. It released a deep blue burst of light that was captured by the circle and channeled into the ongoing spell.

Lith's mana and willpower pushed the pseudo core inside the keychainmail, allowing it to overcome the resistance the mana coming from the blue produced. As soon as Lith was overcharged again, he hit the circle a second time, generating another burst of light.

With each strike, the merging process became easier and faster.

'Dammit, I think we messed up. We created a pseudo core just as strong as the one in the hammer, but this time it's much more complex. I cannot regenerate it and continue the merging at the same time!' Lith thought.

Solus stepped in to help him, but between keeping the hammer charged and powering the circle, her focus was already spent. They fought against the odds for half an hour before the pseudo core collapsed and the blue mana crystal shattered.

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"I can't believe it. I've worked on the armor for less than an hour and I'm way more tired than after we crafted the hammer." Lith said while checking his pocket watch.

"It's perfectly normal. The hammer required a single core, whereas this time you fused four cores of the same power together." Solus said.

"Handling that kind of energy for an hour while repairing any deformation the clash between five different kinds of mana induced is much more difficult than working six hours and a half on a single core. By the way, I'm beat too. I need time to recuperate." Solus wheezed.

Lith had never heard of a tower being out of breath, but he could feel the energy in the tower being somewhat diminished.

"We'll continue tomorrow." Lith said.

"What about Zinya's procedure?"

"Fine! The day after tomorrow."

"You have an appointment with Vastor scheduled for that day." Solus said, making Lith erupt in a streak of swear words.

Lith went inside the bathroom for a long bath. He had over an hour of time and planned to make it count. He arrived at Kamila's early, using the time before she returned home to run simulations with Solus to understand how to compensate for the unexpected complication.

'The boost the final pseudo core receives from the Orichalcum makes it impossible for us to succeed. What if we lower the output of 30%?' Lith thought.

'It would be enough if we were using a single core. There's four of them, so you have to take into account the energy necessary to keep them both merged and in the correct shape. I'd start with 50%. It leaves you enough mana in case another unexpected complication arises.'

'50%? It's a waste of blue crystals, Orichalcum, and ingredients!' Lith rebuked.

'Yeah, but so is another failure. 50% is a reasonable amount and allows us to test the waters. If we succeed, at least we'll have a starting point, whereas another failure would teach us nothing.'

Lith was pondering Solus's words so hard that he completely missed Kamila's arrival. Seeing him brooding with a dejected look threw her into a panic.

"Lith are you alright? It's everything okay with your family?" Knowing his talent at risking his life at least once a day, she was worried he could be hurt. She touched his shoulder, chest, and arms searching for injuries.

"I'm fine and so is my family, don't worry." His answer only made her worry more since he kept staring blankly. Light magic could heal any kind of wound, but not those to his wallet. Lith was almost grieving for his most recent failure.

"Is it for Zinya? Is her situation so bad? Did Fallmug beat her or something?" She shook him, to force Lith looking her in the eyes while answering.

"No, no, and no." He checked his communication amulet, just to be safe.

"Then what's the matter? Speak to me, please" She asked.

Seeing how worried she was for him, almost on the verge of tears, made Lith feel like a jerk.

'I can't tell her I'm grieving for a failed experiment. She would think I'm a self-centered, stingy, idiot. Solus, analysis!' He thought.

'If you ever plan to reveal to her at least as much as you did with Phloria, you can't hide your flaws. Just be honest with her. Besides, she already knows about the stinginess and you're not very self-centered.' She giggled.

Lith told her the truth. She waited patiently until he finished expressing his gripes before saying:

"Idiot! You made me worry for nothing."

'All according to keikaku.' Solus thought.

"I'm really sorry about your materials, but the important thing is that nothing happened to you." She sat on Lith's lap, putting her arms around his neck before giving him a soft kiss.

Lith returned her embraced and his arms ran along Kamila's hair and hips, making her arch her back in pleasure. They started to kiss with growing passion, forgetting all about their daily worries as electricity seemed to course through their skin every time they touched.

"Is it better now?" She said. Her voice was a soft moan, making his morale raise among other things.

"Very much."

"I'm too tired to cook and I assumed it would be the same for you, so I reserved a table for us at the Velorian. We need to hurry, otherwise we'll get late." She said while standing up.

She noticed his disappointed expression and quickly added:

"It's barely seven pm, silly. We have all evening and night. We didn't have a date in weeks and I really miss your company. Would you have dinner with me? My treat, so you'll forget about your financial losses." She chuckled.

"I'm okay going out for dinner, but not with you paying the bill." Lith replied and his stomach grumbled in approval. Even if it had been a failure, the Forgemastering experiment had drained his energy.

"It's my treat, to apologize for giving you a scare. Also, it's not like saving a few copper coins can hurt after having already lost around twenty gold coins. That without taking the Orichalcum into account, since it has no market price."

His words made Kamila choke on her laugh. Twenty gold coins was more than Manohar would ask to treat Zinya's blindness. A single gold coin was worth a hundred silver coins. Even a Constable was paid in silver.

The amount Lith described was enough to buy a house.

"That much?" Suddenly his gloomy disposition was much more relatable.

"Yes, but I'm likely to waste more. One has to fail a lot before succeeding." He sighed.

The food was nice and the wine excellent. Lith told Kamila about Elina's gripes on his work schedule and her intentions of kidnapping her if he didn't spend more time with his family.

"Tell her that I'm a-okay with that. She just has to knock out my boss and I'm all hers." Kamila said.

Between the cheery mood and Kamila's soothing presence, Lith was finally able to relax after weeks of unrelenting work, fight, or training. His body felt light and the anxiety that had been clouding his mind during the last two days disappeared.

'Man, I'm so glad we got out for dinner. I really needed a break.' Lith thought.

'Yeah, I wonder where I heard those same exact words before. Oh yeah, it was me! You just didn't listen, like usual.' Solus was pissed off, yet she took note of all the ideas that were popping in Lith's now clear mind.

