

## Supreme M 741

### Chapter 741 Plans and Blueprints Part 1

"Yeah, too bad that I can't take tomorrow as a day off. We're in the middle of a case. Damn if I hate being a responsible adult." Kamila went into the bathroom, replacing the lingerie with a baggy pajamas.

"That makes the two of us, babe." Lith said before taking a lonely cold shower.

The following morning, Lith left the Ernas household. Quylla's Scanner confirmed that his life force was now no different from how it had been before. There were no new cracks and the old ones hadn't grown any bigger.

Once he was back into his tower, Lith took all the loot he had gained from Kulah out of his pocket dimension, letting Solus prepare their Forge while he called Protector.

"Scourge, what happened to you? I tried to call you multiple times to remind you of your promise. At first, Selia bugged me because she thought you were avoiding us but over time she got so worried about you that she almost forced me to visit your parents and ask them about your whereabouts." Protector was relieved from hearing Lith's voice.

As long as the owner of a communication rune was alive, their rune would remain, but not seeing Lith's amulet active for a month had brought Protector to the point of thinking that he was held captive and unconscious.

Lith told all about the events in Kulah to Protector, explaining that going deep underground had blocked all communications. Life in the wilderness was quite boring, so Selia's hologram appeared as well, sitting on Ryman's lap along with their children, listening to Lith's story as if it was a fairy tale.

Lith was amazed by how quickly Protector Hushed the kids' ears during the most gruesome parts. Then, Lith asked for their help.

"I would like to introduce Kamila to the four of you."

"Well, any kind of company is most welcome, but can I ask you why? I thought you wanted to keep your life as an Awakened a secret." Selia asked.

"And I mean to keep things that way. Learning about Awakening might put her in danger. My issue is about leaving her in the dark about my other half as Protector did to you. In a while, we'll have our one year anniversary.

"I don't think it's fair to drag things this long without giving her the opportunity to decide if she wants to stick with me or find someone more normal." Lith sighed. "You are the only mixed couple that I know, and seeing how she reacts to your situation would greatly help me to understand how open-minded she is."

"So, you're asking us to reveal our secret before gambling on yours?" Selia asked. Lith hadn't shared his hybrid nature with her, but the huntress had actually guessed a lot from the subtext.

"Yes." Lith nodded.

"Fine by me. What about you dear?" Selia asked Protector.

"Wait, what?" Both men said in unison. Ryman trusted Lith so much that any friend of his was also Protector's friend, otherwise he wouldn't have revealed himself so easily to Friya.

"Why so surprised? It's obvious that I'm interested in checking if all humans are scumbags. You are now in the same situation my children will be in a few years. I'm not doing it just for you, but also for my family.

"By the way, if she breaks up with you just because of what one of your ancestors did, she doesn't deserve you." Selia said, believing that Lith carried the blood of an ancestral Emperor Beast.

"It's kind of more complicated than that." Lith replied.

"Are you going to tell me?"

"Not now. Otherwise she would be the fifth one to know, which would make things even harder for her. Especially considering that my ex already knows..."

"Slow down. Are you saying that you already found a girl who accepted you in the past?" Selia cut him short.

"Yes."

'Actually two.' Lith thought since he considered Solus a girl too.

"And you let her go? I'm not going to lie, kid. That was a dick move on your part. When do you think you'll bring her here?"

"As soon as I can. She has a full-time job and so do I. Finding the right time might be tricky. I plan to do that first and then visit Faluel. As you can see, I haven't forgotten about my promise."

After another bit of chit-chat and receiving from Selia the magical equivalent of a grocery list of enchanted items she wanted as a "spontaneous gift" for her troubles, Lith joined Solus in their Forge.

She had already placed several cheap swords and all the lower grade mana crystals in their possession above the obsidian table that they employed for their experiments. She was in her humanoid form, wearing a simple blue dress with a knee-length skirt.

"I hoped that after our bodies fully regenerated, I would look even a tiny bit more human, but I'm still glowing like a frigging bedside lamp." She sighed. "My physical appearance must be linked to my mana core."

"Well, you still look gorgeous." Lith said. "Are you sure you don't want a body? With my current knowledge about constructs, undead, and even body-swapping, we could easily fetch you something."

"Damn sure. Now let's get to work. I've already organized a few things for you to look at. First, the Odi's runes on the blade are more advanced of those we found in Huryole, since they don't glow, but I think they are also less powerful.

"I've drawn you a comparison between all the rune engraved weapons we managed to examine with Invigoration, including Phloria's."

"What? When did you do that?" Lith was flabbergasted. That was the kind of dirty trick he would usually employ, something that he wouldn't expect from the kind-hearted Solus.

"The moment we got stuck in Kulah's lower floor and the life of everyone depended on you. I studied all the artifacts left around while the others rested. I did it only because I thought that learning about runes might boost our chances of survival." She replied as the lights in the tower turned red in embarrassment.

"As I was saying, even though the Odi blade has a pseudo core as strong as Phloria's, the entirety of its surface is covered in runes, whereas Orion used barely thirty runes in total."

"Are you telling me that Orion is already able to do much better than the Odi?" Lith's shock almost made his mouth fall on the floor.

"Well, it's no surprise if you consider that he is likely to use state of the art magic whereas the Odi stopped making any advancement centuries ago. Phloria's blade is just made of Orichalcum yet it would have been able to take the Odi on equal footing even if the other one used an Adamant sword.

"The main difference between the two weapons is that the Odi's was designed akin to a mana blade. By pumping the mana they received from the Reactor into it, the sword can be turned into the rough equivalent of a laser blade." Solus explained.

"I wish I could imprint it and discover its powers! It would be a huge step in understanding how runes work with different enchantments. I can't even fuse it to retrieve the damn Adamant!" Lith cursed the Odi and their self-destruct mechanism.

"Maybe, and maybe not." Solus said with a triumphant smile. "Rather than give it away to the Griffon Kingdom in exchange for pocket money and a handshake, we might as well try to purify it with Origin Flames."

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"Great thinking! My control over Origin Flames is still crappy, but since Adamant is very resistant and hard to find, we might as well try and see if it can withstand the flames.

"Maybe Adamant will be destroyed like normal metals, but maybe it could be just cleansed from the previous incantation. This will have to wait though. I'm not going to use Origin Flames for a while.

"I don't want to take any chances of weakening my life force before it fully recovers." Lith said.

"Right. I'm sure that your decision has nothing to do with you not getting laid once since your return." Solus's voice oozed sarcasm.

Lith dodged the question by starting to craft runes, stumbling upon their first hurdle. Engraving one rune at a time seemed to have no effect. They would retain his mana just for a few seconds before turning into just a fancy inscription.

He then tried to use Bonding to give the blades a mana flow of their own, yet the runes engraved before the Bonding remained inactive, whereas the ones engraved after the procedure would actually weaken the item's mana flow.

"Seriously, what the fuck?" Lith said after wasting quite a few crystals. He could buy the blades in bulk, but mana gemstones were another story entirely.

"Yondra said that Runesmithing is part of the preparatory phase, then why does nothing work?"

