

## Death Magic 241

### Chapter 241: Arda's Council

'I wonder what Staxius is doing,' sat under a now blossoming red tree, Xula had snacks and waited. The garden obeyed her every whim, she could change the weather and season without so much as lifting a finger. A latent power from when she still was a fairy. More often than not, it would change depending on her emotions. The blooming tree was a sign of said effect paired with the more than chilly wind – one that signaled loneliness of which was reminiscent. \*Sigh,\* her gaze faced the horizon, the plants sang with the wind acting as the messenger. Green hair flowed gracefully, it blended with the surrounding.

"Still as pretty as always," a voice came from her right side. A voice that seemed familiar.

"It can't be," she turned, her expression went from stoic to blissful. No care to tact, her cup slipped for the lady rushed into her lover's arms. "-You're back," she exclaimed with a smile.

"Indee-," before another word could be said, she forced her lips onto his. Unknowingly, she craved for this day to come, the loneliness would have grown overpowering. Baffled, he returned her feelings – the heart which beat for the sole purpose of living, sped. A warmth raged from within, the same feeling he felt when they first crossed eyes. 'This is what they call love,' he thought whilst in the middle of a passionate greeting.

"Welcome back," her head moved away and rested onto his chest.

"Glad to be back," he said in awe to her boldness.

"Thy heart sure is racing," she commented with a coy tone.

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"I wonder who's responsible," the tone remained calm and composed, though, on the inside, tis was another story.

'Prophecy, go and block every access-way and portal,' she ordered and slyly moved her body in a way that she fell with Staxius atop.

"I know what your thinking," laid atop one another, he whispered, "-you're mine." Bashfully, Xula turned away in joy. The sound of love and passion-filled the empty garden.

Outside, the nobles and representatives arrived one after the other. At the helm, the old sage, he stood near the throne and greeted all those who came. The queen had announced what the king had done a few days prior. Even so, most wanted to hear those very same words from the adored King. None knew about the vampiric transformation for in their mind, Staxius was still human – the only human allowed in Arda.

"Great Sage, may we inquire to where the king and queen are?" now sat around the round table, Balthazar asked with a coy tone.

\*Cough,\* "-it sure is cold today," he averted the question.

“No need to be bashful,” the great mother, Ayluin, intervened, “-it mustn’t come as a surprise that they would want to partake in the harvest of-”

“Great Mother,” Niroz interjected, “-it isn’t necessary to go into details. We all know that we’re imposing on their reunion. Whether it’s filled with sex and lust or a platonic chat, who are we to judge.”

“General, did you seriously stop the great mother from going into details whilst you blatantly used vulgar terms?” another voice came forth, one of a beastwoman named Mieshre Nufry, the representative for the beastmen. She bore a close resemblance to a wolf. As opposed to demi-humans who were closer to humans. Her blood was more potent, which resulted in her being closer to her origins.

“Honestly,” Ruslan sighed, he who was now her majesty’s only counselor. Currently, the Ardanian crown was composed of seven races, namely: Beastmen, Demi-humans, Dwarves, Elves, Vampires, Lizardmen, and the newly added, Winged wolves. Majority of the populous fit into either one of said categories. There were also other beings, half-elves, and such, but they fell into elves’ subcategory. To name each variation was folly, thus the five primal races. The winged wolves were myth up till now, and vampires, they joined since Xula asked kindly. Each had a representative, apart from the newly allied village for none had been elected yet. Other beings such as harpies, who didn’t belong to any race could easily get in contact with either representative and voice their concern. Their kind could also rally under any representatives – thus, none were ever left out. The system worked flawlessly.

Nobles also had seats on the table, one that had ten-seats in total, however, they were usually vampires or higher beings. Apart from a few exceptions, rare was it for a demi-human or beastmen to be a noble. And even if they were nobles, the rank would most likely be Knight.

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The table compromised of:

Great Mother, Ayluin Orilana, a dark-elf for the general populous.

Zachaeus Balthazar of the Nox’s clan, representative of the most powerful vampire clan.