"I'm sorry to ruin the mood, but I have to tell you." Kamila said.

"What you did today for Zinya was amazing. I brought you with me because I wanted you to reassure her, but you did so much more. You gave my sister hope and even allowed her to see me for the first time.

"I can't thank you enough for that. I've never thought I'd see Zinya so happy, it meant the world for me."

"You're not ruining anything. When my sister was ill, I felt the same as you do." Lith said, giving her the strength to ask the question that had tormented her since yesterday.

"Is it everything alright between us?" Kamila asked.

"What do you mean?" Lith had no idea what she was talking about.

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"I know how things must seem to you. That I dated you only to get a freebie for my sister. I never meant to hide how bad her situation is from you, it's just that it's not something I like to talk about.

"I wouldn't have even bothered you with it if you weren't the best Healer I know and now that I'm a Field Assistant Constable, I can afford the treatment. I can pay you, so nothing has to change between us. I'm not trying to exploit you." Kamila said.

"Gods, my paranoia is really rubbing off on you. I never thought anything like that. I too hid a lot of things from you. I know all too well how difficult it is to speak about a painful past. Only those who want to garner pity from others would speak of such things on a first date.

"I'm glad that you asked for my help, because it means you trust me enough to share your burden with me. I'm even more glad to hear about all the silly thoughts running through your head, because it means you are not taking me for granted." Lith gently caressed her hand.

'I wish I was that strong. I have yet to tell her about my hybrid nature. I can't tell her about Awakening and true magic, but if things get really serious, I can't make the same mistakes Protector did.' He thought.

"Thanks." Kamila sighed in relief, feeling her worries fading.

"The thought that you might be doubting about my feelings was eating at me since yesterday. To be honest, it's the reason I avoided to... you know." She said while the waitress brought them desserts.

The conversation moved again to their respective day's work and silly anecdotes about their lives. When they went to Kamila's apartment, Lith was happy, relaxed, and most of all, sleepy.

"I had too much wine. I'll go take a quick shower to clear my head and I'll join you as soon as I slip into something more comfortable." Kamila said.

'Tomorrow I have a full day and today I've used Invigoration so much that all my body aches. With a full stomach and considering how tired I am, I'd better avoid making advances.

'Besides, things with Kamila will be awkward for a while, at least until we solve Zinya's problem. Heck, I'm too tired even for theory crafting magic.' He thought as the Skinwalker shapeshifted into his pajama.

Lith checked with Life Vision that nothing was out of order and that there was no unknown magical item before being able to relax. He fell asleep the moment his head touched the pillow.

It didn't last long, though. A sudden flash of light and a mildly amused voice woke him up after what seemed a second.

"What are you doing?" There was a tinge of annoyance in Kamila's voice.

"Isn't it obvious? I was sleeping." Lith shielded his eyes from the cruel light with a hand.

"After how you kissed me when I returned home? After what I said earlier? What happened to your math skills?" She was tapping her foot, her hands on her hips.

"What do you- Good gods!" Lith's mind recalled her earlier words as his vision returned to normal. Kamila was standing in front of the door wearing only red lace lingerie. It made wonders emphasizing her pale skin and soft curves.

During his time as Assistant Professor at the academy, Lith had used the White Griffon network to patent the underwear he had plagiarized from Earth. It hadn't been the success he had hoped for, except for the women underwear, of course.

Lith had gifted Kamila a few for their amorous plays and she was now wearing his favorite one.

"But yesterday you said..."

"Yesterday we had to talk, silly." She crawled on the bed on all four with deliberately slow, sensual movements, showing miles of cleavage.

"Didn't you miss me? Even one bit?" She said before giving him a peck that tasted like heaven.

Lith turned off the lights with a snap of his fingers before taking her into his arms. They started to kiss while feeling each other's body. Lith took his time to appreciate the feeling of the lace covering her skin before removing it slowly, one bit at the time.

'Thanks, math. I knew you wouldn't relinquish me.'

The next morning, after they had breakfast together and Kamila left home, Lith went back to Lutia. He took Belius's Warp Gate to leave a trace of his movements and then used Solus's tower Warp to reach his destination and sleep.

Kamila was fine because he had shared with her a bit of his life force, but they had slept too little and Invigoration's effects had yet to reset. Four hours later, Lith was back at his full force and practiced Zinya's procedure until it was lunchtime.

His parents were very happy to have him with them for a while, even more when he chose to stay a bit longer after lunch. Lith told them about his latest mission everything that wasn't a state secret.

"I'm glad to hear that Friya is doing well." Elina said.

"Yeah, too bad that girl is a workaholic just like you. You didn't see each other since Jirni's birthday and yet you spent the entire time practicing magic. You need to relax, son." Raaz said.

"It's what I'm doing now, right?" Lith used spirit magic to play with Aran, moving some of his toy soldiers and engaging him in a fierce battle.

"Why did you pick the beanpole instead of aunt Friya? She's a babe." Aran said with a pensive tone. Some words made little sense to him, so he had a hard time remembering them

"Raaz!" "Dad!" Elina and Lith said in unison. The only way Aran could say such things was by hearing those words from someone else and often at that.

"Guilty as charged." Raaz showed his hands, surrendering.

"I'm sorry, but I never understood how you pick your girlfriends. Even when you two just met, Phloria was already very tall. Taller than me and even than you. Also, she's too..." Raaz was almost too embarrassed to finish the sentence.

"Strong?" Lith asked. He knew that his father was still shocked after losing to her in many strength contests. As far as Raaz knew, Phloria was stronger than Lith as well.

"Yes. A woman shouldn't be so intimidating. Now you have Kamila, she's lovely sure, but she's..."

"Old?" Elina's voice was so cold that it made the temperature in the room plummet.

'If Kamila is old, then what am I?' She thought.

"...er. Older than Lith, dear. Whereas Friya is about the right age, height, and is a wonderful woman. A father has all the right to worry about his eldest son." Raaz said, his voice became low and sour.