"Remember that we are attempting to reproduce the work of fake mages. They can't do things in steps like we do. Maybe if the network of runes isn't complete, it can't hold the power they are imbued with." Solus pondered.

"I disagree. Look at this junk." Lith showed her the blueprints of the only three rune-engraved swords they had, pointing at the old blades.

"I could understand if we were talking about Orion's blade but the others? Both swords are covered in so many runes that I can't think of a single fake mage with enough mana to carve them all at once. Sure, the Odi had the Reactor, but this blade was clearly crafted before its construction was completed

"With runes, Adamant, and infinite mana at their disposal, the Odi would have never settled for such a small pseudo core."

"Fine. Do you have any better idea?" Solus tapped her foot, her hands were planted on her hips.

"No."

"Then give mine a try."

Since it was still early in the morning and runes were his new priority, Lith did as instructed. He reproduced the runes of Huryole's sword, which had the simplest rune pattern among those at his disposal, on a new one down to the last detail.

The result was impressive. All the runes shone with power, not only retaining the mana Lith had employed, but also absorbing the surrounding world energy to empower themselves.

Soon they were even stronger than both Lith and Solus had predicted they would be.

"Told you so!" Lith said throwing his latest failure inside the safe room. Any decent Forgemaster had their lab connected to a room where to throw their faulty products in case they detonated.

Unlike most of his colleagues, however, Lith had Solus put a reinforced glass between the lab and the safe room, so that he could observe the deterioration process of his creation until its bitter end.

It had allowed them to more easily understand what had gone wrong and why. Lith used the technique he had learned during his stay in Kulah, making Invigoration move through the stone of the tower so that he could study the sword with his breathing technique from a safe distance.

In normal circumstances, it would have been an impossible feat. The further the subject was, the fewer details Invigoration would perceive, to the point that even Life Vision would be better.

Yet the whole tower was part of Solus's body and she was in turn part of Lith.

It greatly boosted his new ability's range and effectiveness, plus Solus could replay all the events he spectated, allowing him to focus on different aspects of his failure just by performing an experiment once.

"Yeah, but it was worth a shot." Solus said. She had never expected to succeed at the first try. There was a reason why runes were a state secret that not even most Awakened were aware of. "Any idea what's gone wrong?"

"Off the top of my head, at least a dozen." Lith replied.

"Hey, that's my schtick!"

"Just to be sure, I'll try out one of the spells that Phloria has marked as mere teaching props." Lith ignored Solus's remark and took the booklet out of his pocket dimension.

Some of the simplest enchantments had pictures showing what the final result would look like. Lith couldn't read the ancient language, nor had he found a dictionary for it, but now that thanks to Phloria he knew it wasn't anything dangerous, he could try and replicate the depicted runes.

To not waste any more materials, he used a stone slab as a medium and engraved the words of power according to the scheme in the booklet with his own mana.

Once again, the runes started to grow more powerful and unstable by the second, but since there were much fewer of them, the safe room was useless. The resulting explosion shouldn't be able to harm him.

"Do you see that?" Lith pointed at different runes that were pulsating in unison.

"Yes." Solus said, turning back into her wisp form and storing her dress. She had no Skinwalker armor and she loved her clothes dearly.

"It appears that there are at least two different sets of runes. Each set tries to connect with its components, but they both fail because the mana pathways they create mess with each other and cause the energy to overload."

"My thoughts exactly. What we believed to be a bunch of separate objects are actually all part of the same structure, like an oversimplified array." Lith tried to store the stone slab inside his pocket dimension before it detonated, but to no avail.

The haywire energy was rejected by his storage space.

"Dammit. It would have been nice having a few live grenades of that magnitude ready to blow." Lith said. "Maybe we should apply runes to Alchemy as well."

"I don't think it's possible." Solus pointed out. "Most alchemical tools are made of pure mana, whereas Runesmithing takes place during the preparatory phase. Wands are an exception since they have a physical medium, but we don't know if runes might interfere with the spell infusing process."

"Point taken. We'll think about it later."

They spent the following hour by studying the recording of the explosion of the sword, separating the different sets of runes based on the rhythm at which they pulsed.

It took them a few more failures to iron out the last details since if a rune was surrounded by the components of another pattern, its frequency would mimic their own and screw up Lith's predictions.

Once they were done, Lith could discern three different sets of runes on Huryole's sword, at least five on Phloria's and too many to count them on the Odi's. He even managed to perfectly replicate the weapon from the lost academy.

"Well, the good news is that now we know that runes have to be engraved in sets and that a single one by itself is useless. The bad news is that even with this knowledge, we have no idea what each pattern does." Lith said.

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"Yeah, we still know too few runes to decipher a whole pattern and on top of that, I think that even if we know the modern equivalent of some power words, either we alter the entire set or we leave it as it is.

"We have no idea how ancient and modern runes interact, but if I had to take a guess, I'd bet that they go boom." Solus said.

After a quick experiment that proved her right, Lith decided to study the three rune patterns he knew by engraving them on three different blades. Much to their surprise, all the sets worked as amplifiers, but each one had a different function.

The first set would enhance Lith's energy signature so that the mana flow from the crystals embedded into the blade offered a bit less resistance to the Forgemastering process.

The second set amplified the strength of the pseudo core while the third set dispersed the excess energy so that the cheap metal could withstand the energy that the enchantment released and reduced the stress that the boosted pseudo core would experience.

The three sets combined allowed the magical item not only to avoid mana overload, but also to replenish its energy reserve faster than normal. The runes absorbed the surrounding world energy and aided the mana crystals to empower the pseudo core.

"Fascinating! Now I understand how Thrud could use such powerful artifacts freely. The runes act as a lesser Invigoration, shortening the recharge time of both mana crystals and power cores." Lith said.

"Yeah, too bad that we know only bottom tier sets of runes and we don't have a copy of Phloria's sword to detonate..." Solus was cut short when Lith suddenly doubled over in pain.

"Not now, dammit!" He said while a familiar burning sensation rose from his mana core and moved towards his throat. Lith knew that his breakthrough was close and that the more mana he employed, the sooner it would happen.

What he had failed to take into account was that, while he was inside his tower, part of the energy from the underground mana geyser flowed through his mana core, further speeding up the process.

Soon his whole body started to undergo the refining process that allowed an Awakened one to get rid of the impurities hindering both their mana flow and life force, allowing them to obtain a physique strong enough to handle a new and more powerful mana core.

This time, however, things were different. At first, Lith puked a huge amount of tar-like substance that had reached his core. After that, the deep blue core became brighter and started to pulse like a star.

'By my maker! Now I understand what impurities are for and why Tista needs helps every time she makes a breakthrough. Impurities are a double-edged sword that both protects and damages the body.

'On one hand, they hinder a person's development and enhance the signs of aging, but on the other hand, they are a natural inhibitor of the mana flow. Without them, normal people would die the moment their bodies are not strong enough to bear the power of their own cores.' Solus thought.

'Impurities move toward the core because the closer they get, the more effective they are and once the core gets rid of them, the body is forced to evolve or die.

'Removing Tista's impurities while she grew up made her develop a body that doesn't need to break as much as a normal person's would to be refined. At the same time, however, because she has too few impurities the process is more violent and quick compared to Lith's.