Skokdrag Pebbleheart, representatives for the dwarves.

Ryul Traxina, for the elves. A handsome young boy who always dressed in a robe – a powerful and talented mage.

Krask Jok, for the lizardmen. Light-green scaled veiled behind heavy purple armor and armed with a spear.

Haru Gel, for the Demi-humans. A lovely lady with black cat ears with white spots all over her tail and ears. She also bore whiskers, a noble trait amongst the demis.

Mieshre Nufry, for the beastmen. A proudful cloudy white wolf with the ability to change into one.

A new seat would be added to make a place for the winged wolf clan. It brought the total from nine to ten. On that, the representatives took major precedence over the council.

The last remaining were of the noble clans:

Gabrielle Izora of the Lié par le Sang clan, the clan that was filled with low-tier vampires. A wholesome place for any bloodsucker who sought refuge in trying times. Though she, herself, rarely made an appearance at the table. She held the title of Duchess and was one of the powerhouses in the noble faction.

Tobira Barbara, a Dryad and protector of the forest, she also rarely came for the protection of the wildlife and trees was her duty and pride. Under her wings, the nobles that didn't inherit the blood of a nightwalker, caring and accommodating – any who had the title of nobility could join her faction.

These ten were those who had power over Arda, together, they worked for a better future. At the head, the Queen and King. On this occasion, only four out of the ten showed. There were also other people in charge of lesser important jobs. All and all, it was Arda's hierarchy in a nutshell.

"You sure were forceful today," Staxius commented whilst soaking in the bath, it had been forty-five minutes. "I mean, just look at my chest and neck, it's covered with scratch and bite marks," he said so in hopes of teasing her, "-Angel, you could have been further away from that word in those thirty-minutes."

"Leave me alone," faced away with her arms rested on the bath's edge, "-things happened," her cheeks flushed.

"Yeah, yeah," he said with a chuckle. The regeneration kicked in and no evidence was left. "On a serious note, aren't we supposed to go meet with our visitors?"

"Yes, it's been an hour now since their arrival. Worry not, the sage is handling their entertainment. Some alcohol and good food shall suffice, they aren't that picky when it comes to that sort of thing."

"Can't keep them waiting any longer," he stood, "-I'll go greet them. You take some more time and rest, I'll see you later, dearest wife." The door opened, standing just outside the hall was a butler, he held white towels and shorts. Once in their bed-chambers, he changed into proper attire, one made for a king. White and gold with ornaments on the shoulder pads paired with staff that seemed to come straight from a story. A harmonious blend between a robe and a uniform.

"Staxius," the door opened.

"Did I not tell you to rest a little?" he faced Xula, whomst was dressed in only a towel. A portal was used since every doorway was linked to one another.

"You wanted me to get a heatstroke..." her eyes narrowed.

"No, that wasn't my intent, I thought that you needed a bit more rest, that's all," he approached with the hopes of giving a hug.

"Don't," she held out a hand, "-the clothes will get wet. Let me change," she scurried off into the walk-in closet and changing room.

"Guess I'll wait," he voiced and made way to the balcony. 'How obnoxious can this staff be,' held out into the light, a rod made of gold and adorned with jewels of which prices would fetch in the tens of thousands. It wasn't a lie when many said that Arda was filled with precious stones and resources. The

wealth was shown in that staff alone. It could send any nobles cowering – on the top, an orb of unknown origins.

“That’s a dragon heart,” Adete came forth and voiced, “-it’s a crystal made out a Dragon’s heart. It has the special ability to amplify the user’s mana and magic ten-fold.”

“I see,” the more he stared, the more beautiful it seemed, “-just out of curiosity,” he turned and asked, “-where were you?”

\*Cough,\* “-nowhere,” her wings flapped.

“You’re not going anywhere,” he reached out and grabbed before an escape could be made. “It’s bad to spy on people,” she got tickled as punishment.

“Shall we leave?” Xula came out of the changing room with a royal-blue gown adorned with pearls.

“I guess we are king and queen,” he mumbled and walked closer.