"Eldest son? What about Trion?" Lith didn't miss either Raaz's tone nor Elina turning pale.

"Dear, I told you it had to wait." She said.

"Sorry, honey. I didn't mean to." He sighed.

"Your brother came here a few days before Jirni's birthday, when only your mother, Aran, and I were at home. Things didn't go well. Our reunion started badly and things escalated quickly. Long story short, he disowned us and is no longer a member of our family."

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Trion had never forgotten his promise to Lith, mostly because he was afraid that his brother would barge in his base and humiliate him again. It still took him months to find the strength to go back home.

He loved his parents with all his heart and that was the reason seeing them was much harder than continue to avoid the unresolved issues he had with his family. Trion had thought for a long time about Orpal's fate before realizing that by endangering their baby brother's life he had crossed the line.

Thanks to the life in the army and the camaraderie with his peers, Trion had realized that what he had with his older brother was a sick relationship. Orpal always ordered him around and they rarely argued simply because Trion obeyed to him.

He didn't resent his parents anymore for disowning his beloved older brother, yet the more he thought about it, the less home felt like a home. His parents had never loved him any less than Lith, but he was tired of being always compared to his little brother.

Tired of being painfully often referred to as "Lith's brother" rather than with his name.

The army gave him a place where he could be himself, where the shadow of his brother couldn't reach him anymore. That was the reason he had never returned home. Even if Lith was always at the academy, his presence had tainted the whole Lutia.

In her letters, after asking Trion to reply to her and let her know he was alright, Elina would always mention how the village had expanded, how their house was being renovated. Until the house he remembered was no more.

Things became even worse for Trion each time Lith made a name for himself. The plague in Kandria, single-handedly facing a Valor, becoming a top ranker, they were all events that reached every corner of the Griffon Kingdom, barracks included.

Every time Trion heard people praising Lith for his achievements, despite him being a nameless commoner, he couldn't help but be jealous.

'If there's one thing Orpal was right about is how unfair it is that no one cares about our hard work. No one praises me for my efforts, nor anyone cares for how well I'm doing in the army. Lith only has to move his hands while spouting bullshit and everyone blows smoke up his ass!' He would often think.

When Lith received a family name from the King himself, Trion learned about it the worst possible way. A Lieutenant asked him if he wanted to take the Verhen name in front of the whole Mess Hall.

Suddenly Trion was no more, and in the blink of an eye his name became "Lith's brother" Verhen. Trion had to ask to be relocated and buy a family name, Proudstar, to avoid being associated with the Verhen again.

He regretted what he did to Phloria, but no matter how deep he buried his hatred, it was always there, smoldering. Any mention of his brother's name, no matter the reason, was enough to rekindle it into a blazing fire again.

When Trion returned home, it was exactly as he feared. The house was unrecognizable and so was the village. Most of the farmhands had no idea who he was and those who did spit on the ground at his passage.

"If you were my son and you made my Liza cry as much as Elina did for you, I'd kick your ass back to where you came from." Bromann said, eager to tell about Trion past to whoever asked him who that Sergeant was.

Trion had yet to set foot inside his home and he was already full of venom. He was thinking about throwing the thousands of miles he had crossed into the gutter when the door opened.

Raaz immediately recognized him and held his long lost son into an embrace.

"Welcome home, son." Was all he managed to say while fighting his tears back.

Hearing those words, Elina too rushed to the door, joining the embrace as tears of joy streamed down her face. In that moment, Trion remembered how much he loved his parents and all the wonderful things they had shared.

"I missed you so much, Trion." Elina said between sobs.

"I missed you too, mom. Sorry for not visiting for so long." He said letting go of his past grievances.

Unluckily, they all flooded back the moment his eyes looked at his right, where once there was his old room. It had been replaced by a pantry years ago. He ignored his parents' question about his friends and career, asking in anger:

"What the heck happened here? Where is my room?"

"Don't worry, sweetie. We haven't thrown away anything. Your room is on the second floor, like everyone else's." Elina said.

"What has become of Lith's study? Is it now a laundry room or what?" He asked with way more emphasis than necessary.

"Lith's study is still there, just like Rena's. Lith sometimes brings his girlfriend home and Rena is married now. They deserve a bit of privacy." Raaz explained.

It made perfect sense, especially considering that Lith had paid for all the renovations with his own money, yet Trion lived it as an unfair treatment.

"Come in, dear. Have a seat. We have so much catch up to do." Elina took hot tea and freshly baked pastries out of her dimensional ring, leaving Trion flabbergasted.

Now the kitchen and the dining room where two separate rooms. Every piece of furniture was of good quality. The house was warm and without a single draft, with more magical tools than the apartments Trion lived in.

With every step he took, he felt alien to that place. Only his parents gave him the strength to sit down and fight the rage that was consuming him.

"Who is this man, mom?" A small voice asked.

Trion had heard about Aran from both Phloria and Lith, yet he still couldn't believe his own eyes. He had always thought that giving birth to a demon like Lith had made her barren.

Secretly, he found solace at that thought, like it was some kind of divine justice balancing the scale.

"Sweetie, come meet your brother Trion." Elina held him in her arms.

"I've only one brother." Aran stubbornly said.

"Forgive him, Trion. Aran is barely four years old and has never met you before. You know how kids are." Her tone was apologetic, but Elina never stopped smiling nor her eyes sparkling while looking at the little miracle in her arms.

"Don't worry mom, it's fine." He blatantly lied, making it clear that he resented the small child.

"Tell me everything about you, son. How are things in the army? Do you have someone special?" Raaz asked.

"Sorry, dad. I'm not as good as Lith. I'm not married nor do I have a girlfriend. After all, even after working my ass off for years I'm just a Staff Sergeant, whereas he is a mighty mage who became a Lieutenant right off the bat!

"Why would anyone be interested in a nobody like me?" He said while slamming his hand on the table.