'To help her to survive her next breakthrough, we need to force her body to produce more impurities, whereas Phloria's case is the opposite. We must remove part of her impurities and force her body to rearrange itself enough to not get broken beyond repair when she Awakens.'

Lith's now blue mana core sent one pulse of energy after the other, like a beating heart. Each wave hammered at the impurities present in the rest of his body, forcing them out.

First, his hair and nails fell entirely. Then his muscles were ripped and his bones broken so that the impurities hidden even in the innermost layers of his body were laid bare and expelled.

His body kept breaking and reforming non-stop as if a rough surgeon was working together with a merciful healer to excise the black masses infesting every fiber of Lith's being.

Thanks to the fight with the Odi and having a much denser body, this part was relatively easy and less painful than his last breakthrough. Alas, his inner organs proved to be more difficult clients.

Even shutting down one of them at a time was a near-death experience that put Lith's endurance to the test. The only silver lining was that each time one of his organs was reformed, it would greatly improve the amount of mana and life force that flowed through his body, making the recovery of the other organs faster.

"It's really amazing." Solus said. "Now each one of your organs, your skin included, is an extension of your mana core. We could even rename them mana organs since now everything you do is actual magic."

"Yeah, but if my brain has already gone into the dryer, why do I still feel like crap instead of just tired as usual?" Lith asked. His skin, nails, and hair had already finished regenerating, so the body refining was supposed to be over.

The answer came in the form of a new series of spasms, that caused him to shapeshift uncontrollably back and forth from his human to his hybrid form.

'This doesn't make sense!' He thought. 'This form is mostly made of energy, it doesn't even run on blood, what kind of impurities can it have?'

Lith's seven eyes, even those that were still closed shut, shed black tears while his scales fell off as if he was a molting bird, revealing a fiery red skin lying underneath his hardened shell.

Yet unlike the human impurities that would just leave Lith's body, all the so-called defective parts gathered up on the side of his head and at the end of his spine before bursting into flames.

Where before there was nothing, small curved horns and a short tail appeared. New, thicker scales replaced the old ones while three rays of pure elemental energy erupted from Lith's opened eyes, flushing out more and more impurities.

Lith's hybrid form was born from an already evolved body which possessed a powerful core, so it was perfect. What it lacked was the ability to channel the full power generated by the constant battle between his Emperor Beast and Abomination life forces.

Lith's hybrid body was too small and weak to withstand the full scope of such powerful conflicting energies. Lith's human body would break just to be reshaped into a more suitable host for his core, whereas his hybrid form was forced to grow so that it could unlock its true potential.

Emerald flames suddenly burst out Lith's every pore, but instead of hurting him, they nurtured his scaled body, making it grow bigger and taller until it almost stood 3 meters (9'10") tall, before reverting to his normal height.

Once everything was over, even though Lith had just spent three full days resting, he was on the verge of starving, incapable to move a muscle.

#### Chapter 744 Double Breakthrough Part 2

"Quylla saved your life by forcing you to rest for one more day. If this happened yesterday, your life force would have shattered. Now, instead, it's stronger than ever." Solus said, observing with Invigoration how the boundaries between Lith's mana core, body, and life force had become thinner.

The two different kinds of energy now flowed through his veins along with his blood, making him different from normal humans.

"I know." Lith stuttered. "Solus, promise me that no matter what, you'll wake me up for dinner."

"Yeah, sure. What could the changes in your body possibly matter compared to a night of wild, steamy, hot sex with your girlfriend? By the way, I take back what I said yesterday.

"I'll stay here in Lutia while you have fun. There's no reason for me to..."

"I'm hungry." He cut her short before fainting.

"Oh, yes. There's that too." Solus said while carrying Lith on his bed with spirit magic. She had developed the nutrients potion exactly for that kind of situation, where Invigoration couldn't help Lith, and feeding him the old-fashioned way was impossible.

They tasted like crap and smelled almost as badly, but it was much easier administering them to an unconscious man rather than feeding him a full course meal. Solus's mouth almost fell to the ground when she noticed that Lith was absorbing the potions like a dry sponge water.

"Dammit! The mana geyser is boosting his metabolism to the point that if I don't keep the nutrients coming, by the time Lith wakes up he'll look like a monk after a month of fasting."

Invigoration could do nothing to help Lith recover faster and even if it could, Solus wouldn't have used it. She hoped that the changes both of his life forces had experienced could heal the crack that cursed Lith to a shorter lifespan or at least get rid of Death Vision.

It wasn't a skill so much as a curse that made his life miserable and constantly drained his focus just to keep the visions at bay. Only when he was alone with Solus inside the tower, could he relax without worries.

That, or when he was alone with Phloria.



'It really irks me to no end that I'll never know if it's just because I'm seemingly immortal or because Lith has feelings for me as deep as he has for her. Right now, even the members of his family suffer from Death Vision if they are further away than three meters.

'He never allowed himself to see if things work the same for Kamila as they do for everyone else he loves or if she's an outlier like Phloria. I guess it would mean a lot and Lith doesn't want to second-guess their relationship.' Solus thought.

She remained by Lith's side until his condition stabilized, feeding him potions and checking on his life force from time to time with the Scanner spell. Yet the cracks remained and even though his body brimmed with vigor, the amount of life force Lith had remained unchanged.

Solus sighed, saying goodbye to her broken dream before using both Invigoration and mana sense on Lith. Now both his liver and kidneys were capable of detoxifying most harmful substances as if they were a tier two cleansing spell.

With each regular breath Lith took, his lungs drew bigger amounts of world energy than before, filling his chest with mana that his heart would pump through his whole body along with thin streams of life force that enhanced his recovery abilities.

Only when she was certain that the breakthrough would cause Lith no harm did Solus leave his bedroom, calling her friends to make plans for the night.

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Uninhabited island in the middle of the ocean.

Leegaain had failed to understand why his long lost daughter had gone to such lengths to prevent him from tracking her position, at least until he took a good look at her.

He couldn't use Souls Vision (AN: the Guardians' ultimate form of Life Vision) on a hologram, but all of his regular senses picked more than enough anomalies to make him suspicious.

Xenagrosh, who he knew as Zoreth, was supposed to be already dead, or at least very close to the end of her lifespan. She had chosen the human nature, so even if somehow she had managed to Awaken on her own there was only so much time it could have bought her.

Yet her body was full of vigor, her skin didn't show any sign of aging, and even her heart was off. Mostly because he could hear two of them, beating rhythmically like war drums into his ears.

Her body was too slender, her movements too gracious to be human.

"Let me guess, you are one of those Abominations who fused with their monster doubles and yours was a troll. How can you have stooped so low?" Leegaain asked.

Xenagrosh cursed her bad luck. She was aware that tricking her father was a fool's errand, but she had hoped that her deception would at least last the few minutes she needed to obtain a few answers from him.

"Nailed it in one. Sorry dad, I know I've always been nothing but a failure in your eyes. I guess it's better to end this conversation right now." Her voice was honest. Since the call had started, Leegaain didn't perceive an ill intent coming from her.