“Did you doubt it?” she asked rhetorically. It was the first time he truly experienced what being a king was like. The prior visits to the castle were but short trips. They never got around to him wearing the rightful outfit.

“Majesty,” the duo arrived at the table. Those who were there stood and bowed.

“Greetings all, please raise thy heads and state thy business,” they sat up front. Ruslan stood beside her majesty. The four present, began to speak about politics and how the opening of a new guild here would benefit many. It was during that discussion that Staxius managed to speak about what was required to fully have an operational guild. A building suited for recruitment as well as serving as headquarters. A place where Qaisar could be exchanged for cash. The more details were given, the more of an idea the Queen had to what was required.

After an hour, the impromptu meeting ended.

“Forgive my asking, your grace, but have you changed recently?” The great mother asked with a child’s curiosity.

“Yes,” he spoke in a deep voice, “-I had to forgo my humanity and changed into a vampire due to my weakness. It was the best course of action, the stronger I become, the better I’ll be able to serve my queen and her kingdom.”

“Very noble intentions, however, care to tell who was the one who gave you said blood?” Niroz asked for the purity was important. A king could not afford to have gotten badly bred blood.

“There isn’t a need to pester his majesty,” Balthazar spoke out, “-it was I, the successor of the first Progenitor, who willingly transferred her blood. It was a given, as the heir to the god of death, there is no other better successor than King Staxius himself. He and only he can harness its immense power,” that information had been kept between a few chosen people. Now, it was out in the open. The reaction was one of silence.

“The All-seeing eyes,” called the great mother, she had taken a closer look to his eyes, crimson and burning as if hot magma.

“That means that his majesty is the third person who directly inherited the progenitor’s blood,” Ruslan voiced, “-here I thought that the bloodline would die with the Nox Clan,” he turned and stared intently, “-majesty, if it isn’t too much a hassle, could you please show us thy wings?”

“If you so please,” he stood a few steps away from the table. \*Woosh,\* flapped into reality, a third of his height, wings that resembled those of a fallen angel.

“Impossible,” the counselor could but stare in awe, the others had the same reaction.

“It’s as the story depicted,” Balthazar said in a joyful tone, “-the rightful heir would come from a plain higher than the heavens. A mortal with the power to destroy and rule over all he wished.” In turn, the man stood and called for his wings – it resembled one of a demon. “Take a good look, Ruslan, those are the wings of the first progenitor. An element from a god mixed with the curse from one shun by all of creation – the perfect vessel for her incomplete blood,” he laughed without stop, “-all those centuries of searching has come to a close.”

“Yes, Lord Balthazar, the nightwalkers have found their rightful king,” in that instant, both vampires knelt with the head bowed. They, who’d never lower their head even at a queen, were on the floor before Staxius.

#### Chapter 242: Blood King

“Lord Balthazar, Ruslan,” from her seat, she rose, “-what’s the meaning of this?” Xula asked in a stern yet baffled tone.

“I apologize, majesty,” Ruslan stared up, “-we, vampires are as prideful as we are, in no way would it be possible for our race to bow down to someone. As you know, we hold the power to destroy what we wish,” the gaze changed to Staxius, “-tis an exception. We must bow down and pay respect for the King of Arda has inherited the first Progenitor’s dormant powers. Her will and her wings, it’s destiny,”

“Care to elaborate, what’s this have in common with destiny? Isn’t it but a merely random event,” throughout the whole ordeal, he remained cool and composed. The same couldn’t be said for her majesty – her mind worked tirelessly. Vampires had only agreed to serve her under the condition that a haven would be given. It could spell disaster if said race decided to rebel.