"Trion I'm not making comparisons. I just want to know how you are." Raaz said while Elina tried to calm down Aran. He didn't like strangers, even more those who yelled.

Chapter 606 Retribution Part 1

"How do you think I can possibly be?" Trion stood up abruptly, flipping his chair.

"This isn't my house anymore! You got rid of my room as if it was trash yet you kept Lith's intact. Everything here stinks of him. Your rings, your clothes, even him!" He said while pointing at Aran, making him cry.

"We didn't get rid of anything. Our room and Tista's are on the second floor, just like yours. What's wrong with this house? With your brother Aran? This is a good place where we have a good life." Elina said, her heart hurt by Trion's words.

"Of course the trash goes on the second floor, where it can't offend his majesty's eyes! I'll tell you what's wrong. You cut me out of your lives to the point that I had to learn from a stranger that I had a brother!"

"I never stopped writing to you, but my letters were always returned. According to the army, there was no Trion nor Trion Verhen..."

"And there never will be!" Trion yelled, cutting Elina short.

"I'm Trion Proudstar now. It's clear that as long as you have your precious Lith, you have no need for a failure of a son like me. I better be off before I waste more of your time." He walked towards the door, but Raaz grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Son, what's this madness? Why do you always talk about Lith? What did he ever do to you? We don't love Rena any less just because she's not a mage. If you are trash, then what about her? What about us?"

"Easy. You're worse than trash and I don't need you anymore. Don't bother teaching the runt my name. If I'm not a member of this family, I might as well be disowned too. Even better, I'll disown you, so at least I'll spare you the inconvenience to kick me out." He said before storming out of the house

Lith's house. Present day.

After Raaz finished telling him the whole story, Lith took a deep breath before saying:

"I'm sorry it ended up that way." Yet he was sorry for his parents, not for Trion. He had always considered his older brother a lost cause.

"Me too, dear." Elina sighed.

"Do you want me to go talk to him?" Lith asked.

"No, it would only make things worse. Thanks, though." Raaz said.

"I think it's partly our fault. After what happened with Orpal, we have been so overprotective towards Tista that we failed to notice the hole that losing his big brother opened in Trion's heart.

"Maybe if instead of just trying to forget about our lost son we spent more time with him, trying to explain Trion why Orpal had to go, things would have gone differently."

"No offense, Dad, but I call bullshit. After Orpal was disowned, you did the best you could and so did everyone else, even me." Lith said.

"Why do you say that, dear? You've always been a perfect brother." Elina said.

"No, I wasn't. I never liked my brothers and you know it. They couldn't miss how everyone in the family improved their looks after receiving my treatments and they knew I wouldn't do the same for them.

"By forcing you to keep such an open secret, I created a divide between you and them that further fueled their jealousy. Yet their actions are still inexcusable. Neither Orpal nor Trion ever apologized. Trion has been loved, well fed, and dressed his whole life.

"I didn't love them, but you and Rena did. They had everything they needed yet it was never enough. I never bullied nor humiliated them by showing off my powers. I always minded my own business asking the same from them.

"Their problem has always been that their abilities didn't match their expectations. Even after all these years, the only person Trion worries about is Trion.

"He didn't ask about Rena or Tista, right?"

Both of his parents shook their heads.

"Always a self centered a... apple." Lith corrected himself while looking at Aran.

"Mom, Dad, you've been two wonderful parents and whoever says otherwise is a liar, stupid, or both." He stood up and hugged them both, hoping to better convey his feelings.

"Maybe you're right, son, but it's a parent's job to take care of their children, even when they are lost." Raaz said.

Lith went back to Solus's tower to use its empowering effects to learn more about the methods his most successful colleagues had used in the past. Creating the optic nerve from scratch was simple.

Lith only had to use Kamila as a blueprint and Zinya's flesh and blood as materials. Them being sisters made their physiology similar enough that what worked for Kamila was supposed to work for Zinya too.

The problem was that the new tissues and nerve endings would occupy an already taken place, so the problem was twofold.

Connecting the optic nerve to both eyes and brain without harming either and make space for them without mutilating the patient. Lith tried different approaches, working on his holograms while keeping active both Scanner and Chisel for hours.

His success rate improved dramatically with practice and observation, but in the end, they were just simulations. Lith had never manipulated life force to that extent. He kept revising all the material Quylla had sent to him and spent the rest of the time studying the life force of his own optic nerve.

'Dammit. Even if I kidnap Fallmug and experiment on him, it would be pointless. He's a healthy subject, whereas I'd need one with Zinya's condition.' He thought.

'We can only hope that Vastor has an ace in the hole. Otherwise it might be better to let him operate while we watch.' Solus proposed.

'It's a good idea, but I'd feel more comfortable with him making space for the optic nerve and then connecting it to the rest, while I do everything else. Vastor is an outstanding mage, but a fake mage nonetheless.

'If something goes wrong, I can fix it faster and better than...' Lith's thoughts were interrupted by his communication amulet. A single, long beep warned him that shit had just hit the fan.

City of Xylita, a few minutes ago.

Fallmug Sarta was fuming with rage like he hadn't been in months. The day before he had noticed that something was wrong, but he had paid it no heed. His stupid servants were always jumpy around him for no reason and that stupid wench of Vylna was just an attention whore.

Only after noticing that even his neighbors threw odd glances at him had Fallmug decided it was time to get some answers. It didn't take him long to learn about Kamila's second visit.

The house staff was much more terrified of losing their job than of a random mage. Lith was gone, whereas they had to live there. Their families depended on their job and getting fired without receiving good references would have meant having no future.

"Why you didn't send her away? Have you forgotten what I have instructed you to tell that cunt?" Fallmug's face was centimeters away from Vylna's, his lips curled in outrage.

"I wanted to, but there was a Great Mage with her."

"Who cares about a Mage! That was an abuse of authority, you should have called the guards!" Fallmug hated Kamila's guts.