Zoreth's words stung hard, reminding him why he had such a poor relationship with most of his children. Too often in the past he had treated them as a Guardian would rather than a father,

something that he had tried to correct in his relationship with Melia.

"Why do you say that? I've never considered you as a failure!" He said, trying to stop her from ending the call.

"Oh please! You could never forgive me for picking my human half over yours, or the fact that even though I grew in your cave, I wasn't able to Awaken by myself like so many of my siblings did!" Xenagrosh finger was still above Leegaain's rune, yet she couldn't find the strength to push it.

"Is that what you believe?" Leegaain was flabbergasted by the depth of his failure as a parent.

"Of course! Otherwise why did you never look after me once I left your lair? Why didn't you Awaken me?" Her voice didn't sound like that of a murdering monster so much as that of an abandoned child.

"Because with both your words and actions, you made it clear that you wanted to have your own space! As for the Awakening, do you realize how short a human's lifespan is? If you had chosen to be a dragon, I would've had more time to understand your character.

"Awakening someone is a big deal and you were so hot-headed that I feared that power would get the better of you. The state you're in just proves that I was right!" Leegaain said, his voice shaken like it didn't happen in centuries.

"Yet you didn't hesitate to Awaken that Empress of yours. Guess that's true what they say. You can pick your friends, not your family." Xenagrosh's voice oozed poison.

"You know, the reason why I joined the Master is that unlike you, he at least gave me a chance! He took his time to know me, even when I was just another horrid Abomination before tagging and bagging me like you would.

#### Chapter 745 Fallen Cores Part 1

"I never wanted for you to see me in my fallen state, forcing you to hunt me and put me down like a rabid beast. That's why I never answered your calls before and I wouldn't have contacted you if I wasn't desperate.

"Guess what, oh mighty Leegaain, the only thing you were right about me is that I should have chosen the dragon side of the family from the beginning!"

Xenagrosh shapeshifted into her Shadow Dragon form, flaunting a size that rivaled with that of her father. Her right hand was covered by Bytra's Sky Piercer claws, which pulsed with the same fury that possessed their master.

Leegaain's eyes moved from his daughter to the familiar design of the weapon she was wielding, finally understanding the meaning of Mogar's words during Lith's last tribulation.

The threat they were facing was beyond that of the usual madman aiming for eternal life. Whoever this Master was, he had somehow managed to upset the balance as Leegaain knew it.

The Dragon-Eldritch hybrid in front of him was proof of that.

"What do you need my help for, dear?" He asked. His voice was calm now and there was no judgment in his eyes. Xenagrosh was so shocked that she returned to her human form without even realizing it.

For the first time in her adult life, Leegaain was speaking to her like a father instead of a Guardian.

"I-" Xenagrosh was several centuries old. She had seen Mogar change in ways she deemed impossible, she had fought the most powerful creatures that roamed the planet without batting an eye, yet she couldn't stop herself from stuttering.

Hating Leegaain the Guardian was easy. Hating the father who had read her bedtime stories when she was little, who had taught her almost everything she knew about magic, was another story entirely.

She felt incredibly stupid for revealing her envy towards the Magic Empress to him, for yelling like a petulant child while flaunting her hybrid form as if it was a new toy. She had emitted such a powerful energy signature that Leegaain would probably be able to track her if he wanted to.

"I'm feeling so lost, Dad." She fell on her knees, crying. "I started this because I wanted more power. Because I wanted to become powerful enough to show to this stupid planet that it made a mistake by abandoning me!"

For a magical beast, turning into an Emperor Beast meant that Mogar had accepted them. That was the reason why they would receive its help to shed their old form and be granted a painless evolution.

For Abominations, turning into an Eldritch was the lowest point. It meant that Mogar had completely cut them off from the natural order of things, relegating them to a state lower than the Fallen races.

They could at least still evolve, whereas an Eldritch was the end of the line.

"Yet after spending so much time with the Master, after I stopped living like a beast, thinking only about eating, surviving, and becoming stronger, I realized that power is not what I really want.

"What I truly wished for was to be freed from my hunger, to enjoy little things like smelling a flower without it wilting at my touch. Now I'm so close to getting back everything that I lost, but no matter how much I struggle, I can't overcome this new wall and I'm scared of screwing things again." She sobbed, making Leegaain's heart tighten.

"What's the matter, sweetie pie?"

Then Xenagrosh told him everything about her twin core and her inability to Awaken or to access to any of her old abilities.

"Do you know what's wrong with me, Dad? I tried all the breathing techniques I learned over the years, yet all I've achieved is the feeling that if I make one wrong move, my new core will overload and my new body will be lost." She said.

"And you're right. The Master's crazy experiment has simply created bodies and cores capable of withstanding the Chaos energy that normally ravages an Abomination's physical form, but it didn't cure your status as an Eldritch.

"I'm sorry, Zoreth, but you've been deluding yourself, you are still far from being normal.

"The Troll core is incapable of processing the darkness energy just like the black core is incapable of processing the light element, which creates a symbiotic relationship that allows you to maintain your human form, but that's it.

"Both of them are still fallen cores, so they cannot Awaken. Any attempt on a fallen core will make it burst and fall prey of the black core, killing you on the spot. I don't think you can survive anymore without the troll core. You've changed too much." Leegaain said.

"Wow, fallen cores? Do they really exist?" Xenagrosh wiped her tears while Leegaain nodded.

"I can't believe it. I live together with the most ancient beings on Mogar, Guardians excluded, and no one was able to understand what was wrong with us. Yet you solved it all just by looking at my hologram. Can you cure me, Dad?"

"Honestly, and I don't say this often, I don't know. You're a new life form so it would take me some time just to understand what you've become, but I'm fairly optimistic about your condition." Leegaain said while thinking about Lith.

The anomaly was an Abomination hybrid as well, yet he hadn't fallen, had been able to Awaken by himself, and was living a full life, even walking the path to Guardianhood.

'If I could get to study how his mana core and life force works, I could cure my little girl. Yet I can't afford to let her know about his existence. As long as Zoreth associates herself with the Master, she's a liability to the balance.' He thought.

"Really? Do you think you can help us?" Xenagrosh said, her eyes were full of hope.

"The others? Maybe. I need to see them to be sure. You? Absolutely, but first you have to tell me the Master's identity and where I can find the Eldritchs. I can barter such information with the other Guardians in exchange for your safety, but I can't make any promises about the others." Leegaain replied.

"Are you really asking me to betray my family and the only person who ever gave a damn about me since the day I fell?" Xenagrosh's hope vanished, replaced by her usual determination.

"They are not your family! They are worse than undead. Eldritchs are crazed beasts that destroy everything they touch. Each one of them has made more victims than the entire vampire race! As for the Master, he's not any better than an Eldritch.

"The number of living beings sacrificed for his mad experiments is in the millions. He can't be allowed to exist. Mogar can't afford another Arthan Griffon."

"Then what about me? I'm an Eldritch too, what makes me so different from the other Abominations? If it wasn't for me, the Master would have never learned about the secrets of Awakening, nor about Arthan's madness!" Xenagrosh said.

