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Chapter 31: Chapter 29: Gregory vs Gregory

[???

"Say, do you think Mikoto is sad we left him out?" Ruby asked William as they walked through the recently restored forest.

"Well, he did not seem as bothered by that." William stated, it really was a shame they could only be two in a team. It felt kind of empty without Mikoto. "But I am rather sure he teamed up with my sister." A smile graced his features; his sister might detest him, but that did not diminish his care for the girl. It was nice to know Mikoto was keeping his promise.

"You seem rather happy," Ruby noted.

"I do, huh?" William just shrugged. Maybe he was a bit too glad for his sister; most would likely think him mad for even still caring about her. They would not be wrong for even thinking so. Agatha and him were not even on speaking terms; hell, his sister would not even glance his way. But that was fine; it was not her fault that she was so cold. No, there was someone else to blame. "Well, I guess I'm just happy to have peace of mind." He finally answered.

"Oh, right. I recall seeing your sister with Mikoto." Ruby noted with a hum. "It seems he is keeping his promise. Unexpected from a delinquent." William just chuckled at the jab thrown Mikoto's way.

"A trustworthy delinquent." William corrected. "But we proba-" William cut himself off as he suddenly lifted up his right hand; without even a chant, a pulsing bubble-like green shield was erected around the two of them. Just in time for what seemed like a bolt of lightning to whizz through the air, it collided with the barrier as it groaned and pulsed under the brief onslaught. But the barrier held as the lighting strike seemingly disappeared in a hiss.

William grimaced as he directed his gaze upward.

"Well, I guess I would have been a fool to think you would not seek me out." He spoke with a frown.

"Hello brother." Hoisted atop a thick branch of a tree, she looked down on Ruby and William. She was paired up with Mikoto at his behest, but the masked boy was moving a little too slowly for her taste. So, to make a long story short, she ended up ditching him

and eliminating most of the other students already. Though she may have taken a detour to reach her brother and his partner,.

The duo consisting of Ruby and William watched as Agatha jumped off the branch, landing weightlessly on the dirt ground.

"Say, how screwed would you say we currently are?" Ruby questioned him as a sheepish look adorned William's face.

"Very screwed." He answered honestly. On queue, Agatha took action, as the two tensed for action.

"Creation Magic: Azure Wolf, Basilisk." She murmured as Williams eyes widened.

Agatha stretched her arms out, her palms facing upward, as vivid azure mana surged from her. A surge of magic surged through her, she summoned her will and manifested her thoughts. With a flourish of her hands, she channeled her magic, creating an spectacle of light.

A magnificent creature materialized before her. It stood tall and illuminated the forest with its aura of ethereal whiteness. Its fur, like fresh snow, flowed gracefully, cascading down its powerful form. Its eyes, two azure orbs brimming.

Beside the enigmatic beast, Agatha summoned a massive serpent, a replica of the purest white. Its scales shimmered under the dappled sunlight, as it snaked through the trees. Fathomless azure eyes glowed ready to heed Agatha's every command.

"You're kidding, right?" William could not help but blurt that out as he stared at those two large, intimidating creatures.

"She summoned them?" Ruby questioned sizing up the creatures.

"No, she created them." William corrected with a grimace.

("The Gregory's Familial Arts? Seriously!? Against us!?" Spawns of the Gods and Goddesses had access to any number of Familial Arts. The Gregory's were no exception; they possessed a number of Familial Arts. But Creation Magic stood out from the rest, a magic unique to them. Creating life itself is something all Gregory's needed to master. The absurdity of his sister using her Familial Art on him did not have time to properly sink in as she acted.

With a forceful gesture, Agatha directed the large serpent to attack. The forest floor quivered as the colossal creature slithered forward, its muscular body plowing through thick foliage and toppling towering trees like mere blades of grass. William and Ruby leaped aside just in time, leaves and branches swirling in their way.

But the respite was short-lived. The white wolf lunged forward in a blur. Its movements blurred with impossible speed, closing the distance between itself and the two in an instant. William's muscles bulged with strain as he summoned another magical barrier, a dome that rippled with mana. The wolf slammed against the magical shield, its claws scraping against the protective barrier as if testing its resilience.

Seeing her opportunity, Ruby took action, a surge of fire erupted from her palm, forming a torrent of flames moving with wild abandon. The searing fire sped towards the wolf, its intense heat licking the air hungrily.

The white wolf nimbly leaped to the side with an almost preternatural grace. Ruby's flame collided with the forest floor, leaving a scorching mark on the earth as embers hovered in the air. Though it missed its target, the torrent of flames provided William and Ruby with a welcome respite, allowing them to gather their breath.

"Well, it seems your sister won't be holding back." Ruby commented with a frown. The serpent and wolf seemed to still be ready to attack at any moment. ("She seems too close with Mikoto too...maybe I should...")

("A good thing she hasn't quite mastered the blueprints of the Azure wolf and Basilisk.") Her creations were still incomplete and, by extension, weaker. Creation magic was, after all, impressive; the power to create at a whim was impressive, but the ability itself was not easy to use. Hence, blueprints for creations are passed down within the Gregory family.

"Ruby, how good are you with teleportation magic?" William whispered to Ruby as he kept an eye on the still-idle wolf, serpent, and Agatha.

"Well, I'm garbage." She somewhat sheepishly admitted. "I'm good at hexes."

"Hexes are too lethal." He murmured, This was a training exercise after all. Any curse magic was completely off the table, as that spelled lethal magic. Though at least things could not get any worse,

"Starting the party without me, huh?" Just then, a familiar voice cut into his train of thought.

William felt like punching himself for just now jinxing him and Ruby both. So the two glanced to the side to see Agatha's partner. Mikoto walked to Agatha's side as he examined the large serpent and wolf.

"Completely comprised of magic, huh? Even the wolf's organs and each vein. Nifty spell." Mikoto murmured as Agatha narrowed her eyes at the masked boy.

"I have no need for any assistance; leave. Busy yourself with hunting the other students." She coldly dismissed him as he heaved an exasperated sigh.

"C'mon, why so cold now?" He questioned me with a shake of his head. "You really have it out for William, huh?" He mused as he looked at Ruby and William. "Sorry, you two, but it isn't anything personal."

"Why do I feel like you're grinning beneath your mask?" Ruby asked as Mikoto shrugged.

"Who knows? C'mon, let's go beat each other's asses over yonder and leave the twins with their baggage." William just gave him a look of disbelief, while Agatha looked at him with an unclear expression. Mikoto merely gave William a thumbs up as Ruby shrugged before the two merely walked off deeper into the forest.

Leaving Agatha and William alone.

"That guy...." Mikoto was an unpredictable person. Usually, upon meeting and getting to know a person, you get used to their character, how they function, and what kind of personality they have. Mikoto had no defining traits; one moment he was humorous, another he was quiet. He had no set personality, not to mention he was mysterious with that mask and all. But this was not the time to be thinking about this.

He had his sister and her creations to fight after all.

[Elsewhere]

("I really don't have any idea what her fighting patterns are.") Mikoto mused as he looked at Ruby, who stood across from him at a slight distance. ("But I guess she's in the same boat; all she's seen from me is that short scuffle with that princess chick.")

But there was his instincts, whenever he was close to Ruby they flared erratically. Every cell in his body was telling him to be on guard against this girl. He did not know why, maybe he merely needed to brush up on his instincts.

There was no way Ruby was *that* dangerous.

"C'mon, I hope you're not planning on just standing there." Mikoto semi-taunted.

"Of course a delinquent would taunt someone smaller than themselves." She shot back as he rolled his eyes.

"Seriously? You're still on with that delinquent thing?" He questioned, bemused. She just shrugged, raising her right palm at him.

"I am merely stating facts." She declared as a red glyph came into existence inches away from her palm. And then, without even chanting, bolts of fire shot out from her glyph like a rapid-firing gun.

("No chant and just a glyph, huh?") Mikoto mused as he merely raised his palm. The dozen or so bolts of fire collided with his open palm. It was as if they hit a solid wall as they disappeared into embers upon collision.

Ruby blinked in surprise at the outcome. The fire had just collided with his bare hand, and it did zero damage. No defensive spell was even used; that was his natural durability.

"You seemed surprised, Ruby." Mikoto noted, and Ruby felt as though he was grinning beneath his creepy mask.

"Of course I am." She admitted with a dry look. ("You're so amazing!")

"Well, 'I am' pretty strong." He boasted. "There's no shame in giving up, Ruby." Her eyebrow twitched at his show of arrogance.

"Very well then; if you are strong, then I need not hold back, no?"

For a moment the atmosphere felt suffocating, oppressive. A strange sense of foreboding filling his being. But that feeling disappeared as soon as it came.

This time two dark blue circular glyphs materialized behind Mikoto, suspended in mid-air. Within an instant, bolts of lightning erupted from each glyph, shooting forth like light piercing the air.

Mikoto had already moved to dodge as he instinctively moved to avoid the assault. His feet shifted, and he weaved between the powerful bursts of lightning, evading them with ease.

Not one to be discouraged, Ruby's eyes narrowed as she brought forth her magic once more. With a flourish of her hands, a large, fiery glyph suddenly formed beneath Mikoto's feet. Flames erupted from the blazing emblem, surging upward.

Yet, that too was hardly enough. His limbs carried him away from the fiery torrent, his form barely touched by the scorching heat.

("She sure is quick to cast her magic, but it seems like she's just sticking with elemental magic.") He noted. ("Must be easier to use without chants.") But oddly it seemed like she was holding back.

Ruby swiftly conjured several glyphs of different shapes and sizes around her, each pulsating with ,am. A kaleidoscope of elemental magic surged forth from the glyphs.

Fire, water, earth, and wind converged, swirling in a collection of colors as they raced towards Mikoto. The sheer force of the magical elements tore through the forest, tearing apart trees and scattering debris with an absurd ferocity.

A thick cloud of dust kicked up as trees and boulders flew through the air like projectiles. ("Something's up...she's precise with her magic, she clearly doesn't need any glyphs.")

Mikoto emerged unscathed.

Ruby looked on with a slightly agape mouth. For some reason, the expression did not seem genuine, even so-

"Ah, so you can make expressions," Mikoto snarked.