Not only did the little wench always reject him, but also now that she had her new boyfriend, she was the only thing his family would talk about.

Chapter 607 Retribution Part 2

"I couldn't, he was too scary. Even after he left, it took me hours to recover." Vylna said.

At those words, Fallmug slapped her so hard that she was sent slamming against the nearest wall. Her head started to spin due to the slap and the impact.

"Enough of your excuses! With all the money I waste on you, is it too much to ask for a bit of loyalty?" He lifted her by the collar of her shirt and slapped her again. Vylna's cheek turned purple and her lips started to bleed.

"Was he scarier than me?" Another slap followed, making her cry.

"What about now? Are you still scared of him?" Fallmug threw her on the ground before kicking her over and over, until her whining stopped.

"I work my ass to give to all you parasites a good life, and that's how you repay me? With lies and betrayal? Do you have any idea how difficult it is to be a successful businessman with all those foreigners using the Gate to sell their merchandise even during winter?"

Fallmug Sarta hadn't always been the man he was now. Back before the Warp Gate had been opened, he was the young master of a powerful and rich household of merchants.

He had inherited the family business and made it thrive thanks to his charismatic personality and the network of connections that his predecessors had established. With time, his pride turned into arrogance and his self-confidence into conceit.

After the Gate, though, his life had become a daily battle to the death with his competition.

He had never been a very kind man, so being forced to be nice and patient during work always caused a great deal of stress on him. He had managed to hold his rage in until the money flowed into his pockets and the community respected him for it.

Now, though, each victory came at a price. Also, every single time he was defeated despite putting so much effort into the negotiations, despite the many personal sacrifices he endured, his pride was wounded and something inside him became more twisted.

He had started by beating his servants, but only with an occasional slap and only after a really bad day. Then, he had started to do it just to relieve his stress. Seeing them suffer made Fallmug feel better about himself. It made him feel powerful.

He wasn't proud of it, but the business was better for it and he cleared his conscience by giving them gifts every time he closed a good deal.

Yet the more he gave into his darkest impulses, the more things got worse. Soon he started to beat his wife whenever she pestered him with her whining about him being too hard with the house staff or the kids' schooling.

Then it was the turn of those little runts, who disrespected his hard work and never let him have a single moment of peace.

No matter how much he scolded them, they seemed to remain oblivious of the sacrifices he made for them every day. They would always drive him crazy with their squeaky voices and stupid laughs whenever they played.

He couldn't stand them being so happy at his expenses, even less to spend his hard earned money just for being subject to their terrified expression whenever they met. He was their father, yet they treated him like he was a monster.

Now Kamila, that stupid woman, had dared to violate the sanctity of his house twice, defying his orders and will.

"Someone has to pay." Fallmug said while walking towards the tea room.

He slammed the door open, his voice a low rumble like a thunder announcing a storm.

"Didn't I tell you not to see your sister without my permission again? Have you gone deaf as well or are you just too stupid to understand a simple order?"

Zinya gulped in fear. She was waiting for Fallmug to continue his ranting, but the prolonged silence meant his questions weren't rhetorical for once.

"I didn't invite Kami. She came here on her own and Vylna let her in." She clenched a small, red stick in her hands, trying not to stutter. It would only make Fallmug angrier.

"Did you tell her that whatever happens now it's on her?" He asked.

"I did, but she stayed."

"Good. Your sister should have followed your example. A married woman learns about obedience and discipline, whereas a spinster doesn't realize that each action has consequences.

"I'm sorry, dear, but you'll have to pay the price for your sister's defiance." Fallmug took out the horsewhip from his jacket's pocket, making it snap against his palm.

"Please, don't. She did nothing wrong, she was just worried for me." Zinya now clenched the stick with both hands.

"She had no reason to. Didn't I always take good care of you?" He stepped forward as the whip cracked on his palm again.

"Stay away! There's a reason I never stepped out of this room!"

"What might it be?" His tone went from cold to angry. He hated it when people ordered him around.

Zinya broke the red stick, which was actually a red mana crystal. Six more were hidden from sight under a couch and arranged to form a small array that became visible to the naked eye.

"He's coming. Lith promised me." Zinya said.

"Really?" Fallmug laughed as he grabbed Zinya by the collar of her dress, forcing her to stand up.

"Even if he lived in Xylita, it would take him minutes to get here and he doesn't. He lives in Distar. By the time he gets here, there will be nothing to find. A healer friend of mine will make sure of it. He may be a mage, but in this house I'm your god!"

Zinya sobbed as two strong hands grabbed Fallmug's arms with enough strength to shatter them, forcing him to let her go. Yet she heard nothing because of the Hush zone enveloping her husband.

"Get over here!" Lith dragged him inside the dimensional fissure leading to the Mirrors Hall on the tower's first floor.

The moment the array had been activated, Solus had Warped the tower to the nearest mana geyser while Lith focused on Zinya's room coordinates through the Warping Mirror which amplified his Warp Step's range.

"Hello, Ezio. Long time no see." Lith said while giving him a backhand slap. It broke Fallmug's jaw and spread his nose all over his face, sending him crashing against the nearest wall.

"Please, stop. My name is not Ezio." Fallmug whined. Tears of pain were streaming down his eyes.

"I know, and that's the only reason you'll get out of here alive." Lith's fist struck Fallmug's chest, making his ribcage and lungs collapse.

Fallmug fell to the floor, coughing out blood. For a few terrible moments, he thought he was about to die, but the pain slowly faded and he could breathe again.

"What the...?" Fallmug could lift his arms, now perfectly healed. His nose and jaw were back to their original state, and so was his chest.

"Magic." Lith explained with a laugh as the mirrors disappeared and an array became visible to the naked eye.

"I gifted you an immortal body. The dream of countless kings and emperors, all for you." Lith's grabbed Fallmug by the neck, slamming him against the stone pavement. His skull shattered, his spine was severed, leaving him limp like a stringless marionette.