"By the Great Mother! You're my baby girl, that's the damn difference! I protect countless lives every single day. Humans, beasts, undead, plants, and the only thing they have in common is that I don't give a rat's ass about them.

"I can afford to be egotistical from time to time, especially when my family is involved. Come back home and I promise you that I will do all I can to save you."

## Chapter 746 Fallen Cores Part 2

"I'm sorry, Dad, but I can't do it. They may be monsters to you, but to me they are precious people who need me. I've come too far to turn my back on them like that." Xenagrosh sighed.

"Thanks for your help, Dad. I promise you that I'll use what you've taught me today to make you proud. I'll find a way to redeem my race in your eyes. I hope that the next time you see me, I'll be whole again."

She turned the communication amulet off before Warping to random locations to make herself untraceable, unaware that there was no need to. Leegaain considered it his parting gift to his daughter since the next time they met they were bound to be enemies.

"I've got bad news and terrible news. Which do you want to hear first?" He said after activating his mind link with his fellow Guardians.

"The bad news." Tyris replied.

"I know why the Master knows us so well and who has helped them with Arthan's Madness. My daughter Zoreth is among his hybrid Eldritchs."

"My condolences, old friend." Said Salaark. "If I meet her on the battlefield, I'll try to give her a painless death."

"The terrible news is that among her peers there's even Bytra, the 4th Ruler of the Flames. Zoreth was wielding one of her weapons."

"Fuck me sideways!" Said both Guardians in unison.

"The inventor of modern runes? The same Bytra who taught us how to unlock the true potential of Davross?" Tyris asked.

She had always believed that Bytra had disappeared due to the tragic consequences of her never-ending quest to find Menadion's legacy and beat the Mother of Forgemastering at her own game.

No Guardian would have ever thought that Bytra's passion could have turned into an obsession, leading her to become an Abomination.

"Yes, and that's not all. Just like the anomaly, the Master's experiments have allowed my daughter to tap again into her draconic nature even though she discarded it centuries ago, back when she was still a normal hybrid.

"Not only is this supposed to be impossible, but also if the same happened to all the other Eldritchs, there's no telling what kind of bloodlines we might have to face. As you know all too well, some Eldritchs pre-date even us Guardians."

Only silence followed Leegaain's words. Some of the Fallen Races had obtained great powers before devolving into madness. The idea of such powerful creatures combining their might with the wisdom of millennia and with the Chaos energy that only Abominations could wield, made them worry.

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Solus Tower, eight hours later.

Despite the fact that the mana geyser and his tower were supposed to enhance his recovery speed, when Lith woke up he felt as if someone had stopped time the moment he had closed his eyes and then buried him under several steamrollers.

'Guess I would've been out cold a full day if this had happened in any other place.' He thought while yawning like a bear ready to go in hibernation for winter.

The first thing he did was check his pocket watch. Luckily there was still plenty of time to snack and go back to the Ernas mansion. The second thing he did was to investigate the source of all the noise he heard.

The moment he tried to focus his attention, Lith could almost feel as if something inside of his head clicked. He could now distinguish all the voices and the smells despite the several closed doors that stood between him and his guests.

'It seems that Solus invited Tista and Nyka at the tower.' He thought.

Pain aside, one of the last things he remembered before losing his consciousness was taking the Skinwalker armor off to more easily get rid of the impurities. So Lith made sure to be presentable before opening the door of his room.

"Big sister, how nice of you to visit. Yet when I was bedridden you didn't show up." He said.

"Not everyone has a magical tower that moves freely through space." She replied with fake rage before hugging him.

"I was too far from the nearest Gate and too busy clearing a couple of dungeons to return. Especially after hearing from Solus that you simply needed rest and that you would pick me up later."

"Why dungeons?" Lith asked.

"I need real battle experience and I prefer fighting known monsters instead of putting my head inside the dragon's lair like you always do. I always go alone, so that I can practice both fake and true magic according to the circumstances.

"Spotting things from a distance with Life Vision almost makes things too easy. Almost." She shuddered at the memory of a couple of her recent near-death experiences. Tista had learned the hard way that monsters could be Awakened as well.

"Hi, sweetie." Nyka said, and judging from the red content of her glass, she was being literal rather than flirty. "Gods, you smell delicious."

"Thanks, I guess. What's all the ruckus?"

"Solus wants to beat the crap out of me. She says that it's the best way to temper my body and fill it with impurities, to delay my next breakthrough as long as possible." Tista replied.

Solus then brought Lith up to speed about her most recent discoveries about the body and mana core refinement process.

"Excellent news! This will allow us to greatly improve Phloria's survival chances. By the way, how do you feel, Solus?" Lith asked.

"The quality of my nourishment has greatly improved but even though I used Accumulation during the last few hours, it's too soon for my own breakthrough. I really hope that something will happen the moment I graduate from deep to pure green." Solus said.

"Excellent news my ass!" Tista said, interrupting their daydreaming about the content of the second floor of the tower.

"I'm not a fan of pain. To add insult to my future injuries, I'm will not even be allowed to use Invigoration after getting beaten since it would rejuvenate my body and make most of the imperfections that light magic leaves disappear."

"You can always use darkness fusion." Lith shrugged. "Also, I think that it's better to be prepared than dying the moment you experience a breakthrough during our absence."

After eating enough food so to stave-off his hunger, Lith and the girls practiced together Silverwing's Hexagram. After seeing the Wargs use it as a learning tool for Awakened while they were under Tezka's influence, Lith had applied the same method to both groups he supervised.

Solus's friends and the Emperor Beasts living inside the Trawn woods that he had Awakened would regularly practice the array. It served as both a means of defense and to learn the finesse of manipulating different elements.

Usually, it required one person for each element and there were only four people in the tower, but with Lith's level of mastery, managing two elements at once was an easy job.

The exercise required that the Awakened ones practicing the spell would cycle the control of all elements while keeping their mana output at the same level. For Tista it was an opportunity to learn by imitation how Lith handled his mana flow.

Solus was at Lith's level in terms of control over the elements and magical knowledge, but she appreciated the training to build teamwork. She hoped one day to be capable of leaving the tower and experience the world together with her friends.

## Chapter 747 Deep Bonds Part 1

With her weak mana core, Solus was the benchmark of the group, except when it was Nyka's turn to handle light magic.

It was always a vexing experience for the vampire and her blood core, requiring her to feed often. Yet she needed to do it in order to better understand the powerful darkness magic that flowed inside her body instead of blood.

Usually, Lith would use the gathering to share his knowledge and further strengthen his foundations of magic, but this time he focused on himself the most. The problem with breakthroughs was that he needed to get used to his new strength, both physical and magical.

The array exercise allowed him to learn about the changes his mana core had undergone and how to regulate his mana flow without causing an explosion while trying to light a match.

After a while, he and Solus tower Warped back to the Ernas mansion. He needed to make sure to not kill the next person he hugged and Orion's training dummies, which had the same durability of a human body, were the perfect subjects.

Much to his surprise, the guards at the gate had a message for him.

"Great Mage Verhen, you have visitors from the army waiting for you in the lounge, yet Lady Quylla needs to speak privately with you before anyone else. She's been pretty clear about this point."