("How amazing. As expected from you, Mikoto. Even in this world, you're amazing.") Ruby looked at the boy in front of her.

"Then I should attack, huh?" His body blurred in a burst of speed, he reappeared before Ruby, the girl staggering backward. Before she could fall, Mikoto caught her by her waist, bringing her closer.

"Hmm," Ruby did not seem to mind; she seemed content for whatever reason.

"I thought I was a strange one, but you're way more mysterious, *Ruby*." His red eyes, gleaming behind his mask, bore into the girl's aqua eyes.

"I am but an ordinary girl," she smiled, though it did not reach her eyes. "Our bodies are pressed against each other quite tightly. I do not mind, but-"

Immediately, Mikoto let the girl go, resting a hand on his hip.

"What, are you a fangirl of mine now?" He snorted.

She cupped her chin, "Mhm, maybe."

"I see...I'm still gonna bully you now, either way."

"Wut?"

Chapter 32: Chapter 30: Gregory vs Gregory II

"Mikoto Yukio, Agatha Gregory, William Gregory, and Ruby Leonora, hm?" Professor Fergus stood atop the edge of a cliff, overlooking the majority of the forest. However, he was not looking at the impressive view; instead, there was what seemed to be a holographic-type screen displayed in front of him in mid-air, a Zephyra Illusora. It was a

really simple application of magic; magic had many types of main classes and subclasses.

For example:

Main Types of Magic:

1. Elemental Magic:

-Fire magic

-Water Magic

-Air Magic

-Earth Magic

-Light Magic

-Dark Magic

-Ice Magic

-Lightning Magic

-Nature Magic

2. Healing Magic:

-Regeneration Magic

-Restoration Magic

-Purification Magic

-Herbal Magic

-Life Magic

3. Illusion Magic:

-Glamour Magic

-Phantasm Magic

-Deception Magic

- Hallucination Magic

- Shapeshifting Magic

4. Necromancy:

- Raising the Dead

- Controlling undead

- Soul Manipulation

- Spirit Communication

5. Psychic Magic:

- Telepathy

- Telekinesis

- Psychic Projection

- Mind control

- Clairvoyance

6. Enchantment Magic:

- Enchanting Objects

- Enchanting Potions

- Enchanting Weapons

- Enchanting Armor

- Enchanting Tools

7. Time magic:

- Time manipulation (to an extremely minor degree, control varies depending on the individual.)

- Precognition

- Temporal Freeze

-Time Loops

8. Divination Magic:

-Tarot Reading

-Crystal Ball Gazing

-Palm Reading

- Astrology

-Aura Reading

9. Summoning Magic:

-Summoning Elementals

-Summoning Spirits

-Summoning Familiars

-Summoning Demons or Angels

-Summoning Mythical Creatures

10. Elemental Control:

-Manipulating Fire

-Controlling water

-Creating and Bending Air

-Shaping Earth

-Harnessing Ice

-Manipulating Lightning

-Plant Manipulation

11. Celestial Magic:

-Astral Projection

- Celestial Energy Manipulation

- Star Magic

- Lunar Magic

- Solar Magic

- Cosmic Manipulation

12. Song Magic:

- Singing spells

- Enchanting with music

- Manipulating Emotions through Melodies

- Song Summoning

13. Rune Magic:

- Writing Spells with Runes

- Casting spells through inscriptions

- Rune Energies Manipulation

14. Elemental Fusion:

- Combining Element Magic for Advanced Spells

- Fire/Water Fusion

- Air/Earth Fusion

- Light/Dark Fusion

- Ice/Lightning Fusion

Subtypes can further be classified within each main type of magic, depending on their specific characteristics and applications. The magic he made use of was a subtype of illusion magic, to create an illusionary screen for him to gaze upon. Using the ley lines within the forest, he can glaze over what the students are busying themselves with.

No one would expect such complex magic from him, but being a veteran of war, he had to learn how to use very many types of magic. But that was neither here nor there; currently, he had to focus on this lesson.

Of course, with the recent demon attack the academy suffered as well as the casualties suffered, most of the faculty feared the students were ill prepared. And so he was stuck with even more extensive training lessons for the students. Currently, he was teaching class Wolf, Professor Gregory's class.

Though things were not going as expected. The only student of note in class Wolf was, of course, the Gregory girl, as she was the only spawn in the class. And the recent spawn of Isadora. He had settled for a simple battle royale exercise, and naturally, he had expected her to make quick work of everyone.

Instead, she seemed to ignore the majority of the other students and headed straight for a specific target. Instead, it was the masked brat who proved most effective; in fact, it was he who wiped out the most in this exercise. To make it even more impressive, he used pure physical prowess.

"That brat might become my favorite." Professor Fergus mused.

"Quite a rarity to see you in such a good mood, Alexander." His mood quickly went sour upon hearing the voice behind him. "And what is with that sour face, not happy to even see an old friend?" The voice questioned in amusement as the perpetrator came to a stop at his side. Professor Fergus threw an annoyed glare at his side.

Her delicate features were accentuated by flawless, porcelain skin that glowed with a hint of a rose petal flush. Framing her enchanting countenance, cascades of long, lustrous black hair falling down her back, raven in color.

Her eyes, a captivating shade of lilac. They were windows to a captivating soul filled with mystery.

Gracefully adorning her slender, perfectly proportioned figure was a dress that harkened back to a bygone era. Rich, luxurious fabric draped gracefully from her shoulders. The dress accentuates her every curve, softly embracing her slender waist before descending into a full.

"What in the seven hells are you doing here, vixen?" Professor Fergus merely questioned, not even taken aback by this woman's beauty.

"Now, is that any way to greet a friend?" She questioned.

"What are you doing here, *Guinevere*?" Still quite annoyed by her, he once again questioned her appearance here.

"I was merely taking a stroll." She innocently answered with a smirk. Professor Fergus merely stared at her blankly before heaving a tired sigh. They were barely talking, and he was already getting tired of her. Something Guinevere here specialized in, annoying him with zero effort.

"Do not take me for a fool, ya vixen." Professor Fergus huffed out. "You expect me to believe the king's court mage is out for a stroll on Luminare property?"

"Fine, fine, I shall relent. No need to get so sour, Alexander." Guinevere mused this as she fixed her hair.

"It's hard not to with a lass like you." Professor Fergus spat out.

"I'm no 'lass' Alexander; I prefer the term 'lady'." She clarified, but Professor Fergus did not seem to care much about her preferences; he was too focused on the footage displayed on the Zephyra Illusora.

"I'm busy with class; make yourself scarce." Professor Fergus stated; he was not even turning to her.

"Teaching, hm?" Guinevere seemed to be amused as she uttered those words, as if she found something funny about it. "You waste your time and talent teaching a few uncouth runts." She commented.

"It's a simple life." He answered. "One this old dog is content with."

"So you say." Guinevere muttered.

"But you've not come to reminisce, state your purpose, or be gone from my sight." Guinevere merely rolled her eyes at the harsh words.

"Always so very uncivilized." She murmured before relenting. "If you must know, I've been sent as a messenger by the king himself." She informed.

"The king?" Professor Fergus questioned. "Is it to do with the demon attack?"

"Indeed, I was to speak with your headmaster." She confirmed. "But upon making my way to the academy, I was told he was absent. So I took a stroll in the forest." She answered casually. "Nihil seems safe."

"To annoy me, you mean?" Professor Fergus corrected, but Guinevere did not banter back; instead, her gaze latched onto the Zephyra Illusora.

"It seems your students are busy with quite the fierce battle." She commented, causing him to turn back to Zephyra Illusora, only to narrow an eye at what he was seeing. "Oh? That girl is a Gregory, no? The latest one, it seems. But who is that masked lad? He

must have quite the abundant of mana if I can not sense it, most interesting." She further mused. "Lyra would find him most intriguing," she muttered lowly.

"Those two are not supposed to fight." He merely grunted.

"And why is that, pray tell? I imagine this is all some ludicrous training exercise; are they not meant to do battle?" Guinevere questioned.

"Those two brats are supposed to be on a team." He clarified with an annoyed sigh. "The exercise is over; there are only a few of note. So be gone; I'll be putting a stop to that scuffle."

"Now, why would you go and do that?" She merely asked, causing Professor Fergus to look at her in slight confusion. "I'm quite interested to see what the newest Gregory has to offer."

"Why would I feed your curiosity, ya vixen?" Professor Fergus merely asked.

"I imagine you're interested too, no?"

"In the Gregory brat?" He questioned. "Not a bloody chance." He answered, though Guinevere merely shook her head.

"Nay, the boy, I mean." She clarified. "He is your student, correct? What is his name?"

"Mikoto Yukio." Professor Fergus answered.

"An easterner?" Guinevere deduced.

"And why the interest in the masked brat?" Professor Fergus asked as Guinevere merely smirked.

"How about we see?" She said she was gesturing towards Zephyra Illusora.

[Earlier, within the forest]

As William raced onward, the forest seemed to come alive around him. Thick roots snaked across the forest floor, threatening to tangle his feet and send him falling. He leaped over fallen logs and dove under low-hanging branches, his movements fueled by adrenaline and desperation.

He twisted his lithe body, his legs moving in tandem with his torso. His outstretched hand and his fingers arch upward, as if reaching for the skies, A soft glow emanated

from his palm, swells of vibrant light intertwining. Inch by inch, a mesmerizing light blue glyph manifested before him, casting a glow upon his skin.

A bolt of icy magic erupted from the glyph, hurtling forward with intense speed. The frozen tendrils sliced through the air, trailing with a glow as they soared towards the pursuing Agatha.

But before the ice spikes could find their mark, the massive serpent seemed to have almost materialized in front of Agatha with its speed. With jaws wide open and glimmering fangs dripping with something, it shielded its mistress from danger. The ice spikes collided with the creature's scales, but they shattered harmlessly into a million glittering shards. Undeterred, the serpent roared and wriggled, unleashing a hiss that sent shivers down William's spine.

William's mind immediately raced to strategize his next move. In a split second, he pivoted his body, tucking and rolling. The wolf lunged towards him, teeth bared and claws extended, aiming to snatch him with its powerful jaws. But William's evasive maneuver saved him, his body rolling out of harm's way with a hair's breath to spare.