“Let me take over,” still knelt, Lord Balthazar spoke, “-I’m sure Adete has given a history of our kind already. There’s a piece of information unknown to most, the real reason why the progenitor stopped her fight. It wasn’t because gods and demons grew too overpowering, no, that was a lie fabricated for convenience. The real reason was Lord Death, the second most powerful entity since Creation. Unbound by rules and laws, he is to do what he wished. Since death was his domain, neither god nor demon could oppose for once immortality was lost, all were but at his feet. Myth has it that vampires were made for one purpose, to act as the guards in case the god of death went crazy with power. During her journey, with no clear purpose – fighting was all she could have done. Siding with no-one, an attempt to stop a war all by herself. The efforts were recognized by Lord Death for it was he who knew what she intended. Under a red-moon, hidden amidst corpses with heads flying atop – an agreement was made. She who had had enough of immortality stopped her forces and acted as if she had been defeated per Death’s orders. In recompense, a contract – one that said her power would forever be sealed till it came with contact with the Death Element. It was on the same night, I, Balthazar, who was back then, a low-tier

demon, came across her dying corpse. In her last moments, I was given her blood with a will, one that has long lost its sense of meaning. With a smile, the only one who could rival death vanished under the same crimson moon. I knew her powers were sealed. A few months later, I found a way to turn others into vampires without her blood. I swore to find a way to return her powers one day. A hope to unlock and understand her will," the real reason came to light. Upon the last words, he stood with a blissful smile.

'That smile, he's implying something. There must be something he left out. What did he mean by will,' in the corner, Adete hovered over to the table where food was left. 'I get it,' a eureka moment. "Lord Balthazar," Staxius voiced loudly.

"Majesty, I assume you've figured it out?" he kept the smile and relaxed.

"The First Progenitor, her blood that remained asleep, the all-seeing eyes, Blood-Mary. Weirdly, it linked together, my change in appearance, the overwhelming power I felt, the way the death element reacted with the blood," the head shook in disbelief, "-Adete isn't an apparition of just my vampiric power; she's the first-ever vampire."

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"Hmm," food in the mouth, "-I'm what?" she turned confused with the attention on chewing.

"Yes, Adete is the first progenitor. I knew the moment I saw her face – identical to the lady who turned to dust so many millenniums ago," idyllic by completing a life-long quest, the old man fell to the floor.

"I got you," Staxius dashed to hug the Lord, "-it must feel nice, finding the heir to the god of death and it all turning in thy favor. I dare not imagine how long it has been," with a reassuring smile, "-you deserve a long night of rest. Lord Balthazar, I'm grateful for having been turned into a vampire."

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"Thank you, majesty," they stood, "-it's about time I thought about retiring. The Nox clan will be inherited by Aurora since she's the only family I have. I'm afraid there isn't much I can give but my everlasting pledge to serve thy name, majesty."

"This new turn of events will have much impact on the vampiric community," Ruslan voiced, "-The Nox's clan, who's been the overwatch and guard for said community will be inherited by a vampire Knight. So, you see, Lord Balthazar, the hierarchy will collapse onto itself. You, yourself, know how heartless our kind is. For power none will pay heed to slay their own kinfolk to have a taste of what it feels to be almighty."

"If they are to run wild, Arda could stand to suffer major losses," Mieshre said with a concerned tone. General Niroz nodded and backed her words. Even the Great Mother was doubtful of the situation at hand. It wasn't far off to see un coup d'état.

"What do you suggest?" Staxius asked, for Ruslan's eyes glimmered.

"The crowning of the first vampire-king. Our highest rank has always been Duke. With the blood of the first progenitor coursing through thy vein, none could refute thy power. Besides, I'm sure it would be simple to slay any who wished to cause harm – nothing beats feeding off another nightwalkers blood,"

the voice disguised as noble of which behind its façade held ulterior motives. “Majesty, tis up to you, either become the one who shall guide those who wished Arda harm to the gates of purgatory or let it be ravaged by a sense of freedom.”

“I understand the implications,” with Balthazar now resting on a chair, he walked over to Xula, “-wouldn’t that mean the birth of a new faction. If I were to rule vampires, it would be imperative that they leave the alliance of Arda,” he glanced over to the Queen’s face. The latter held a smile – one empty, with the sole purpose of comforting him.

“Yes, we’d have to form a new faction,” Ruslan’s tone seemed relieved.