Lith nodded and went to Quylla's room, where according to the guards she was waiting for him.

'I wonder what she needs me for. I doubt she has already made up her mind about me being a hybrid. It's more likely to be related to the army's envoy. Probably she wants to make sure that our versions about Kulah's events match.' He thought.

"I've got your message. What's the emergency, Quylla?" Lith asked.

"I never got the opportunity to return this to you." She replied, handing back to him the book about the Mana Reactor. Quylla was so nervous that she was unable to stop fidgeting. Even folding her hands didn't help.

"That's hardly a reason to be worried." He shrugged.

"No, you don't get it. We're about to give our report. If I hand this book to the army, they'll ask me where I got it. Since I was held prisoner, I'll be forced to tell them that I got it from you."

"And?" Lith kept missing her point.

"And once the army explores Kulah and finds the safe near the Odi's life pod, they might wonder if such a big container was really meant for a single book. In their shoes, I would expect to find all the information regarding all the Odi's successful projects, not just one.

"You could end in trouble because of me." She said.

"You're right." He nodded, moved by her concern. Her brain seemed to have a hard time making a decision about their friendship, but her heart didn't seem to care.

"Thanks, but there's no reason to worry. I was going to hand over to the army everything that I found back there anyway. That kind of knowledge is toxic, but it's not up to us to decide what to do with it.

"You're really a genius, little one. There were really three books in that safe." Lith said while ruffling her hair out of habit. Back then he had been in too big of a rush to hide the safe before the fight and there had been too many witnesses once he had regained consciousness.

He couldn't expect everyone to be dumb, blind, and deaf so he knew all along that it was a matter of time before he would be forced to choose between giving up on the tomes or being charged with treason.

Lith had already copied the contents of the body-swapping book, so he no longer needed the original for his purposes.

Quylla became stiff under his touch, yet she didn't push away his hand.

"I've done my best to read and translate the book about the Mana Reactor, to make sure that there's nothing written in there that might help you with your life force." She said.

"Thank you for your kindness, but it was clear that such a monstrosity couldn't help..."

"I couldn't be sure until I read it." She cut him short. "Countless times wrong things have been modified to do some good, but sadly this is not the case. You were right, the Reactor can only be used to produce mana, not life force.



"By the way, these are the Odi dictionaries that I've compiled during my studies. Some of the terms they use do not have an equivalent in our language nor in modern magic, so most dictionaries can help you translate a poem, but most of the magical jargon gets lost in translation."

Quylla handed a couple of books thick enough to stop more than one bullet to him.

"Feel free to borrow them. Aside from you and me, no one knows that I wrote these vocabularies." Quylla had never underestimated Lith's intelligence, so she was well aware that he might as well have made copies of whatever he wanted.

It was her way of telling him that if he needed to research the Odi language, the army might take notice if he started to consult Odi magic dictionaries and that even though she wasn't sure if she wanted to help him, Quylla didn't want him to get caught either.

"What are we going to say to the army's emissary?" She finally asked.

"The truth. Well, mostly." He quickly added after noticing her flabbergasted expression. "We'll tell them that we defeated that monster together and that I did most of the job. Damn, this really feels like being back at the academy."

Lith's attempt to make her laugh failed. Quylla's expression became even more serious and her feet restless.

"Is it because you're not human that you're this strong? Like when you saved Yurial from the assassins or when you killed the Abomination in the forest?" She asked.

"No. I told you. I wasn't able to shapeshift back then." He replied.

"Have you ever considered us as your friends? I mean for real? Or was even that a deception?"

"The truth?" Lith asked and she nodded for him to reply.

"Not at first and not for a long time." He said, making her turn pale.

"I don't expect you to understand how hard my life was, nor how thick-skinned I am. Yet I want you to know that after Balkor's attack, I started to grow fond of all of you and that now I consider you one of the few true friends that I have."

Lith stored the dictionaries inside his pocket dimension and then told Quylla how he was going to explain the fight with the Odi to the army's envoy. She was amazed by how short and precise his report was, not finding a single weak point in it.

Lith and Solus had prepared it together, interrogating each other in turn to find plothes in their story. In the doctored version of the events, once the Mana Reactor had been shut down, the three of them had employed hit and run tactics to make the enemy ran out of juice by exploiting the Odi's need to take them alive.

In this story, Phloria had detonated the body-swapping machine only to inflict the death blow. It explained everything, from how they all survived to all the battle marks that remained in the room.

## Chapter 748 Deep Bonds Part 2

To make everything fit, the only thing they had to lie about was how much mana was left in the Reactor.

Once Lith went to meet his guest, he was surprised to see that Constable Griffon had come to see them in person.

Not only because sending a member of the Royal Family was a clear indicator of how serious the events of Kulah were considered by the army's upper echelons, but also because a Constable meant more an interrogation rather than a report.

Lith wasn't worried. Phloria knew what to say because they had discussed the matter when he had gone visiting her the previous day, and even if Quylla was still on the fences about how to react to his nature, she had just proved how much she cared for him.

The butler led Lith to the Tea Room for esteemed guests, where Jirni, Orion, Phloria, and Constable Ernas were waiting for him. It wasn't the Tea Room the family normally used, its furniture was more formal and the seats more spaced between them.

Comfortable padded red sofas and chairs were arranged around a white elliptical oak low table. A soft white and silver carpet covered the floor, preventing the moving chairs from making noise and muffling all the sounds that the servitude might make while serving the guests so that nothing could disturb the conversation.

The east wall consisted of a glass wall that allowed the morning sun to illuminate the room and make the many silvery ornaments spread throughout the room shine like jewels. On the west wall, there was a huge fireplace surmounted by a huge mirror with a golden frame that covered most of the wall.

Lady Tyris was exactly as Lith remembered her, time didn't seem to have any effect on her appearance. Finding the whole family assembled for the report was quite odd, but Lith hoped that it was just the deference an old bloodline was supposed to show to a member of the royal family.

Tyris Griffon wore the uniform of a Royal Constable and was 1.76 (5'9") meters tall. She was a woman in her mid-twenties, or so it seemed. There was something about her that made her look young yet ancient at the same time.

She had shining golden hair braided into a tress long enough to be twisted and knotted above her head resembling a crown. Her silver eyes sparkled like stars under the morning sunlight.

Most men found her beauty intoxicating, but to Lith it was unsettling. Such a degree of perfection in her forms, in the symmetry of her features, was simply too good to be true.

He gave her a deep bow the moment their eyes met, using it as an opportunity to hide his suspicions and wear his usual poker face. Much to everyone's surprise, Lady Tyris stood up at his arrival and offered him her hand.

"Ranger Verhen, I had heard that your injuries were quite severe. I'm glad to see that you're recovering so well." She said with a dazzling smile.

The moment Lith shook her hand, Tyris used Mother Earth, her version of Invigoration, to scan both hybrids at the same time. Mogar seemed to be interested in Solus as much as she was interested in Lith, so it was time to give to Menadion's Desperation the attention she deserved.

The black hybrid's mind was a shattered, incomplete puzzle, the pieces of which were fighting to fit each other without falling apart. Some cracks had disappeared, empty gaps between spaces were now filled by small yet growing pieces, showing the healing process Lith was still undergoing.