Gasping for breath, William lurched to his feet, his eyes scanning his surroundings for an escape route. His heart sank as he realized that Agatha, the wolf, and the serpent had moved with synchronicity to block his every conceivable path.

Agatha's emerald eyes locked onto his with the same cold glare she always looked at him with, her long, tangled hair swirling in the breeze. The wolf growled, its eyes gleaming with hunger. The serpent slithered sinuously.

He did not speak; he could not speak. It would not matter if he did; the gaze Agatha held was one of hate, after all. One he very much deserved, so all he could do was take action. But it seems she would beat him to it.

The wolf's muscles tensed as it lunged at William with lightning-fast speeds. He barely had time to react, his mind racing as he frantically conjured a magic shield to deflect the wolf's attack. The shield shimmered into existence.

The wolf swiped its claw at the shield with tenacity, its massive paw leaving deep gouges in the bark of a nearby tree. But William's barrier held firm, the shield cracking and splintering under the force of the wolf's assault. The boy stumbled backward, his body colliding against a tree trunk with a sickening thud.

As he lay there, dazed and disoriented, the serpent slithered towards him with a sinister hiss. William barely had time to roll out of the way as the serpent lunged at him with its razor-sharp fangs.

The serpent mauled down the tree instead, its massive coils writhing around the trunk as it let out a deafening hiss. William scrambled to his feet, his heart pounding with

adrenaline. He knew he needed to attack, but it was too late. Agatha's cold eyes bore into his back as she placed a palm on his shoulder.

"You could never beat me." She merely uttered out.

A wave of purple electricity coursed through William's body, sending pain shooting through his limbs.

"Ghra?"

He fell to the ground, his body convulsing with agony as he lost all function of his muscles. Agatha merely looked at him with cold eyes as she raised her palm at his body.

"You are weak, William." She continued speaking, even though he was unconscious. "How dare you smile? How dare you laugh? How dare you live? After what you caused?" Her gaze grew more empty as she stared at his body.

"You may have forgotten, but I remember." Her mana flared as her palms cackled, she readied a spell. "I see your face, and my hatred only grows. Rare is the opportunity to cause you suffering. They are always watching and listening. But now you shall suffer. As I have suffered because of you!"

But before any action could be taken, large chains suddenly wrapped around the serpent and wolf, rendering them trapped. This caused Agatha to stop as she looked at her creations in confusion, though she did not have the time to question this sudden event as a voice caught her attention as well as a person.

"Now, what do you think you're doing, Agatha?" Mikoto questioned.

Chapter 33: Chapter 31: Pointless

The endless blue above him looked so peaceful, with formless clouds spread about. He could just motionlessly lay there as he stared up at the sky. The violent vibrations that shook the forest probably indicated someone was fighting. But his body hurt too much for him to dwell on that.

So now with not much else to do all William could do was think. What had led to this very moment right here? Right, the answer was clear as day was it not? The immense hate that stemmed from his sister. That burning hate that would never diminish no matter what he did.

But why was it that Agatha detested him so? Even 'hate' seemed like too soft a word to describe just how much Agatha detested him. Was it because she alone had the blessing of Isadora, meaning all pressure was placed on her?

That was the reason, correct? Him getting off easy due to not having the blessing and her suffering. But was that truly the reason? He was detested for something he had no control over?

No that was not the reason. There was a fog on his mind that would not be lifted, memories he could not access no matter how hard he tried. There was something more to the hatred his sister felt.

But what was it?

The forest was silent, save for the sound of leaves rustling in the wind. Suddenly, a loud growl echoed through the trees, followed by the sound of trees being uprooted and shattered. The white wolf, controlled by Agatha, charged at Mikoto with lightning-fast speeds. Its eyes glowed as it bared its teeth, ready to sink them into Mikoto's flesh.

But Mikoto already moved to react. He leaped into the air, avoiding the wolf's jaws with ease. The wolf continued its charge, crashing through trees and bushes as it pursued Mikoto. The ground shook beneath their feet as they moved.

As Mikoto landed on the ground, he saw the white serpent slithering towards him. Its mouth opened wide, revealing its fangs. He kicked out with his leg, striking the serpent's face with a deafening crack. The serpent reeled back, its body writhing in pain.

"C'mon Agatha, I'm stronger, faster and I have more mana." Mikoto's voice echoed throughout the forest and hopefully towards Agatha. "Your pets aren't stopping me you know! And why the hell are you fighting me in the first place?" Yet his words were merely unheard as he turned to the sky, to face Agatha's now third creation. Like the wolf and serpent it was overly large, its feathers overly white and it possessed azure eyes. This one seemed to take after an eagle.

The white eagle creature soared through the sky above them. Its feathers glinted in the sunlight as it dived towards Mikoto. But he was ready for it. He raised his arm, and a sudden chill filled the air. Ice erupted around him, engulfing the bird creature in a instance. Mikoto turned away from the frozen creature and turned to look behind him.

"Be reasonable Agatha." Mikoto spoke to the blank faced blonde as he heaved a sigh.

"You're in the way." Came her immediate response, her wolf and serpent came back to her side as the eagle creatures form dissipated into glowing particles beneath the ice.

"Jesus, you really must hate William." The sheer hate radiating off of her reminded him of the hate he himself harbored once upon a time. She really did destest William, enough to maybe even kill him. That was not normal, just what happened between them?

"Simple hate does not do what I feel justice, Mikoto." Mikoto watched as the wolf and serpent beside her burst into particles, disappearing as if they were never there.

"So you want to kill him, is that it?" Mikoto questioned.

"I want him to suffer." She corrected.

"That so? Well it ain't happening."

"I will not let you stop me." Her mana flared as she glared into his eyes.

"Yeah, well you don't have a choice." Mikoto idly tapped the face of his mask as he heaved a sigh. "Like I said Agatha, I'm stronger than you. This is not a statement, opinion or a declaration. Fight me and you'll lose."

"I will succeed."

Agatha, raised her hands high above her head suddenly, great gnarled tree roots sprouted from the ground, bursting forth with surprising speed, their massive forms tearing through the forest floor towards Mikoto. The limbs snaked and twisted in absurd patterns, resembling a pack of hungry snakes aiming to strike their prey.

Mikoto merely raised his palm at the torrent of roots. A fierce torrent of freezing cold water and icy winds erupted from his palm, swirling. The ice enveloped each and every root, encasing them in a shimmering layer of cold. Despite their massive size and imposing force, the roots were reduced to mere frozen pillars, rendered immobile under Mikoto's spell.

Unperturbed by the outcome of her initial attack, Agatha evaded the encased roots and casted another spell. She brought forth illusions, her form blurred, and suddenly an army of Agatha clones materialized, scattering throughout the thick grove of trees.

Witnessing the sudden multiplication of his opponent, Mikoto narrowed his gaze in response.

"Think little tricks will help? Please." Mikoto merely scoffed.

Gathering his mana, he infused them with the elements of fire and electricity, forming a combination. His hands cupped together, he drew in the raw mana and released it in an explosive burst.

A tremendous wave of fire-lightning surged forth from Mikoto's palms, crackling and sizzling as it spanned outward across the forest. The illusionary clones, unable to withstand the sheer force exuded by fire and electricity, disintegrated into nothingness. But Agatha, unleashing her own magic, erected a translucent barrier. Within its protective embrace, she stood, her eyes burning into his.

The blazing wave of destruction crashed against Agatha's magical defense, causing the barrier to quiver and tremble under the immense pressure. Her barrier absorbed the onslaught, protecting her from the raging fire that surrounded her.

Mikoto surveyed the aftermath of their clash – the frozen roots encased in ice, the dispersed illusionary clones, and the resilient Agatha defending herself behind her barrier. A momentary pause settled between the two adversaries, both contemplating their next move as the forest grew still around them.

"C'mon Agatha, could we stop fighting and just talk?" Mikoto asked but he already knew the answer.

"Stay out of my way then I might." She shot back.

"So you can go ahead and torture William?" Mikoto questioned. "Not a chance, Agatha."

"You have no business in this." Agatha's eyes narrowed as she glared at him with malice.

"Maybe not." Mikoto admitted. "I can empathize, to some extent."

"How could you possibly understand?" She scoffed. "You hardly know why I harbor this hate."

"Yeah I don't know, maybe William is a terrible person or maybe not." Mikoto sighed. "You hate him right? Then kill him."

"What?" Confusion replaced her glare quickly.

"Go ahead and kill him, butcher him, slaughter him, exterminate him. Hell torture him, tear of his nails, peel of his skin." Mikoto scoffed as he stared at her confused expression. "Honestly it should be easy for you, no? I don't know what he did to make you this angry, hell I don't even know why I'm fighting."

What the hell was he doing? He was playing school. No progress, he was still right where he started. And now he was playing hero? This was all so wrong, did he really have to go out of his way to defend William like this? Surely Professor Fergus would have stepped in.

"Tell me Agatha, do you want William dead?" He asked.

"I want him to suffer." She spoke those words without pause, yet for a brief moment there was a bit of hesitation, though it was barely audible.

"That so?" He really did not have any right to interfere, that much true. All this served no purpose, but still William was a friend. That should be enough reason to fight, no? But

still maybe he had been going about this the wrong way. "Go ahead then." Mikoto then turned around much to Agatha's confusion as he prepared to walk away but he was promptly stopped.

"Wait." Agatha spoke as she narrowed her eyes at the masked boy. "You're walking away after all that?" She questioned befuddled.

"Isn't it what you wanted?" Mikoto asked back.

"But why now? I thought you cared for my brother." She stated as Mikoto merely shrugged.

"Professor Fergus will probably stop you before you can go crazy." Mikoto stated. "And I probably don't have any right to get in the way of your revenge now that I think about it. I know how much it would've irritated me." Of course Agatha took close note of his words as she spoke.

"Earlier you said you could emphasize with me."

"Yeah I can understand what you're going through to some extent." He confirmed. "But tell me, what exactly is your story, Agatha?"

"Why do you care?" She questioned.

"I don't I'm just curious, is all." He clarified. At least they were not fighting anymore, now he could hear their story.

Chapter 34: Chapter 32: Bad Omen

Gods shaped the history of our world. They are a major part of the world and ingrained into society. Churches are built for the Gods, and they are continuously worshipped throughout the world. Gods vary, and so do their worshippers; some worship only specific Gods, while others dedicate themselves to all Gods. But back to the main point, the actions of Gods in the past shaped the history of the world.