“Let me ask this,” Shanna came forth, “-would it nullify the risk of a coup d’état by the nobles?”

“If his majesty accepts the title of the Blood-King, then yes, all would certainly focus their attention on him. A target would be placed, much-wanting power will scour the kingdom in hopes of fighting – assassins will be sent to see if the king is worthy,” the risk was as big as the responsibility.

Saddened, her gaze fell to the floor, Staxius saw it – a glimpse of Xula aching. “Listen to me,” he rushed over and grabbed her arms before her posture fell into a slump, “-if it means that Arda is safe, I don’t mind becoming a target. My priority is to make you and this kingdom a haven for all. If vampires grow to be a problem-,”

“-then will kill them,” Adete interjected, “-from what I’ve heard, I’m the first progenitor. Sadly, I don’t have any memories. My sole purpose is to help my master accomplish what he wishes for. If it means the extermination of our own race – then it’s no trouble. They who wish to lay a hand on what he deems precious will be faced by a hell unlike any other.”

“It’s as Adete said,” he came closer, “-I’d do anything to save you. Trust in me for once, let me carry some of thy burdens. I know you told me to not get involved into politics and live unbound by the title of king,” the voice had a warmth unlike any other, “-even so, if it means that my queen is to suffer due to my selfishness; then I’d rather forgo my freedom and endure. Don’t forget, you’re the one who gave me light when I was in the dark, you’re the one who gave me a purpose, you’re the one who showed me the meaning of love. There are things you’ve done that can’t ever be put into words. I’m a murderer, one who thrives in death and suffering, yet, you chose to sacrifice so much so that I’d have a chance at starting again. This isn’t about repaying favors, I’m being selfish because I want to help my lover, is that too much to ask?”

“I get it,” she held his hand tightly, “-I get it,” tears flowed, “-I trust you, my king.”

“Pardon me for interrupting the touching moment,” Niroz interjected, “-but it might get inappropriate for royalty to get to business in, \*cough,\* a place one could say is... public?”

“Oh dear,” she stepped away, “-I apologize for getting carried away,” she blushed.

“Who would have thought that Queen Shanna, would be brought to tears by mere words that came from the heart. Youth must be nice,” The great mother added in jest.

“I’ve made up my mind,” Staxius turned, “-I’ll take on the title of Blood King. I will do so to protect Arda. My loyalty will never change, I will always side with Queen Shanna no matter the situation. Therefore, once the new faction is to be formed – we’ll reenter the alliance of the Ardanian crown. I care not if the

path is to be filled by the blood of my kind – I will do so to protect what I hold dear,” he stared at Ruslan, “-if those conditions are adequate, then begin what is needed for said ceremony.”

“I had a feeling that King Staxius would say those same words,” Lord Balthazar added with a hint of coyness, “-Arda is in good hands. A powerful sword paired with an unbreakable shield. Queen Shanna and King Staxius are a couple who are to never be underestimated.”

“You could say that twice,” Ruslan added with a sense of relief, “-the coronation can be done as soon as tomorrow, from when the Nox clan falls under its new leadership. If the ruler accepts to plead her loyalty to the Blood-King – said backing alone will suffice. After all, the Nox’s clan are the rulers of the nightwalkers.”

On said day, it was decided that Staxius would become the first king of the vampires. A new challenge filled with blood and suffering. It was as if starting a kingdom altogether since the land they ruled was off to the north-east. A capital-city where most vampires lived; Noctis’ Hallow. A city hidden by a dense forest filled by ghouls and undead. It was a protection and a rite of passage. Only they who held the blood of a nightwalker could enter the city. Somber and dark, silent where death could come at any moment. A place not for the faint of hearts – one of many towns scattered around Arda. Lower-breeds, the commoners, were treated as if animals. The same treatment in any society where a strong hierarchy was in place. Human trafficking was also a part of its supposed charm. It grew harder to hide away their prey since the alliance with Rosespire. It created unrest between the Earls, who were unhappy by the decision. Up to now, it had only been through sheer of show power that the Nox’s clan was able to stop an uprising. Ruslan said true, the change in power from Balthazar to Aurora would create an opening for those who had wished ill of her majesty’s decision.