"Immortal doesn't mean invulnerable, though. You can still feel pain. You just cannot die while we are having fun!"

Chapter 608 Web of Lies Part 1

The array enveloping the first floor of Solus's tower was something they had developed in case Lith managed to find a mana geyser while being on the brink of death.

It allowed Solus to harness the energy of the mana geyser to heal all kinds of wounds almost instantly and to share part of her life force with Invigoration. The final result was a powerful healing field capable of beating death as long as the subject's mana core was intact.

In Fallmug's case, however, Solus wasn't giving him any life force. Lith refused to have her tainting her noble spirit with such a human faced monster.

Fallmug's spine recovered and so did his limbs. He was seconds away from fainting due to exhaustion when Lith used Invigoration to restore his life force. Lith wouldn't let him get any respite.

Even healing was an excruciating process since Solus was performing it without any kind of anesthesia. The bone fragments would dig through the flesh and blood vessels to return to their original position, opening new wounds at their passage.

Fallmug could feel his body constantly get torn apart and reconstructed.

"How does it feel, Ezio?" Lith waited for him to have completely recovered before crushing his windpipe with a fist to the throat.

"How does it feel to be helpless against someone much bigger and stronger than you are?" Fallmug couldn't even breathe, let alone reply. His vision blurred before the array allowed him to breathe in fresh air again.

"How does it feel walking a mile in your children's shoes?" A flick of Lith's finger and one of Fallmug's nails flew off, spraying blood through the room as he screamed in agony.

"Your voice is definitely high pitched for a god." The nail was still regrowing, biting the flesh on its way when another flew off.

Fallmug kept screaming, holding his right hand to defend it, just to have the fingernails on the left hand be ripped off all at once. The pain almost sent him into shock, but Solus's healing and Lith's life force saved his life again.

"Any last words?"

"You will not get away with this. If I disappear..."

"Then what? Who would even care? Your wife? Your children? Your family?" Lith stomped on Fallmug's kneecap with enough strength to almost cut the leg into two.

"The Kingdom will never..." Fallmug attempted to say as soon as the pain allowed him to.

"Wrong!" Lith stomped on the other leg, cutting him short and making Fallmug grateful to the gods for giving him only two legs.

"The Kingdom wouldn't give a damn, but death is too good for the likes of you. I will turn you into your wife." Lith's fingers shapeshifted into claws, piercing Fallmug's eyes all the way to the brain.

"Just like she is your plaything, you shall be mine. I will beat you an inch from death every single day and then send you home unscathed. No one will hear your screams." Lith slammed his opened palms against Fallmug's ears, destroying his eardrums.

Fallmug lost control of his bladder as his world was now pitch black and devoid of sound. Solus only healed his ears, to make him feel like Zinya did every day of her life.

"No one will witness what I'll do to you." Lith's knee struck Fallmug's nether regions, turning his genitals into toothpaste.

"No matter who you ask for help, they'll just think you're crazy. No one will believe you." A jet of Origin Flames set Fallmug ablaze as Solus kept the healing speed fast enough to keep him alive despite the flames eating his ever regenerating flesh.

Lith went outside, using his army amulet to create himself an alibi. The amulet pinpointed his position while he asked for updates from Commander Berion. The army would be his witness, stating that he was at his own house if anyone asked.

When Lith returned to the tower, the flames were gone and Fallmug was unconscious.

"His body couldn't take any more punishment without eating." Solus said.

"Well done." Lith's voice was joyless. He hated the idea of letting him live, but his disappearance would make Kamila ask questions he didn't want to lie about. They brought Fallmug back in the tearoom and prepared a new alarm array, this time above a cupboard.

"I always keep my promises." Lith said while embracing Zinya and giving her another stick to replace the one she had consumed.

"What about Fallmug?" She asked.

"He is alright, but I doubt he'll touch you again for a long, long time." Between his studies at the academy and the time spent with Jirni, Lith was an expert about the human body and mind.

It would take Fallmug days to recover from the physical exhaustion, but the mental trauma would last much longer, whereas he would return the following day to bring Zinya to the academy's hospital to prepare her for the procedure.

"If anything happens, you know what to do. Remember, if anyone asks, I've not been here."

"Thank you so much." Zinya buried her face into his chest.

"He might be a monster, but he's still the father of my children."

"Believe me, they are better off with their mother. Giving guys like him a second chance will bite back at you sooner or later. I'll pick you up tomorrow, so rest easy but keep the trigger always with you.

"Once you stop hearing my voice, count up to ten, and then use the handbell to summon the house staff. Fallmug just had a stroke." Lith let her go and disappeared inside the Warping Mirror.

When Zinya started to scream for help, no one came. The house staff thought Fallmug was beating her in a particularly vicious manner since she usually never yelled. Like anyone else in the house, Zinya knew that it only made things worse.

'Oh, right. They must think that if they get in here, Fallmug will pick on them too.' Zinya thought.

"Help, Fallmug doesn't respond."

When the servants arrived, they had to help Vylna first. She was still bleeding from her injuries and required a healer whereas aside from being unconscious, Fallmug was fit as a fiddle.

The beating had taken less than half an hour and before returning him to his home, Lith had erased all proof of what had happened with darkness magic and even ironed the man's pants and shirt.

Fallmug would be unconscious for days before his body and mind could overcome the trauma. Lith had made sure of it. Once he was back to Lutia, Lith kept researching the procedure to heal Zinya until it was time to go back to Kamila's home.

When she arrived, Kamila instantly noticed he was once again in a gloomy disposition, but after what had happened yesterday, her heart was at ease.

"What's the matter, babe? Another failed experiment?" She sat on his lap, trying to kiss him, but Lith stopped her. She was shocked, it had never happened before.

"I wish. It's about Zinya. Her dirtbag of a husband found out about our visit and tried to get even with her." Lith couldn't stand the thought that a man of the caliber of his Earth's father was still breathing even though he had all the opportunities to kill him.

It made his face dark and his voice sour.