A prime example of such Gods are the twin trickster Gods, Anerur and Emu. Devious twin Gods that looked to gain satisfaction from their fellow Gods annoyance. Their tricks varied, turning Gods against each other with false information or even sabotaging them in various ways.

Distaste grew as their benevolence did as well. Even more so when the twin Gods actions led to the Death of the former God of navigation. Mere hate from their fellow Gods led to any number of things. One of them being ill omens that came with twins, something that was proved upon the birth of twins. Sometimes it results in mutations in the twins or even their deaths.

All of this is because of a pair of prankster Gods.

[15 years ago]

Cold green eyes bore into the two cribs. Two infants occupied the respective cribs, the two having the same bright emerald eyes as him and small patches of blonde hair on each of their heads. They were twins and fast asleep as the young man peered at them.

Though he was not the only one in the room, beside him was an older man. He too had a head of blonde hair, but he possessed bright blue eyes, and he was dressed in a white robe. He examined the two infants, and his gaze was focused as if there was something only he could see. A spawn of Almeric and a man of knowledge, a doctor.

Elijah looked at the two with an unreadable expression. He did not want children. But it was at his late father's behest. Even though he was merely seventeen years of age, he had an arranged marriage, and by custom, he needed to sire children. It was a common practice among the nobles. He was not quite fond of it, but he was rather lucky, funnily enough. Most would get married off at much younger ages, but he managed to prolong his freedom.

But eventually he was forced to marry a woman from the house, Stark.

Then, of course, there was this. His wife had given birth to twins, a bad omen.

"Fascinating." He heard the man beside him murmur as he turned to face him.

"What is it?" Elijah questioned.

"Their blessing is split." The doctor explained much to his confusion.

"Split? What do you speak off?" Elijah demanded, and the doctor quickly obliged with an answer.

"While rare, it is a known condition, though just amongst twins." He started. "Have you heard the myths of the twin trickster Gods?" Elijah merely looked at him, befuddled.

"Speak plainly. What has a myth of the Gods to do with this?" He questioned again.

"Hm, you are still young, I suppose. And myths aren't as important as they used to be." The doctor murmured before continuing. "Well, all you need to know is that birthing twins can result in a bad omen. In this case, the blessing of Isadora is only partial within both your children, as it is incomplete." Elijah merely looked at him, absolutely confused, trying to digest the information.

"Incomplete?" He repeated this as he looked at the two sleeping infants. "How is such a thing even possible?" He asked. "And are you even sure? How are you able to tell?"

"A blessing from my own God, a Familial Art." The doctor clarified. "It allows me to analyze individuals, showing me a variety of information. Be it at their name day, name of which blessing they possess and more." He explained.

"I see..." Elijah merely murmured absentmindedly. "What are the side effects now that they do not possess the full blessing?"

"From previous records, I can only confirm a few things." He started as his eyes glazed over the two. "Usually, it can result in any number of things; they might not receive traits from the Goddess Isadora. Nor even Familial Arts." Elijah grimaced as the doctor finished informing him.

"Is there a remedy?" He asked with a small amount of hope laced in his tone. A pondering look adorned the doctor's face as he mulled over something.

"I have heard tales of rituals that could make one of them whole." He started before shaking his head. "But I've heard of many negative side effects that could stem from such a ritual. It could damage their mind and body both."

"A ritual?" But from what the doctor said, only one could be whole, and there were side effects as well. That did not bode well, but this was a chance he would have to take if he wished for even one of them to succeed. "I wish for you to bring me more information about this supposed ritual. I want to know every minute detail."

"Very well, I shall do my utmost to recover anything worthwhile, young master." The doctor gave him a nod as he exited the room, leaving him alone with the two.

"One of you shall inherit my legacy." He spoke as his eyes glazed over the two. "And one of you shall be forgotten." They were his spawn, but he was a Gregory, and his lineage would always come first.

However cruel that may have been, it was simply the way things were. If the supposed ritual could work, then one of them would prosper and be the next head of the house, Gregory. And the other one would simply be forgotten, but which one?

"Agatha, William." He uttered their names as he stared at their innocent faces. A part of him did not want one of his children to merely be left behind. But he had a duty as the next head of house, Gregory. He could not let mere emotions cloud his judgment. Even if there was an ache in his heart, it did not matter; one would succeed and the other would fail.

As young as he was, he understood that. It was simply the way of things, and there was nothing he could do.

[9 years later]

Agatha and William—the difference between the two was as clear as day. Their situation was the same, but it was clear who possessed latent and natural talent. William was lazy and unmotivated. He would rather spend his time fooling around with nonsense. He was energetic, but all that energy just went to waste with his foolishness.

Agatha was the opposite, to some extent. Despite her predicament, her latent talent was not dulled in the least. Magic seemed to come naturally to her, as if it were a simple subject. She was prim and proper and knew just how to behave in specific situations, unlike her buffoon of a brother.

Twins, yet not the same in the least. Yet that did not stop the two from forming a bond, despite their being polar opposites. And there lies the problem: William was dragging her down. His antics affected her and her progress, but it did not matter.

Elijah gazed through the window of his office towards the courtyard where the two young twins were.

Today was the day his choice of successor would be solidified.

"We really should be training, brother; we'll risk father's ire by slacking." Agatha advised her twin as they stood in the center of their large mansion courtyard.

"We've been doing nothing but training this whole day." William argued with a sigh. "And I doubt you would be the subject of father's wrath. He favors you after all." He murmured back, prompting his sister to resist rolling her eyes.

"Only because I train, dear brother." She smirked. "If you were not so lazy, father would favor you as well."

"I'm not lazy!" He denied. "Training is just so tiresome." He tried to clarify.

"A fancy way of confirming you are indeed lazy." She stated with a smug smile.

"Come now; you must find all this training and studying tedious as well, no?" William asked his sister, who merely mulled over his words momentarily.

"Mayhap, but I would rather do that than anger father." She informed.

"Understandable, I suppose." William murmured.

"Yes, yes, now come. Let us train." She suggested.

"Have we not practiced enough for the day?" William questioned.

"You know how father gets; there is simply no practicing enough with him." She spoke with a sigh sitting on her lips.

"Yeah, I suppose you are right." William agreed. "But we do not have to train, you know?"

"William, no."

"Come now, Agatha; I know you tire of this endless training as well. Why don't the two of us take a much-needed break?" He suggested as she merely shook her head.

"And risk father's ire?" She questioned incredulously.

"It will be a quick break; father will barely notice." He said trying to sway her.

"You also said that last time and father ended up catching us, I would rather not receive another punishment." She clarified.

"Then how about a trip instead?" She merely looked at him, confused.

"A trip?"

"Yes, let us venture around the city. We barely get to leave the estate after all." He suggested causing Agatha to look at him as if he were a fool.

"For good reason, you fool." She chastised. "If it is discovered we left the estate without permission, well, I would rather not even think of the consequences." She shuddered.

"Just a short venture." He clarified it with a smile. "Father will barely take note of our absence."

"I refuse to be a part of your foolish schemes." She huffed as she threw him a glare.

"It will just be a little while, sister. Please, I rather not go alone." He begged, and Agatha's glare faltered as she sighed.

"V-very well, but I shan't stay out long." She spoke as a smile immediately graced her brother's features.

"Great! You won't regret it, sis!"

Chapter 35: Chapter 33: Choice

As always, the marketplace in the capital city was as bustling as ever. It was the largest city in Galadriel, so that was expected. Market stalls were set up all around, with the area being decently populated. Luckily, the two of them did not have to worry about being recognized. They very rarely left the estate after all; they needed to put too much time into training and studying at their father's behest.

But that was neither here nor there.

Strolling through the streets of the capital, William finished his crape dessert as he glanced at his sister; she merely absent-mindedly stared ahead as they walked. Not making an effort to eat her own crape.

"Something on your mind, sis?" William questioned her, snapping her out of her slight stupor.

"It is nothing of importance." She murmured, taking a small bite out of her crape.

"Uh-huh, are you sure your mind is not on today?" He asked. "Father is going to be naming the house's future head after all." In response, Agatha merely sent her brother a bland gaze.

"If you knew what I was thinking, why bother asking?"

"Eh, common courtesy." He shrugged. "Anyhow, I can understand why you are nervous. It's obvious you are going to be his main pick. And there's going to be a lot of pressure on you as a result."

"I am not worried about the pressure." She clarified.

"Oh? Then what is it?" William questioned. She heaved a small sigh as she spoke.

"I'm not quite sure if I am up to it." William looked at her confused, upon hearing her words.

"C'mon, not up to it?" He scoffed. "You're talented, Agatha; everyone can see it. And you're smart to boot. You are definitely up to it." She shook her head.

"Will others truly see it that way?" She frowned as she continued. "You and I only possess half the blessing of Isadora. We've tried, but we cannot even make use of the Familial Arts. We are incomplete, William. I am incomplete. Would others even respect me as our house head?" William opened his mouth to speak, but he closed it immediately after.

He did not know what to say to that. It was the truth after all; they were incomplete. Partial blessings, something irregular. Others might not even respect Agatha's authority,

with her not even having the full blessing. House Gregory might lose status and reputation for such a thing.

"Who cares?" He finally spoke. "We're together; I am your other half."

"What nonsense are you even spouting?" She dryly asked.

"I'm saying you're not alone, you idiot." He blandly shot back. "I am still here, aren't I?" He shot her a smile as he continued. "You won't be alone just because you are the house head. If anyone makes trouble for you, I'll show them what's what."

"How brave." She chuckled. "You should become a knight with that mentality." She mused.

"Ha! No way." He immediately shot down the idea. "Giving up magic for a bit of strength? Not a chance; I might not be any good, but magic makes life easier."

"Of course that is all you are worried about." She grinned. "Making your life easier with convenient magic."

"Hey, don't judge. I am not the one using magic to tidy my hair every darn day." He defended as she merely smiled.

"Well, I have to look good if I am to be the future head, no?"

"Touché, Agatha."

"But I must thank you, William." She suddenly spoke again.

"Huh? For what?" The boy was questioned.