“Are you sure about this?” inside their bedchamber, Xula asked with a still doubtful mind.

“Yes,” now changed into more flexible clothing, “-I’m going to become the Blood-King and purge all who wish you harm,” they held hands.

“I know, but I’m worried,” she voiced gently.

“Don’t forget who I am,” he gave a wink followed by a kiss, “-I best head off to scout a location for the new adventuring guild. There is much to be done,” the door opened, “-stay pretty for me,” a smile which reassured her worries.

“It will be alright, majesty,” Prophecy came forth, “-your husband is much stronger than before.”

‘I can’t let this new turn of events deter me from the objective at hand. Though it aligns quite nicely. Skokdrag might have an idea,’ and off he was to the dwarven mines.

#### Chapter 243: Guild Building

Next came the guild building, since dwarves were expert builders of which only the prestigious could afford. Staxius headed into the same dwarven mines from whence Skokdrag was made an acquaintance.

“Ay majesty,” the short but muscle man, who at the time worked on the giant forge, stopped and greeted.

“Sorry to barge in without invitation,”



“No need for apology, tis all good, yer grace,” a bit inappropriate for not letting him finish.

“I need a form of expert opinion about opening a guild building,” he decided to let go of the little mishap. More pressuring matters were at hand.

“Oh, guild building,” he called for five more miners, “-that job has already been settled by queen Shanna a few months ago. She said that a headquarters for the new guild master might come in handy very soon.”

“Is that so,” he said slowly then thought, ‘-if what they say is true, then my work is nearly complete. Let’s hope that Xula made the perfect place. Location will be important; I’d figure a guess that it’s on the ground floor.’

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“Let’s go majesty,” called the five miners, “-it’s on the ground floor, we’ll escort you through the portals.” In addition to the stairways around the city, a teleportation stone was installed on each floor. A desperate necessity since the goblin incident, or some would call it, the Massacre. Instant, independent, and reliable – a mid-tier spell which helped the populous a lot.

“Here we are,” taking alleys and backstreets, they arrived. A few meters away from the barracks, in the middle between a bank on the right side and a mage’s guild on its left – the headquarters stood with six-floors high.

“A bit excessive,” he commented whilst the locked door opened.

“It was per her majesty’s request, who are we to argue,” an Ardanian made structure. The outside as well as the inside had an intricate design, the walls were embedded with Ikahmite. The surprisingly rare ore that could negate 90% of all magical damage. The ground floor was spacious with a tall ceiling. On the right, a screen – now off for it would be used to show quests. In the middle of said room, a circular booth, divided into four separate parts – each would be where adventurers sign up for quests or place a job request. To the left, a waiting area with nothing more than seats.

The first floor came as a shock, a circular stairway on the top right of the ground floor which linked all the floors. The first one held a tavern – self-explanatory for the most part.

The second floor, a general store for any and all items. It would be handled by a trader sent from the castle. One that would have common items and also, uncommon such as monster drops for recipes and more.

The third floor, a magical shop, a place for potions and scrolls, a place where an alchemist or an elf from the magical university would take seat. The layout was simple enough, nothing fancy, though the décor differed based on what purpose the floor filled.

The fourth floor, an evaluation room, the place where ranks would be assigned. It would have been faster to have it on the ground floor – though said process was to be private. At the moment, it was but an empty brown and red-colored room with large windows facing the street below.

The fifth floor, a meeting area for future guilds and people of interest who might show a liking to their guild. In the future when humans would be allowed to come for mission and such into Arda – it would

also be here that the details of their quest would be discussed. A place used to reprimand those who had gone astray from the right path and dabbled in the ways of thieving and turning into a rogue.

The sixth floor, the guild master's office. Already furnished with the highest quality commodities. The door that led inside was made of Elder wood – a tree that had been alive for centuries. Inside, a carpet with crests in a not so minimalistic layout. The middle, a large desk with the backdrop being a window covered by red curtains. On the right, massive bookshelves and on the left, various portraits of Xula in her full glory. Not to mention the couches that fell immediately under her picture.