"Oh, gods! Why didn't you contact me immediately? Is she alright? We need to go..." Kamila tried to stand up, but Lith grabbed her hand, with a firm but gentle touch.

Chapter 609 Web of Lies Part 2

"There's no need. Do you remember the mana crystals I left in the tea room and the promise I made to your sister?" Lith asked.

Kamila nodded, yet she wasn't reassured by his words. Lith was too serious, he was clearly hiding something from her.

"I kept my word. I used the array to know when she was in danger and unleash a spell that reflected on Fallmug all he did to Zinya. He didn't harm a single hair of hers."

"That's- great news. If everything is fine, then why the long face?" She asked.

"Kami, what I did is a crime. A blatant abuse of power made it worse by the fact that I left him alive. Now, I'm confessing my crime to you and entrusting you with the knowledge about a secret spell of mine at the same time.

"Do you understand how serious this is?" His words wiped the smile from her face.

"I understand." She said after a moment of hesitation.

"You committed a crime to protect my sister and you're asking me if I can live with it, right? You're asking me if you can entrust your secrets to Kamila the girlfriend without Yehval the handler revealing them out of duty."

Lith nodded, putting their relationship to the test for the first time. Just like he did with his academy's mates when he revealed to them his inhuman physical prowess. To him, it was a critical moment.

He had not told her all the truth so that if Kamila proved to be unworthy, he would risk nothing. A spell like the one he had described was out of a fairy tale, even a first year student would laugh at such a story.

Zinya had heard nothing while Fallmug's story would be completely different from Kamila's and even less believable. Not even Manohar could cover the distance from Lutia to Xylita in a matter of seconds.

"Thank you." Kamila's voice was happy but broken. Small tears streamed down her face.

"Even though I have plenty of friends, I spent all my life alone because when push comes to shove, my burden was my own. When people heard about my problems, they would pity me and say a lot of nice words, but no one would do anything.

"Thank you for saving Zinya at all costs. Thank you for taking to heart a problem that's not even yours and putting your career at risk for me." She sobbed, but she never stopped looking in his eyes.

"Most of all, thank you for trusting me so much. I don't care about my career. I'll do anything to protect your secret just like you did for me." She hugged him, hiding her face on his shoulder, trembling like a puppy scared by a clap of thunder.

"You're welcome." Lith replied, holding her tight.

"As I already told you before, being in a relationship means solving together problems that you wouldn't have alone. This means that sooner or later you'll get dragged into the mess that my life is. Are you up for that?" He asked.

"Yes, I am." She said with all her heart. Yet Lith didn't shapeshift nor told her anything else. He just wiped the tears and the snot from her face before giving her a short, soft kiss.

'Now she's too clouded by her emotions. I have to wait until she is cool headed again. Only then I will see her true reaction.' Lith thought. Words were meaningless to him, only actions mattered.

"Tomorrow I'm going to speak with Professor Vastor about your sister and probably I'll have her admitted at the White Griffon Hospital for the procedure. Do you want to come with me?" He held her face between his hands, gently caressing it.

"I wish I could, but I have to work. I shouldn't even be here." She sniffed.

"I'll try to be there for the intervention. Please, keep me posted."

Lith nodded in reply.

"Do you want to get out for dinner or do you want to stay at home?" He asked.

"I want to stay with you." Was her reply. She refused to both release him from her embrace or stand up from his legs. Kamila felt like his arms were her castle and his heart was her sky. She wanted that moment to last forever.

"Are you sure that nothing happened to Zinya?" She asked.

"Absolutely. Not only did the spell protect her, but it also gave me a full check up of her condition. No harm came to her after our visit." Lith's voice was so confident that it made Kamila's worries disappear.

Lith had a hard time preparing dinner while never letting her go, managing to do it solely thanks to spirit magic and fire vision. When he attempted to spoon-feed her, she couldn't repress her chuckle anymore.

"You're the least romantic man I've ever known. Couldn't this wait a few hours?"

"Maybe you are right, but I'm hungry and so are you. I can't feel the romance in the air with all this noise." Both of their stomachs had grumbled for a while before Lith started to cook.

"I know. Stupid stomach. Always ruins everything." It grumbled harder since she had refused the spoon and the smell of the food was delicious.

"You're too good a cook. It's all your fault if I get fat." The first bite was enough to make Kamila realize that between her long day at work and all those emotions, she had worked quite an appetite.

"Hands off my plate, woman!" Lith rebuked her merrily as she exploited being on his legs to eat from both plates.

"Make me." She said while feeding him.

The next morning Lith hadn't slept much, again, but he was definitely happy about his past night. Kamila had refused to let him go even during the morning shower, giving to his day a really pleasant start.

'One thing is for sure. If you two keep up like this, Kamila will lose weight fast.'

'Solus, that's dirty!' Lith rebuked her.

'Hello, pot. My name is kettle and I'm black.' She sneered.

He left Belius for the White Griffon academy, where Professor Zogar Vastor and Quylla were waiting for him.

"Lith, my boy. It's so good to see you again. It would be much better if you didn't visit or call only when you need something, though. I know we are both busy men, but it's kind of rude anyway."

"That's exactly what I told him, Professor." Quylla nodded.

"I apologize to both of you." Lith said, having a hard time to repress a sigh of annoyance.

"I've consulted all the material Quylla sent me and I'd like to hear your opinion about the different approaches I devised."

"Hold your horses, Lith. No competent Healer would give their opinion based on a hologram, no matter how good it is. We need to see the patient. I've taken the liberty of setting the Gate's coordinates to Xylita already." Vastor stood up abruptly.

How he managed to do it without wobbling despite his egg-shaped body was still a mystery to Lith. When they reached the Sarta household, the servants quaked in their boots, not daring to say anything.

One mage was terrifying, but three at once were the stuff nightmares were made of.