The white hybrid's mind, instead, was whole, but with multiple cracks that seemed to have grown over time. Just like Mogar had told her Guardians, Solus's memory loss coupled with the lack of a physical body had prevented her to have any semblance of normality in her life and had deeply affected her mental state.

'Interesting,' Tyris thought. 'His body has further evolved after the events of Kulah. His second life force is now more distinct and the wall between it and the human life force seems to have thinned, unlike how it happened to my children.'

'Normally, the more a hybrid grows stronger, the more apart their life forces grow until one of them has to be sacrificed to allow the other to thrive. In Lith's case, instead, they have moved closer.'

'I've seen it happen in the past. It could mean that either the two life forces will clash for dominance, in which case Lith's life will be at risk, or that they are trying to fuse. If the latter happens, then Mogar is right and he would be really moving towards becoming his own species.'

'Also, Lith's core is not a Fallen one. On the contrary, it presents an extraordinary affinity towards the fire and darkness elements. There is no sign of unbalance, the light element flows through his body as well, preventing Chaos energy from being formed and harming his body.'

'As for the woman in the ring, she's truly unique. She possesses only one life force, yet I can feel she has two bodies and two cores as well. The tower's core is part of her body just like her own mana core and they have been bonded with means like I've never seen before.'

'Yet she's not a cursed object. Neither she was sacrificed to give life to the tower nor she's enslaved by it. She a true human-artifact hybrid and the only reason she doesn't have two life forces like Lith is that items do not have life force.'

'Her condition allows her to control Menadion's artifact in ways that not even the First Royal Forgemaster could. She and the tower are one, making the girl more than human yet less at the same time.'

"Quylla Ernas is the only healer of my generation that I acknowledge as my equal, and the Ernas family has treated me very well every time I needed help." Lith said, appreciating the soothing warmth that Tyris's skin exuded.

Looking into her eyes was almost as staring at a placid lake during a morning spring. It made him feel at peace and almost lulled him into staring at the golden reflection of the sun on her irises.

Almost.

"The Ernas truly are one of the founding pillars of the Kingdom." She said while turning around and giving a deep bow to the masters of the house. "The Crown is deeply indebted with you and for your unwavering loyalty, you have our gratitude."

Seeing an involuntary nervous spasm on Jirni's face was something unprecedented, no matter if it had lasted barely a split second. Clearly the situation was as odd for them as it was for Lith.

Yet for Tyris it wasn't odd, just nostalgic. Orion and Jirni came from two of the most ancient bloodlines, that had been established together with the Griffon Kingdom. Their ancestors had been

founding members of the Queen's Corpse back when Tyris was still Queen and Valeron's dear friends.

Juria Ernas and Oghrom Myrok hated each other so much that it had taken their families centuries before considering their oath of never mixing their blood just a legend, leading to Orion's and Jirni's marriage.

Being inside the Ernas's tea room was a trip down the memory lane to her. While the Ernas couple reminded Tyris of her long lost friends, Lith and his companions reminded her of herself.

Lith was just a candidate Guardian, but she could feel that their bond ran deep.

#### Chapter 749 Hard Truth Part 1

"Why don't you sit down while we wait for the last member of this meeting to join us?" Tyris said, pointing a padded chair near to Phloria at Lith. The Guardian was intrigued seeing that both hybrids were broken beings, even though for completely different reasons.

Quylla entered the room soon after Lith. Her surprise was big as well, but her poker face wasn't up with the rest of the family's standards. She stuttered when Tyris stood up to greet her and she tensed so much that even Lith would have suspected she practiced forbidden magic if he didn't know better.

"There's no reason to worry." Tyris chuckled at her reaction, making everyone present swallow a lump of saliva. They all knew that a Constable's reassurances were mostly smoke and mirrors.

"This is a friendly hearing. I assembled you here because I know that you're all tired, but I need to hear from you how you dealt with the last of the Odi. This should be the quickest way for you to give your report and go back to your deserved rest." Tyris said.

Phloria took the initiative and told only the truth, at least until the part where she and Lith had remained alone with Jiira in the body-swapping room. Too many people had witnessed the first part of the fight and she had no idea what they had reported.

She undersold the gravity of the injuries Lith had sustained but kept the rest accurate. After that, she stuck with the story they had agreed beforehand. Tyris didn't interrupt her nor asked questions, she just stared at the other two and studied their reaction.

Lith was as calm as Quylla was nervous. Tyris's set up was as simple as it was effective. Since they have had all the time to forge a story, by putting them all together and in front of their parents as a reminder of the consequences that lying would have, Constable Griffon could find the weak link in the group.

Unfortunately for her, Lith just nodded from time to time, whereas Quylla was so nervous that she never stopped fidgeting, even when Phloria told the truth, making it impossible to understand the reason for her discomfort.

When it was Lith's turn, he told her how he and Morok had reached the Reactor and how he had found the safe. Lith also handed Tyris the three books and the God's Will array bead.

After carefully studying the artifact, he and Solus had realized that now it was just a piece of junk. Not only did the bead require the Reactor to be fueled, but also half of its runes had to have been carved into the Odi's enchanted life force.

Without them, the bead's pseudo core had slowly started to crumble. With just the mana pathways inside the artifact, the pseudo core was unable to sustain its existence.

"Did they ever leave your storage items? Did you make any copy of their content?" Tyris asked while putting them away with her eyes staring into Lith's.

"No and no. I made no copy." Much to Tyris's surprise, he was telling the truth. When dealing with opponents of Jirni's caliber, Lith knew that even he couldn't afford to lie.

That was the reason he had stored them inside Soluspedia, to never have to take them out, and why he had let Solus do all the work. A fight was a messy, unpredictable series of events, so it was hard to discern facts from fiction, whereas simple yes or no questions were much harder to lie about.

Quylla told her all about her experience with the Reactor and Morok, including the kick which had prevented him from partaking in the final battle. She was quite relieved having to speak nothing but the truth since just like Lith, they didn't repeat what Phloria had already told Tyris.

"I'm glad to hear that despite the dire circumstances you experienced you've managed to keep a level head. Captain Ernas, you have failed to protect the Professors, but judging from the reports of the other survivors, it's already a miracle that so many people made it out of Kulah alive." Tyris said.

"The failed mission will go down in your personal file but it will not affect your career. You have my word. Mage Ernas, you took part in the mission as an Assistant, and yet your contribution overshadows that of most Professors. I'll make sure that the White Griffon academy compensates you properly.

"Ranger Verhen, you have played your role splendidly, yet there is only so much that the Kingdom can do to award you and that's one of the reasons why I'm here. This matter is even more pressing due to the excellent references that Ranger Eari gave you.

"Are you still unwilling to claim a land as your own?" Lith nodded.

"I suppose that the same stands for your career in the army or the Association." More nodding ensued.

"Is there anything in particular that you want?" She asked.

"I've seen the Royal Forgemasters at work and I'd love to study their art." Lith replied.

"I'm sorry, but no." Tyris shook her head. "You've been given plenty of chances to become an integral part of the Kingdom yet you always refused, remaining at the fringes of the system.