"Your idiocy never fails to cheer me up." She received a dry gaze for her backhanded compliment.

"Gee, thanks, sis."

"You are most welcome; now come, let us return home before Father discovers us."

His father's office was as spacious as it was empty, with a few book racks leaned against the wall and his desk with his chair. Sometimes he questioned the need for an office, but currently that was hardly important.

Slightly weary, William's green eyes studied his father; the man's back was turned to him as he gazed out to the window of his office.

Upon having returned home, the servants of the household informed him that his father wanted to see him. Of course, he assumed it was because he and Agatha had left the estate without his knowledge. Naturally, he prepared himself for another bout of degrading or a lecture.

But his father was being eerily silent. Much too silent, his father was not one for many words, but his long silence was starting to agitate him. Luckily, that was soon to change.

"Tell me, boy..." Elijah suddenly started, surprising William. "Do you believe your sister has a future?" William blinked in confusion at the random question. He was failing to see the reason why it was asked or why his father had even asked for his presence.

"Well...yeah?" He answered unsurely, not because he did not believe Agatha had no future but because his father was hardly ever satisfied with his answers.

"Wrong." And there it was. Elijah turned to him, and William still felt unnerved by his unnaturally cold gaze that seemed to pierce his very being. It was not a gaze a father should harbor for his child. But that was simply how he was; they might have shared blood, but he was not his son, and he was not his father. The feeling was mutual.

"But Agatha is talented and smart." Elijah gave a childish answer, and Elijah seemed to resist the minuscule urge to roll his eyes. William could only gaze away in embarrassment at the dumb answer. Even he would acknowledge how stupid it sounded.

"I need not tell you that mere talent and knowledge will not suffice." His father stated it matter-of-factly tone. "Your sister shall fail." William frowned at his tone; he sounded so sure. "Your sister does possess a talent for magic, and she is a quick learner, but she will still fail. Do you know why that is?"

"Because of the blessing." He answered hesitantly. To his surprise, his father nodded his head.

"Precisely." No insult, no correction, and not a hint of annoyance. This was a first from his father; this was strange. "The two of you are Halflings, unnatural phenomena that shall not make it far in this world. And that is the simple reality of things; with your sister the way she is, she has no future."

William knew that. Of course he knew; he saw the gazes they received from others whenever they were at high-end parties. Hell, even the servants of the house threw them looks. It was as if they were a display at a circus; those looks irked him to no end. It was much the same for Agatha, no doubt. They were just not normal.

"But there is a way to remedy this situation." His father started, snapping him out of his train of thought. He blinked in surprise at his father's words.

"But I've never heard of anything that could help with our situation." William was perplexed. Was there truly something that could make him and Agatha whole? If that were the case, then this was huge, mainly for Agatha, but still.

"I would not expect you to have." Elijah merely stated this as he stared back out the window. "But it concerns a ritual."

"A ritual?" William questioned; he had read up about certain rituals. But to his knowledge, rituals were mainly used to summon something forth or imbue an object with magic. Was something like making a God's blessing whole really possible?

"This will make Agatha whole." His father continued, and immediately William noted the problem with his father's sentence. William narrowed his eyes slightly at his father as he spoke.

"Just Agatha?" He questioned, yet his father's solid, cold gaze just remained. As if he were expecting his question.

"You are useless, boy." Those words left his father's mouth naturally. William glared at the man, meeting his gaze. "Do not gaze at me so; you know it to be true."

"Screw you!" His father merely shook his head at the outburst. Seemingly disappointed but not surprised.

"Tell me, boy..." His father started; he was not sure he wanted to listen anymore, but the prospect of his sister having a chance at being whole kept him invested. "Do you wish for your sister to be happy?"

"Of course I do!" He answered without pause.

"Then give up your blessing."

"What?"

"You heard me." His father spoke, seemingly resisting the minuscule urge to roll his eyes at his son's incompetence. "The ritual functions by transferring your partial blessing to your sister, so she may be whole." William merely looked on, confused, not even knowing how such a thing could be possible. "But it is not my decision to make; if you wish to remain this way, so be it. But remember, you are not the one that matters here. Your sister will suffer for the choice you should make today."

A choice.

Which was the correct choice?

Chapter 36: Chapter 34: Lie

"You are a cruel man, Elijah."

"Whatever makes you say that? Dearest Elisa." Still within the confines of his office, Elijah questioned the woman across from his desk while seated in his chair.

Elisa Stark is his wife. She was a tall beauty with high cheekbones and oval-shaped eyes. She was dressed in what looked like a high-quality black dress, and along with that, she had a head of long black hair and brilliant blue eyes.

She was from a noble family with a long line of royal knights. With her herself having been a knight not long ago,.

"You made them think they had a choice." She started, her expression remaining blank.

"We both know how desperate you are for an heir with the full blessing. If both refused, you would still no doubt force them to go through with the ritual."

"Mayhap." He shamelessly admitted it.

"Lest you forget, they are my children as well." She glared at his blank face as she continued. "I hope you are not thinking that I will idly stand by while you force them to do something they do not want to."

"I will not be forcing them; in fact, they will make the choice on their own; at least he will." He cryptically shot back.

"What is that supposed to mean?" She questioned.

"How shameful. As their mother, I expected you would know what is best for them." He shook his head with a sigh.

"And you do?" She scoffed. "You mean to forsake William so Agatha alone can prosper?"

"And? What of it?" He sighed, seemingly at her incompetence. "I assumed you understood; maybe I overestimated your intelligence."

"Understood what!?" She snarled. "Do you mean to force our children into this ritual of yours?"

"They have no future as they are." Unbothered by her outburst, he simply spoke on. "This much, I assume you understand." Elijah raised his right palm, and a bright blue light came into existence. He illuminated the small space much further as something began to take form with his palm.

One could see how its form was slowly structured as it came into being while the light died down. A butterfly hovered inches above his palm.

It had delicate wings adorned with hues of vibrant orange, deep blue, and striking black. Its wingspan stretched around 4 inches, demonstrating its sizable and powerful stature. The thin, velvety wings were patterned with bold stripes and speckles, making them a sight to behold. Its body was slender, with a slender thorax and a rounded, bulbous abdomen. The eyes were large and multifaceted, shimmering an iridescent blue with every movement. The graceful butterfly's legs and antennae were long and slender, completing its entrancing look.

Were any other mage to look upon this shock and respect would flood out of them. As this was no mere illusion, or party trick. This was the creation of a living being. A sentient being had its own train of thought and will to live.

This was one of Gregory's Familial Arts—the creation of life. Even the most experienced mage could only hope to recreate magic of this caliber.

Elisa frowned at the display of power but remained confused as to what the purpose of it was. Elijah crushed the recently born butterfly in his palm as it faded into dust particles.

"To create life on a whim." He mused. "Tis a power that Gregory's highly valued. A power neither Agatha nor William possess. They are useless."

"If you've a point, then make it." She spat, growing annoyed at this prolonged conversation.

"My father plans on disposing of those two." He bluntly stated.

"What?" Elisa blinked in confusion at the random statement.

"They are a stain in house Gregory; they are mere Halflings who cannot make use of our Goddess's blessing."

"They are still our children, and you would speak of disposing of them!?" Elisa fumed in disbelief.

"Is your hearing impaired?" He looked at her, annoyed. "It is my father who cannot stand their existence. He would sooner have us breed another child than to be stuck with incomplete heirs."

"And so what? Do we forsake one child so the other can be whole?" She questioned.

"Precisely." He answered without hesitation. "William is lazy and lacks motivation; you do not expect that boy to have any future, do you? The blessing, as partial as it is, is

wasted upon him. But his one redeeming quality is his love for his sister, as you will see. I do not have to force him to do anything. Soon he will voluntarily give up his blessing so his sister might succeed."

Elisa frowned. There was truth to his words, as unfortunate as it was. But were they truly going to forsake William so Agatha alone could succeed? That left nothing but a bad taste in her mouth.

"No! Absolutely not!"

"But si-"

"But nothing!" Agatha huffed as William sighed.

Currently, they were within the confines of Agatha's room. A large space filled with an overly large white wardrobe adorned with black. A desk with a stack of papers and a quill on top. There was a window to the far right, where a few sun rays crept out, and finally there was Agatha's overly large room with an absurd amount of stuffed animals decorating it.

William, the same as Agatha, was seated on the bed. He sighed once more as he stared at his glaring sister. His father had spoken to her about the ritual as well but he alone was considering it.

"Look, sis, I know you don't like it, but that bastard is right." He stated, trying to make his case. "This blessing is wasted on me; you could put it to much better use. You can be whole!" He reasoned. But Agatha merely shook her head.

"That is not the point." She huffed. "The pressure I would get from that man should we go through with this ritual would be unimaginable."

"Look, I know that, but if you were whole, no one would question your position as next in line. You could change this garbage family for the better." He argued, but his sisters thoughts were not like to change based on her expression.

"I am sorry, but I just can't." Agatha did not care that she had a half-blessing. Sure, she could not make use of any of House Gregory's Familial Arts, but if she were being honest, she would not have it any other way.

Between herself and William, she was the obvious choice for the next heir. Which is why she received 'special training'. William did not know, but she would keep it that way. She did not want to think about what the boy would attempt to do to their father should he know what their father put her through.

If her blessing would make her whole, she shuddered to think about what her father would put her through then. Torture disguised as training.

"Look, William, you will not convince me my mind is set." She clarified. "I care not if my blessing is incomplete." Her gaze meant she was serious. William shook his head and sighed.

He understood why she did not want to go through with this ritual their father proposed. She was afraid he would be discarded, seeing as he would not even have a partial blessing anymore. But their mother would never allow him to be kicked out of the house. He did not care if his father discarded him; if Agatha were to receive the full blessing, she could change the Gregory family for the better.

("I'm sorry, sis, but I can't let you go on like this.")

"Alright, sis, I'll drop it." It put a bad taste in his mouth to lie, but he was doing this for the good of Agatha. So, getting off the bed, William forced out a smile. "Whelp, all this arguing has tired me out; it seems I'll never win against you."

"Well, you should know better than to think you could win against me in something like arguing." She stated it in a haughty tone with a smug look on her face.

"Yeah, yeah." He just shook his head at her antics as he approached the room door, exiting her room. His smile immediately dropped.