Chapter 610 Arrangements Part 1

"Zinya, allow me to introduce to you Professor Zogar Vastor and Healer Quylla Ernas. He is the leading light in the field of Body Sculpting and the expert I told you about. Quylla is a genius healer and a dear friend of mine.

"They are both here to help me with your procedure." Lith said.

"It is my honor that such an important person bothered himself for a nobody like me, Professor Vastor." Zinya stood up and gave a deep bow in the direction of Lith's voice, her head almost touched the floor.

"It's nothing, my lady. There's no need to thank me, at least not before we've succeeded healing you." Despite his humble words, Vastor puffed out his chest in pride.

It had been a long time since a beautiful woman had praised him with such sincerity.

"Nice to meet you, Healer Ernas. Please, take good care of me." Zinya gave a curtsy, this time following Vastor's voice.

"The pleasure is all mine." Quylla said. There was something wrong with both the house and its inhabitants, something that gave her the creeps.

"We need to perform a few diagnostic spells that require physical contact. Do you mind if we touch your head?" Vastor asked.

"Not at all."

The moment Vastor cast his best diagnostic spells Lith could see him turn pale before his usually calm visage was twisted into a red mask of anger. He was clenching his teeth so hard that Lith wouldn't be surprised to hear them crack.

"Quylla, I need a second opinion." Vastor said while making her way.

"Lith, I would like to take lady Sarta to the White Griffon Hospital immediately. We can't perform any procedure until her body doesn't recover and she doesn't put a bit of meat on those bones." His voice was calm, but Vastor had a murderous look in his eyes that could rival with Lith's.

"I agree with your assessment, Professor. Lady Sarta needs immediate assistance." Unlike Vastor, Quylla's poker face was perfect.

'So far so good. I healed everything but left behind everything a competent healer would need to diagnose the repeated domestic abuse over the years.' Lith inwardly smiled. In the case of divorce, Vastor's testimony would mean a great deal.

"Now? I've not prepared any luggage." Zinya said.

"There's no need for luggage. The White Griffon will provide you all that you might need." Vastor opened a Warp Steps leading them back to the city's Warp Gate and from there they could reach the hospital ward directly.

Once Zinya was settled in her bed, Lith called Kamila with his civilian communication amulet and left the two sisters talking before meeting the Professor again in his study.

Kamila's supervisor wasn't very happy about a social call during working hours, but Jirni had a family as well, so she let it slide.

"Scum of the earth." Vastor snarled as Lith entered the room.

"These are the moments when I regret having left the Queen's corps. Back then, I would have killed people like mister Sarta without a second thought, just adding their name in the 'collateral damage' list."

"Professor! We're Healers, not cold blooded killers. We took an oath!" Quylla rebuked him.

"It's easy to say when you are so young and naïve. When you reach my age, after you'll see things so bad that make that poor woman look lucky in comparison, you'll change your mind. I'm tired of seeing good people die while the bad guys thrive."

"I agree with Professor Vastor." Lith said.

"Now, if we can please discuss the treatment, I would love to have your input about how to proceed."

"I won't sugar coat this, Lith. It's hard. The optic nerve is part of the central nervous system, one slight mistake can turn her into a vegetable. Even if you succeed in restoring her sight, it's likely that she'll suffer from side effects for the rest of her life."

"Her other senses might be altered and her personality might change. If you want my help, you'd better have a good plan." Vastor said.

Lith explained to them how he had already managed to temporarily give Zinya sight using mana as a conduit.

"I plan on using Kamila, Zinya's sister, as a blueprint. There may be many differences between them, so my idea is to use mana as a probe. To test where to connect the nerves before actually doing it.

"This way I can simply slow down the process and use a trial and error approach to avoid affecting her brain in any permanent way."

"This is genius!" Vastor blurted out.

"Kid, you make me feel useless. How long did it take you to manipulate mana to this extent? It must have taken months just to create a spell so complicated, let alone master it."

Lith felt embarrassed. He had devised the spell on the spot, by simply altering his true magic version of Chisel. Back then, Zinya's desperation had driven him into an outrage. He had done it simply to give her something to fight for.

Only later, while he had performed Body Sculpting simulations, did Lith realize that it could actually be employed as a diagnostic tool to solve most of the unknown factors when harnessing Zinya's brain.

"Don't be so harsh on yourself, Professor. I worked on that spell ever since you taught me Chisel, so it's not such a big deal. Also, I can assure you that with your experience in manipulating mana, you would master it in just a few days, if not hours." Lith's words were only a half truth, as usual.

"Thanks, but rather than me reinventing the wheel, it would be better if you shared such a spell. The Kingdom would reward you handsomely." Vastor said.

"Sure." Lith shrugged.

'As soon as I make a fake magic version of it.' He thought.

The three of them spent the following hours discussing the details of the procedure. Vastor gave Lith plenty of advice thanks to his rich medical experience. The more Lith explained to him how his Probe spell worked, the more Vastor understood what its strong points and limitations were.

Quylla took note of everything, using water magic to manipulate the ink and writing faster than a stenographer. She didn't have Vastor's experience, but her ingenuity allowed her to find a solution whenever they got stumped.

"Zinya needs plenty of food and rest before undergoing any procedure." Quylla said.

"I recommend to wait for at least a week."

"Agreed." Lith and Vastor said in unison.

"Professor, here is the paper that qualifies me as lady Sarta's personal Healer. If her husband tries anything funny, please alert me immediately." Lith handed him the document so that Vastor could register it into the academy's archives.

"I hope he does, dear Lith. This time of the year the magical beasts are particularly voracious. Not to mention how many diseases he could 'accidentally' catch while visiting a dangerous place like our labs."

The two men exchanged a murderous look that gave Quylla the creeps. Before leaving the White Griffon, Lith went back to the hospital ward, to say Zinya goodbye and give her a present.

"Thank you so much." She said while handing Lith back his communication amulet.

"Too bad Kami is so swamped with work, we could barely talk. You know, I didn't step outside for years. Even the air is different from how I remember it. I already feel much better."