"Even right now, you're like a wolf that circles around a village and refuses to be domesticated. The Griffon Kingdom or any other of the three great countries cannot put a wolf to guard the henhouse, it's too dangerous.

"I can grant you free access to the Royal Library, mana crystals, anything that money can buy, but nothing more. I've come personally here today to assure you that the Crown holds you in great esteem and hopes that you'll decide to become one of its keystones in the future.

"Yet right now you are too young and too many people question where your loyalty lays. The Kingdom can't afford to disclose its secret to someone that might use them against it.

"We would love for you to take this country as your home, but the choice is up to you. Feel free to contact the embassies of the other countries, you'll discover that your situation there would be the same."

Tyris had spectated to the whole fight, so she knew the truth without the need of listening to their reports. Also, she knew that Lith was withholding Rizo's Adamant Eternal Blade.

On one hand, it proved that he was a smart and resourceful man, capable of inspiring the loyalty of those around him. On the other hand, however, it made him a thief that had pushed two of the most talented young mages of the Kingdom to commit treason.

They both knew about the sword and yet neither of them had mentioned it to protect their friend's secret. Sure, they had no idea what Lith could make out of that sword, but that didn't make him any less dangerous nor their crime any less severe.

Yet Tyris decided to let it slide. She was an enforcer of the change, not of the law.

Also, she was pretty sure that Mogar had assembled all the three Guardians of the Garlen continent to spectate, even though one would have been more than enough to wipe out the Odi, to make them aware she had plans for Lith.

## Chapter 750 Hard Truth Part 2

'I really hope that Lith understands how important the few years he has left with his friends are.' Tyris thought. 'Without roots, a man is nothing but a leaf in the wind that life is. My beloved Valeron didn't abdicate to prevent others to discover about his long life.

'With me by his side, there was no one that could threaten him or our children. He left all that he had fought so hard to build simply because he had no one to share it with anymore.

'He loved me dearly, and so he loved our children and grandchildren, but after over a century, he couldn't stand being a relic of the past, nor seeing our kids become old while he remained young.

'Valeron begged me countless times to Awaken them, and that was his only plea that I could never fulfill. It broke his heart and almost our relationship. Yet it was Arthan's treachery that killed him.

'He could never recover from the guilt of having chosen the wrong person to stand on the throne and it's the reason why he asked me to select the rulers in its stead even when he was still alive.'

Before leaving, Tyris shook everyone's hand and told Lith to call Commander Berion when he had decided about what he wanted as his reward.

'I must say, Salaark is right. I have to get out more often. I truly enjoy seeing the Kingdom thrive and knowing the descendants of my old friends. Yet Leegaain is also right. I must pick another human form. I'm sick and tired of people that check out my ass, make me a marriage proposal, and sometimes do both at the same time.'

She thought while Warping to Salaark's home. Tyris wanted to share her impressions about the two hybrids with her before going to Leegaain's place. Since he had heard from Zoreth, he had become obsessed with finding a cure for his daughter.

"That was definitely out of the ordinary." Jirni said with her eyes semi-closed while she searched her memory. "I've never heard of this Constable Griffon, not even after becoming an Archon.

"To make matters odder, I was certain to know every member of the Royal family, yet I would surely remember a person this peculiar."

"She was so powerful and intimidating that I had a hard time keeping my composure." Said Phloria. "Not to mention that she made me feel like a really ugly duckling."

"You and me both, sis." Quylla sighed while all the implications of Tyris's words were slowly sinking in her brain.

"Not that. I mean how she spoke about Phloria's career. It's not a Constable work to decide how a failure will be handled by the High Command, no matter if they're members of the Royal Family or not.

"Just like the Queen doesn't mess with the army, the King does the same with the Association. Yet she spoke on behalf of both of them. Either she is the middleman of the Royal couple, or she has been sent here as an eye-candy to sway a certain someone." Jirni said while looking at the unfazed Lith.

Orion had something to add, but then he remembered about Jirni's presence and his brain activated before it was too late, allowing him to turn the very poetic words he was about to say about Constable Griffon into a harmless:

"I told you so, Lith. The Kingdom will pay you handsomely for your services, but gold can only get you so far. Otherwise you can only rely on your own research or a stroke of luck."

Lith considered the purple crystals he had gotten from Kulah, his gold coins funds, and the Adamant in his possession.

'A truckload of gold sounds nice, but what I must really aim for are metals and crystals. The mana crystals we found in Kulah are rough since Crystalsmithing had yet to be invented, but that's the least of my problems.

'Sure, if Solus is right and Origin Flames can cleanse powerful materials from the residual traces of failed Forgemastering attempts, it means that I have enough Adamant for both a sword and an armor, plus I can try as many times as I want.

'Yet not only is that a big "if", but it also is pointless unless I find some blueprints for runes. Based on what both Yondra and Orion told me, without runes I can't Bond crystals to Adamant, and without crystals, I can't infuse powerful enchantments.' He thought.

'Well, we got back from barely three days. Let's rest and recover before using Origin Flames, I don't want you to lose one more day of lifespan.' Solus said.

"You are right, Orion, but no matter how well the Kingdom promises to treat me, I prefer flying solo. I've got enough time that I can rely on luck for a little longer. If push comes to shove, I'll probably ask you as my mentor." Lith smirked.

"And I'll be glad to refuse." Orion smirked back. "I'm already too busy between my duty and my apprentices, so unless a Royal decree forces me to take you in, you'll have to look for another master."

"Speaking about time, it's damn late. I have to go." Lith ignored Orion's remark, according to his pocket watch he was going to be late for dinner. He left the room with a brisk walk while he and Solus organized their days between research and experiments.

Time. That word triggered something inside of Quylla, who had never stopped fidgeting ever since Constable Griffon had summoned her.

"Phloria, I need to talk to you. Can we please go to my room?" She said.

Phloria nodded and the two young women left the tea room as well.

"Those were two more things I didn't expect to see today after a member of the Royal family actually bowed to us. Quylla lying to a Royal Constable and you refusing to take Lith as your apprentice. Do you mind explaining?" Jirni asked.

"I'll be honest with you. I like the kid mostly because he cares for our girls, but I don't trust Lith farther than I can throw him. He pulled too many miracles out of his ass during the years. First his sister, then Balkor, then Nalear, and now this?

"I mean he was an extra in the expedition and ended up saving the others. Plus, there's the matter of Orichalcum and Skinwalker armors. I'm a Royal Forgemaster for more than twenty years and I never managed to pull that.

"Heck, even the Royals commission some of their equipment from me. The fact that he dumped my little flower is another minus on my book." Orion replied, grunting loudly.

"Geniuses are just like that dear. Our daughter faced Nalear as a student as well and it was her dumping him." Jirni rose an eyebrow at his reaction. To her, Lith was a friend and a priceless asset, the best combination she could ask for.

"He should have fought for her instead of moping his way out of her life! Also, he's no genius and we both know it. Manohar is a genius, Balkor is a genius, and they are both completely out of it. Lith is too normal to be in their ballpark. He's as magically talented as me and as devious as you are, dear."