("Am I really about to do this?") Doubt settled in his mind, but he quickly reaffirmed himself. This was all for Agatha; even if she were to be angry at him for some time, she could at the very least prosper this way. Even if he should be left behind, all that matters is her succeeding.

William moved quickly through the expansive halls of the mansion, his feet quickly stopping in front of a lone wooden door. Without knocking on the door, even as he pushed past it as he entered the office, still seated behind his desk was his father.

His hands cupped in front of his face with an unsurprised look on his face. As if he were expecting William to barge in, and his words are now just attributed to that fact.

"So, boy..." He started, a ghost of a smirk adorning his face. "Have you made your decision?"

"Yes." Doubt was still strong within them, but he once again told himself that this was needed. "Take my blessing."

Chapter 37: Chapter 35: Conclusion

She felt great. She felt so light. So at peace. So whole. It was a feeling she could not quite describe. She just felt so right.

Agatha's eyes slowly opened themselves, and her vision quickly adjusted to her room's ceiling. She sat up in her bed, feeling rejuvenated. A feeling she quite rarely experienced given the pressure from her father. It was odd; she did not know the reason for this unexplainable feeling.

Getting out of bed, her bare feet touched down on the cold floor, yet in the moment she did not experience discomfort in the shivering cold of the floor. Agatha moved through her room and towards her room window. She opened it, and immediately she was showered with bright sun rays.

She closed her eyes in comfort as the sun washed over her. It felt good; merely standing in sunlight never felt this good. She felt as though she were being rejuvenated this way.

Though she quickly turned her attention away from the feeling as she heard a knock on her bedroom door,.

"Enter." She exclaimed as the door was pushed open and a maid entered the room. She gave a curt bow as she opened her mouth to speak.

"Lady Agatha, your father is requesting your presence." She declared this, and Agatha could not stop herself from frowning.

"This early?" She questioned. "Did he say what he wanted?" The maid merely shook her head at the question.

"Nay, he only said that it was of the utmost importance. Shall I help you dress?" Agatha just absentmindedly nodded her head. It was no doubt a new schedule for a training regime her father wanted her to go through. But still, there was a strange sense of foreboding she could not rid herself of.

And there was a pit in her stomach, like something bad was about to happen.

She felt anxious. Nay fearful was the correct term. She never liked being near her father; it was so irksome. His cold gaze would always pierce her like a blade, as well as unnerve her to no end.

Those green eyes stared at her right now, yet there was no hint of cold disapproval. No, from his seat in his office, he looked satisfied. Though it was a rare look from her father, it was still very unnerving.

And still, she did not know just what was going through her father's head. He was never one to wear his heart on his sleeve and openly express himself. It was unnatural how uncaring he was, despite being a father. All the man cared for was results; nothing else mattered to him.

"You no doubt feel different." Agatha jumped in surprise as her father suddenly started speaking. But as she registered his words, she could not help but look at him in confusion. "Full of vigor and energy, no doubt." How did he even know that?

It was true; since she woke up, there was something different about her that was apparent. She felt whole and right, like a completely different person. But how did her father even know about that? And why bring it up?

"You are whole; congratulations." The man spoke, and confusion flashed across her face once more.

"Whole?" She questioned. "What...what are you talking about?" Though she asked, she was not quite sure if she truly wanted the answer. A thought came to her mind as her stomach dropped.

("No, he wouldn't...") She denied it as she stared back up at her father.

Her father had a ghost of a smirk on his face as realization hit her.

("No, no. William would never. He promised.") She tried reasoning, but her father's words just solidified the facts of the matter currently.

"Your brother no longer possesses his partial blessing." Her father started, and in some way he seemed to enjoy it as her features morphed at hearing confirmation. "He agreed to the ritual, and now, Agatha, you are a true Gregory."

That could not have been right, Why would William agree to something like that? He knew what she would be put through if they went through with the ritual. Her father must have been lying. That had to be it.

"W-where is William?" She could not just believe her father's words. William would not place this big a burden on her without her knowledge.

"He is bedridden." Her father coldly answered.

"What?" She was confused.

"Extracting your brothers blessing was a delicate process. There were... some unforeseen results." Her father explained. "No damage was done to him physically, though apparently, from the words of a spawn or Almeric, he suffered mental damage. His memories may be impaired."

"..." Agatha only remained speechless as she heard her father's words. Was this truly happening? She found herself in disbelief. This all felt like a bad dream. But unfortunately, it was all too real.

"Now, child, I need not tell you what is expected of you." Of course she knew. As a full spawn of Isadora, she knew what hell awaited her. "I'll be expecting nothing but perfection from my heir, is that clear?"

"Y-yes." Agatha found herself subconsciously answering.

"Good, you may leave. Your new training schedule shall be handed to you later." She could just absentmindedly nod her head as she aimlessly exited her father's office.

She found herself in the vast hallways of the mansion. Her mind was trying but failing to understand anything.

"William, why?" The words left her lips, and they were directed at someone who was not even present. But she could understand why he would do this. Did he not know what she would be put through? No, she had told him. Yet still....

Agatha moved through the hallways with no destination in mind. Her heart was racing with fear. What hellish training would she experience now that she was supposedly a proper spawn? What torture would she be put through?

Her body ached, a reminder of the physical beatings she endured when it was 'physical combat training' with her father. Even when she was healed, she felt the ache of her wounds. It was a reminder of how brutal that man could be.

And that is not mentioning training with magic. He would rain down spells on her, which she was forced to block or end up severely injured. It did not matter in his eyes; if she ended up with a missing eye or limb, it would only mean she did not train hard enough.

Now all of that was going to increase tenfold.

Why had William done this to her? Had she not suffered enough?

Agatha stopped as she stared out of a window in the mansion. She caught sight of small birds flying freely, enjoying their natural freedom.

Was this truly how things were going to be?

[Present Time]

[Location: Luminare Academy Medical Bay]

His body ached severely as his eyes sluggishly opened. Williams eyes adjusted to a dull gray ceiling. The smell of various medications filled his nostrils as he barely managed to sit up. He was in a medical bay, it seems, with white-painted walls and an array of beds lined up on each side of the room.

Memories hit him like a truck as he recalled what had happened to put him in such a state.

"Aga....tha...." His voice was slightly hoarse, and his throat hurt. His body still felt a tad numb, but he could move well enough.

"Oh, you're finally awake." He slightly jumped at the sudden voice he heard to his side. He turned his gaze to spot a head of aqua-colored hair.

"Ruby?" He questioned her as he took note of the short girl seated on a chair next to his bed. She was still in her uniform, but there was a bandage wrapped around her head.

"Yo." The girl gave a two-finger salute. "You've been out for awhile now after Mikoto carried you back." William could vaguely recall Mikoto stepping in to help. "After he hung me from a tree, he went off to you and that sister of yours." She explained.

"W-where are they, Agatha and Mikoto?" He questioned; he felt a lot of mana being expanded when he was barely conscious within the forest, so their battle must have been intense. He did not know who he was more worried for, but Agatha was powerful, and he did not know if Mikoto would come out of a battle like that unscathed.

"Apparently they fought some, but Professor Fergus had eventually stepped in with some other woman." She clarified as she crossed her legs. "They don't seem to have been very injured, but your sister seemed pissed."

William sighed in relief that the fight had not escalated. He did not want to be the cause of an injury to a friend. But still, there was a pit in his stomach at being the victim of his sister's animosity. His own blood was willing to injure him or worse.

But still, he did not know where or why this hate stemmed from his sister. There were holes in his memories—things he could not begin to recall. It hurt to try to remember; it was just a blur of these holes in his memories. He knew they were important, but he did not know how to bring them forth.

It was irksome. The reason for his sister's hatred was within grasp, yet he could not bring those memories to mind.

("Agatha....")

Chapter 38: Chapter 36: What doth thy think?

[??? Empire]

[???

The throne room was a sight to behold, with every detail designed to convey power and opulence. The walls were constructed of dark, polished stone adorned with carvings. The floor was covered in rich, crimson carpets that cushioned the footsteps of those who traversed the room.

The centerpiece of the room was the throne itself, a massive carved chair made of ebony wood and decorated with gold filigree. The back of the throne was high and imposing, towering over all who approached it, and the seat was cushioned with velvet, the color of blood. The arms of the throne were designed to resemble twisted blades, each one ending in a sharp point.

The guards who stood watch over the room were equally impressive, clad in sleek black armor that gleamed in the dim light. Their chest plates and helmets were decorated with patterns of red and black, matching the color scheme of the room. Each guard carried a sword at their side, and an odd looking weapon reminiscent of a rifle.

The lights that line the walls flicker with a blue color.

The one seated on the throne exuded an aura of sheer intimidation. Despite being seated, it was clear he was a tall man. He had a head of flowing, pitch-black hair with contrasting blood-red eyes that seemed to passively peer at everything they looked at.

He had a handsomely sculpted face with a sharp jawline; were it not for his almost murderous gaze, he would no doubt garner more positive attention. And the man was outfitted with perfectly crafted silver armor, a full chest piece, shoulder pads, braces, and sabotans, all adorned with a gleaming red patterns, and lastly, the same colored cape was draped over his shoulders.

He sat on the throne almost robotically. He did not move an inch, and his eyes never traveled long. Though this was a fact, the guards within the room did not seem to mind or were too used to it.

The large, gleaming iron doors to the throne room opened themselves as a man entered. He had a head of wild lilac hair, and he was outfitted in a dark-coated uniform adorned in red. As the man moved through the throne room, he came to a stop at the steps leading to the throne. He bowed briefly as he fixed the glasses on his face.

"Greeting Prince Avice." The man greeted as the prince in question regarded the man with a neutral gaze.

"Professor." Avice greeted. "You come here bearing news on Project Omega and Alpha, no doubt." He surmised. The professor grinned, excitement coursing through him at having the chance to explain his recent breakthrough.

"Yes, my prince, we've come with a breakthrough with Alpha." He started ecstatic. "We've managed to make it fully operational!"

"I see." Prince Avice spoke with a small hint of satisfaction. "Father will be pleased."

"Yes, my prince." The professor agreed. "This is not mentioning the dragon core we've used; it seems a perfect fit." The man informed.

"Interesting. But how well will it perform against the Inheritors of the Verdantis region?" Avice questioned.

"Well, its raw output should match that of an Inheritor." The professor started. "We must just make a few adjustments to its joints, and then it should be apt for a combat encounter." The professor explained. Avice hummed, taking in all of the information.

The prince opened his mouth to speak, only to be interrupted.

"How truly interesting." A pompous voice resounded in the throne room. "To think Alpha was already made operable. As expected of the technology of the Vel'ryr empire." From the shadows behind the throne, a figure emerged. He was a man, a tad younger than the prince himself. Short but neat black hair and eyes as red as Avice's own.

A condescending smirk seemed permanently ingrained in his pale, handsome face. His clothes fit him well: a black button shirt, a black tie, slacks, and dress boots of the same color. As well as a military coat slung over his form, black in color and adorned with red.

"Aegraxes." Avice hissed out, annoyed, as he shot a sharp glare at the appearance of the sudden man. Yet despite his intrusion, the guards in the throne room did not act, and the professor merely furrowed his brows at the man.

Prince Avice merely raised his right hand, snapping his fingers together. It was as if a sudden switch had gone off for the guards within the room. Simultaneously, the guards turned their heels and exited the room with surprising robotic-like swiftness.

"You are also dismissed, professor." He spoke to the professor with a neutral glance.

"Of course, my prince." As swift as he could, he did not waste any time exiting the throne room after the guards. Eventually, leaving Avice and Aegraxes alone within the confines of the throne room.

"My, my, you truly are the spitting image of your dear old father while you're on the throne." Aegraxes mused, comfortably leaning against the throne.

"You've nerve to show your face after your failure, demon." Avice spat out, not even sparing the now-identified demon a glance. Said demon shrugged as if he could care less.

"It was Nybbas and Asmodai who failed, not I." Aegraxes corrected, pulling himself away from the throne.

"Those two's failures are yours as well, demon." Avice stated. "Our intelligence stated the Headmaster was absent at the time; the only threat should have been the spawn of the magic Goddess. You were to retrieve the Divine Blade Nihil."

"True." Leisurely, he moved down the steps leading to the throne, stopping midway and taking a seat. "Our original goal was to retrieve the blade which lies within the confines of the academy. With the spawn of Octavia being an Inheritor herself, she was the only threat. Either one of my comrades could have kept her busy while the other retrieved what we came for."

"Yet they failed; your words are naught but air."

"Well, it seems there were unforeseen circumstances that have led to dear Asmodai being bedridden." Aegraxes mused. "But that is neither here nor there, I suppose." He threw a glance back at the prince as he spoke. "We'll have a chance next time; for now, I suggest you focus a focus a lot on a means of combating the Inheritors of Verdantis. Especially Dante."

"We're well on our way to some actual progress with Omega. It will combat those Inheritors with ease." Avice stated it almost boastfully.

Is that so?" Aegraxes smirked. "You underestimate them. Dante, the Inheritor of strength. A knight so stained in blood, it matters not what you do; that is simply an obstacle you shall never overcome."

Avice's eyes narrowed at the demon's tone, taking it as a challenge.

"But say, where are Daddy dearest and your siblings? I have not seen them around for quite some time now."

"Father remains a mystery, as always. I've no clue what that man is up to." Avice admitted. "He merely bid me to sit on the throne in his absence."

"And what of Amaury, Selwyn and the others? Knowing those latter two, I presume they are up to no good." Aegraxes surmised, keeping his smirk. Avice scoffed.

"You presume right demon; the fools wish to take part in the festival for the magic Goddess once more." He explained as Aegraxes hummed. "My other siblings are doing naught of note."

"The festival again, eh? But a glorified battle most of the time."

"Correct, a game for savages. Those two will be right at home as always." Avice allowed a ghost of a smirk that immediately disappeared as soon as it appeared. "But enough conversing; what business do you have here? I imagine you did not come before me to merely converse."

"And what is wrong with some idle conversation?" Aegraxes questioned as he stood up from his seated position. "But you are right, I had some words for your father, but he is absent for the moment, so I shall come by again at a much later date. I was hoping to cash Verence as well, seems she's playing pretend."

Avice merely narrowed his eyes at the demon as a dark fog enveloped Aegraxes, seemingly swallowing his form; it dissipated in a near instance. Leaving Avice alone within the throne room. The prince frowned.

"Working with demons, how foolish." He muttered to no one but himself. He did not see the point in cooperating with such beings. Especially when Alpha was functional and Omega was almost fully operational. But it was at his father's behest; why that old fool would have them work with demons is beyond him.

But for now, he could do nothing but remain silent. He was but a prince, and not even the crown prince. His twin brother Selwyn had that honor for merely being brought into the world a few seconds earlier.

"Idiotic. That bloodthirsty fool could never be emperor." He chastised, but no one was there to hear it. He shook his head; his father would see who was better fit for the crown.

But for now, he would focus his efforts. While his siblings playing the bloodthirsty savages they were, he would strategize. For soon, the Vel'ryr empire would declare war on the world.

Chapter 39: Chapter 37: Curriculum

[Luminare Academy]

[Conference room]

"This meeting is now underway." Seated at the head seat within the conference room of the academy, Aleister glazed over those present. There was Professor Fergus, Gregory, and Eudora.

There was also Professor Melisande; she had a head of long, flowing light green hair styled into a single ponytail. Her face was round, with a cute button nose and large eyes where green orbs sat. She did not at all look her age; her clothes consisted of a simple,

elaborate lime green dress. All in all, she did not look like one would expect an alchemy teacher to look like.

Then there was Professor Eugene, a sculpted face with a permanent frown. He had a head of neat black hair and emerald eyes. He was dressed in a simple yet decorative black suit with gold outlines and a lilac undershirt. The professor who was responsible for the various wards that defended the academy as well as the professor responsible for ward practice.

And of course the guest, King Thordan, the seventh's very own court mage, Guinevere Fae. All were seated at the table.

"So out with it, Vixen." Of course, Professor Fergus was the second to speak as he directed his gaze at the court mage. "What was so bloody important that you needed young Aleister to hear?"

"Do you have to be so uncouth?" Professor Eudora could not help but comment, brushing a strand of her purple hair out of her face.

"I must agree." Professor Gregory chimed in. "It would not do well to speak to the court mage in such a savage manner."

"I-I agree?" Not wanting to feel left out, Professor Melisande spoke out.

"WHAT'S WITH YA BASTARDS GANGING UP ON ME ALL OF A SUDDEN!" Obviously annoyed, Professor Fergus shouted out.

"Now, now let's get back on track." Aleister tried but failed to hide the smirk that stretched onto his face at seeing Professor Fergus being so riled up. "Now, Guinevere, was it? I suppose you're here because of that demon attack, no?"

"Well, that is only partially why I am here." She stated. "The geezer Thordan wanted me to confirm if the relic was still safe."

"Rest assured it is." Professor Eugene spoke up. "The wards I placed on it are different from the ones I created for the academy and even the forbidden section of the library. I won't bore you with the details, but it would take a considerable amount of effort to reach the relic." He explained.

"Then I'll take your word for it." Guinevere hummed. "But still, it is strange for more than one Chaosmaw to present itself." She murmured.

"You've got that right, Vixen." Professor Fergus agreed.

"It's possible they've been in hiding for awhile. The words of one of the Chaosmaw's attest to that." Professor Gregory inputted.

"Could it be possible that there are more than two?" Professor Melisande questioned, not at all liking the prospect of more than two roaming around.

"It may be possible." Professor Eudora started. "Chaosmaw's may be rare, but anything is possible. And from the way the one who battled Professor Gregory spoke, they may have an organization."

"S-seriously?" Professor Melisande blurted out.

"A troublesome thought." Professor Eugene murmured before turning to Guinevere. "But you stated you had more business you wanted to disclose." The court mage nodded her head.

"Two things, to be exact." She clarified as she continued. "The first is regarding the upcoming festival for Octavia."

"You no doubt want Lucinda to participate again, no?" Aleister quickly surmised.

"Indeed, her cooperation ensures Galadriel's victory. With her being the spawn of Octavia as well as an Inheritor, she will be instrumental in combating the other Inheritors of Verdantis." Guinevere explained. "But my reason for bringing up the festival was not mainly for young Lucinda."

"Then out with it." Professor Fergus spoke slightly impatiently.

"As of now, we only have four participants, including me, General Mai, the Stark prodigy, and the Crown Princess. I'm sure you can see the issue here." Guinevere spoke as Professor Gregory followed suit.

"Too few." He stated. "Are last year's participants out of commission?" He questioned.

"Indeed, barring me and Mai." She answered.

"I can see where you are going with this." Aleister interrupted. "You wish for more of my students, correct? To participate in the festival." Guinevere nodded her head as Professor Eudora frowned.

"I mean, no disrespect, Lady Guinevere, but most of the other students in the academy would only be a hindrance. Most lack any real battle experience." She argued.

"Then recommend to me those who can adapt quickly. This was a direct request from the king; we only need one more victory. But as do Verdantis and Vel'ryr, and I am sure you do not harbor weaklings at this academy." Guinevere shot back, only deepening Professor Eudora's frown.

"Headmaster...." She threw a glance at Aleister, who seemed to mentally mull over something.

"Well, true, I suppose." Aleister started. "We are on our way to winning the big prize. So Galadriel must pull out all the stops. With that said, I'd recommend Princess Mirabella. As inexperienced as she is, her raw magical output should prove useful, especially if she is paired up with her elder sister. Now then, how about you, lot? Have any recommendations for the festival?"

"The Gregory brat." Professor Fergus was the first to speak up. "For an inexperienced whelp, she knows her way around a battle. And that masked brat, Mikoto."

"You can not be serious." Professor Gregory furrowed his brows as he addressed his colleague. "You would recommend that buffoon? He is not even a spawn."

"Ah? Since when has that mattered?" Professor Fergus huffed. "Spawn or not, that mask brat managed to keep up with your daughter in today's training." That tidbit of information left Professor Gregory looking slightly appalled.

"Absurd." He merely uttered out; he had more words, but he was interrupted as Guinevere spoke up.

"Mikoto, yes, I would very much like him to participate." She murmured. Her interest seemed a mystery to most at the table safe for Professor Fergus. "But you no doubt have more to recommend."

"W-what of Victoria?" Professor Melisande meekly recommended. "Compared to the others, she is experienced and smart to boot."

"The spawn of the god Almeric, no? With her innate knowledge, she could prove useful." Guinevere stated that as Professor Melisande looked proud of herself now for the recommendation. "But still, we're short a few. Though unless the spawn of Isadora and Aragorn are Inheritors, we would not need the extra manpower. But considering their age, I am guessing they're not."

"I do have two in mind." Professor Eugene spoke up. "But still, they must still need further assessment before I can make a concrete choice."

"So it is settled; those we recommend..." Headmaster Aleister spoke up. "Mirabella, Elijah's heir, Mikoto, Victoria, and the two professors Eugene will look into."

"Hold on." Professor Eudora quickly interrupted. "While I cannot speak for Mikoto, the others mentioned are skilled and powerful in their own right; however, as I mentioned, they lack experience. Mirabella and Agatha were beaten by that Chaosmaw despite working together. Should they participate in the festival, they would be facing opponents on par or stronger than the Chaosmaw."

"Your opinion is noted, Elizabeth. That is why I've come up with the perfect solution." Aleister stated, drawing a confused look. "A curriculum."

"Curriculum?" Professor Eudora questioned, and Aleister was quick to clarify.

"A simple training regime. The few recommended students will receive the experience they need."

"And how is that?" Professor Eugene questioned.

"Take them outside of the academy, hell, the region itself. Have them battle any enemy they come across." He explained. "The best way to gain the experience they need is to battle."

"While there are holes in this 'curriculum' of yours, I agree this could be of help. The festival is still a good while away, so this is as good a chance as any. And I have just the problem these children could work out." Guinevere spoke.

"But who will accompany the children on this journey?" Professor Melisande asked, slightly concerned. "We're already stretched thin at the academy."

"I can." Professor Eugene spoke up. "With all the wards repaired, there is not much need for me to be at the academy. I can look after the children."

"Alone?" Professor Melisande questioned.

"As you've said, We are stretched thin here at the academy." Professor Eugene stated this as Aleister spoke up again.

"While you have my trust, it would be prudent to send someone with you. Mayhap Fiona? She is an assistant after all; she can afford to leave."

"Yeah, Fiona will be great!" Professor Melisande announced.

"Alright, then I and Miss Fiona will keep an eye on the children as they go through with this curriculum."

"Bah! All is settled then, yeah?" Professor Fergus asked, having long since grown annoyed at the endless conversation.

"Indeed." Aleister announced. "Tomorrow we shall speak to those recommended and sort out the new curriculum. Also, Professor Fergus, make sure to keep an eye on 'her' with Eugene's absence. You know what your duty is."

"Of course I do."

Chapter 40: Chapter 38: Chosen few

[Luminare Academy]

His office was nothing special—a simple oak table and chair with a few decorative paintings on the walls and a clean wooden floor with a velvet carpet draped upon it. A single book shelf was leaned against the wall, with another one across it.

Professor Eugene idly tapped on the desk as he stared at various papers on it. Profiles for all of the students recommended for the new curriculum.

"Lucinda, her help within the festival will be invaluable. She is in her third year, so she is not exactly lacking in experience. She also played a big part in last year's victory; there is not much to improve with her. But it will be prudent to include her in the new curriculum; it will help to get her more accustomed to her would-be team."

As the only spawn of Octavia, her Familial Arts and traits were valued. Not just by the academy but by the nation of Galadriel as a whole. Other spawns could simply not compare to her. She could create never-before-seen spells on a whim and even replicate other Familial Arts with just a glance. All because of a simple trait.

Being the spawn of a God of magic, war, and navigation gave you a number of advantages. A boundless mana pool, the ability to excel in magic at a frightening rate, and with Octavia also being a war god, Lucinda possessed natural battle ferocity and absurd superhuman abilities. Though there were no traits for the navigation aspect, as it was not a concept Octavia originally governed over,.

Lucinda was powerful—more powerful than maybe even the headmaster. She was only really held back by her young age and lack of creativity.

("For a sorcerer, what matters most is tenacity and creativity. Throughout history, many set spells were created, with specific glyphs and chants created along with the spells. Yet very rarely are those spells exercised.")

Even those lacking in magical talent could create their own spells with enough effort. However, all that came down to their way of thinking and imagination. Could they envision the spell? Could they specify the effects? Could they bring the spell to life?

So what held Lucinda back from truly being the strongest was a lack of creativity. But then again, her being an Inheritor made up for that fact.

("Then there is Elijah's kid and the princess.") Eugene's eyes glazed over two sets of other papers. ("The spawn of the Goddess of creation and a spawn of the God of destruction, quite a duo.") He mused.

("Creation magic is no doubt useful, and from what Alexander told me, this Agatha has already somewhat mastered the art. Or she at least managed to memorize the Gregory Astrothian blueprints.") There was a lack of experience however. ("But with the Gregory family's Familial Arts, it would be foolish not to include her. This is also an opportunity to see if she is an Inheritor.)

("Then Princess Mirabella. Her destructive capabilities are only exceeded by the likes of Lucinda and Aleister; in terms of destruction, not even her older sister can compare. It won't be too difficult to improve her. I know Aleister's Familial Arts well; I should be able to teach her the basics and help her improve. And like Agatha, she might be an Inheritor; the chance is likely, seeing as no one in her family is nor is Aleister.")

("Though less impressive, there is also Victoria. Her capabilities don't lie in battle, but her mind should be her greatest asset. Considering she could create magical objects on a whim or if she's bored, that is a true fact. Though I would like to see her train of thought in battle, The curriculum should be helpful with that. Along with the recommended students, there would be General Mai and Guinevere; the former is not exactly known for her strategic mind, and Lady Guinevere's intelligence lies elsewhere and not really in battle.")

There was also the Stark prodigy, but Eugene hardly knew enough about him.

("Verdantis has a total of at least five inheritors; if we want to win a battle with numbers, this will not be enough.")

Eugene looked at the last three papers and, reaching out, grabbed one.

("Mikoto Yukio, recommended by Alexander himself. I won't underestimate a veteran's keen sense, but I've yet to see this boy's potential. But apparently he was able to keep up with the Gregory heir.") For someone who was not a spawn, that was an impressive feat.

"That sums up those recommended, five in total. Not enough." He himself had two he wanted to recommend, but the two were too weak as of now. They would not make it with this curriculum. So for the time being, these five would have to suffice.

"Time to gather them."

[Forest]

The usual sounds of chirping birds and rustling leaves have been replaced by a deafening silence.

The once-restored vibrant and lush collection of trees now stood lifeless and wilted, their leaves turning a sickly shade of black and brown. The bark of the trees was cracked and charred, as if they had been scorched by an intense fire. Some of the trees had even been uprooted, their roots exposed and twisted in unnatural shapes.

The ground was covered with a layer of dark, ashen soil that seemed to suck life out of anything that came into contact with it. The grass and foliage that once carpeted the forest floor have wilted and withered away, leaving behind a barren, desolate landscape.

Strange, twisted branches reach out from the scorched trees like gnarled fingers. The air was heavy with the smell of burnt wood.

Lucinda could not help, but internally, wince.

("And the forest had just been restored too...") The spawn of Octavia could not help but feel a tad bit guilty due to this.

Huff Huff

Lucinda directed her gaze to the one mostly responsible for the destruction (she herself may have had a part in it too.), Princess Mirabella.

The princess was breathing heavily, and her body was decorated with scratches while her uniform was smudged with dirt.

"Damn... *huff*... you're a real... *huff*

...pain." Mirabella managed to squeeze out between breaths. Lucinda could just give a wry smile at the exhausted princess.

"Thanks?" She did not quite know how to respond to that.

"Are you okay?" A squeaky voice asked as the young Juliana approached Mirabella. She threw a glance at the girl before giving her a huff.

"I'm fine, just exhausted." Mirabella stated with a somewhat softer tone as she took in another breath.

"Well, you've definitely improved, princess (if only slightly)." Lucinda informed, initially, when she came to the destroyed forest to examine the destruction, she did not expect the second princess to be there too. Neither did she expect the princess to pick a fight. Though maybe it would be more accurate to say the princess had sought her out for improvement.

"Tch, I told you to stop calling me princess; it's Mirabella." She huffed. "And you're talkin' shit. I haven't improved."

"But you seem to have." Juliana spoke up, though she was not very sure of her statement, "Your mana has increased, no?"

"That's all." Mirabella murmured. "I still can't manage complex spells. What a pain."

"Well, you'll get there, don't worry." Lucinda encouraged with a smile. "It's just that I'm not really the best when it comes to teaching magic." Her words merely caused both Juliana and Mirabella to look at her confusedly.

"But are you not the spawn of a Goddess of magic?" Juliana questioned.

"Yeah, magic is like second nature to me because of that fact." Lucinda confirmed. "But that is exactly why I make a bad teacher. Magic is too easy for me; I don't really even need to know the basics to unleash a spell. So I can't really teach you much, safe for helping you become more resilient." She further explained.

Mirabella pondered over her words. Being more resilient could help, but when it came to dishing out destructive punishment, few could compare. But that was all she was good for—large-scale destruction. Hell, she could not even properly master defensive spells.

Which is the way she underwent training to push her agility and flexibility to the limit. If she could not defend, then she would dodge. Yet that would not always be an option.

"Doesn't matter." She finally spoke up. "I'll just bulldoze through my enemies."

"Well, I guess that is an option." Lucinda sheepishly replied. Mirabella was determined; she would give the princess that. Unfortunately, that would not be enough, more often than not. Her train of thought would have continued had a voice not invaded her head.

[Agatha Gregory, Mikoto Yukio, Princess Mirabella, Lucinda, and Victoria Eizenberg, please report to the headmasters office as soon as possible.] Lucinda noted the familiar voice of Professor Eudora, and she took note of how Mirabella seemed to hear the message as well.

"Invading our heads, how irksome." Mirabella spat. "What do they even want?"

"I am not really sure." Lucinda answered, the festival was still a month away, so it could not have been for that. She also noted a familiar name, the masked boy. What did the headmaster want with him?

She supposed her questions would get their answers soon.