"Talk about going overboard," he said in jest for the place seemed more for royalty as opposed to one used for adventuring.

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"It's what majesty wanted, thus we delivered," Skokdrag spoke proudly of the building as a whole.

"It's a thing of wonder, dearest Skokdrag, you've and the dwarves have amazed me once more. Thy constructions deserve more than mere praises,"

"Pleasure was ours," with one eye closed and index rubbing against his nose, he left the room, "-do as you wish. The staff has yet to be hired, that is up to you. Queen Shanna already has a few people lined up for you to choose," the visit ended.

"Guild Master of Arda," the curtain opened, he stared out at the lovely scenery. Buildings, houses, and streets filled with the chants of merchants trying to make a living. The guards below provided a sense of security. The gate leading outside was but a few kilometers away. In case of an attack, it would be easy to evacuate or prepare.

"Don't forget, that tomorrow is also the day you're to be crowned as Blood King," Adete sprung into the air; her hair rejoiced as the gentle wind gradually made it sway.

"King of Arda, the heir to the god of death, a vampire that inherited the blood of the first progenitor, a gold rank adventurer named Xenos, Guild Master of Arda and leader of Kniq, a mysterious alchemist and killer who goes by the nickname Shadow in the underground, a semi-known Alchemist in Rosespire, how many title does one need. I'm sure I've missed some along the way," he sighed.

"Yeah, I know," Adete agreed, "-Add Blood-king to that list. Titles don't affect who you are, it's just a way for people to know who one is."

"I guess," the windows shut, "-I don't mind having various personas for different tasks. In case I am found out – Death will be what is found upon the next step," he walked out of the room.

"I knew you'd say that," she smiled, for it wasn't that big a deal.

'Each title has its perks. All and all if I grow more renowned, my influence will be extended. Allies have to be made as quickly as possible, when people are not expecting trouble. A war might breakout, the monsters could become bolder, nothing can be taken out of the picture. For now, it's time to focus on the vampires and its return to the Ardanian alliance. A coup d'état due to a shift in power, how pathetic can my kind be.'

“Welcome back,” sat on her throne, Shanna voiced loudly. A boy with wings stood a few meters away, underneath the balcony up-top, “-was the building to your liking?” no nobles insight nor representatives, the Old sage had to venture on an urgent errand.

“It’s obscene at how masterfully it was built. I’m almost scared to enter it,” a quick chuckle later, “-may I ask who that boy is?”

“A guide left behind by his people.”

“The winged wolves?” he asked, the reply was a nod, “-look’s around fifteen and is frail, not to mention the severe cough he has.”

“He refuses to sit nor take a bath, I know not what the child wants,” Xula rolled her eyes and stared away.

“Here I thought you were supposed to be good with kids?” he asked sarcastically.

“Give it a try,” she pouted.

After which, the figure walked over slowly in a harmless fashion, “Hello,” he knelt since the boy wasn’t that tall for a fifteen-year-old.

“H-hello,” he replied but the eyes and wings moved subtly, a clear give away of being uncomfortable. \*Achoo,\* he coughed whilst keeping the reluctance.

“Here,” without warning, using a handkerchief, he helped in cleaning the boy’s face. “From what I’ve heard, you come from the north, aren’t you supposed to be resistant to cold?” the voice concerned and friendly, Staxius broke into his safe-space without triggering an alarm.

“Thank you,” the snuffle continued.

“Here, take this,” a potion, “-might taste bitter,” he said with a smile.

“o-okay,” a few seconds later, he drank the potion.

“Want to join me in a warm bath?” Staxius asked in a pleasant tone, “-I’m sure you’re hungry as well,” the boy’s stomach roared at the mention of food followed by flushed cheeks. “No need to be embarrassed,” hand in hand, he gained the boy’s trust and gave a smirk on the way out.

‘Seriously,’ Xula’s hand curled into a fist, ‘-how can one person be so nonchalant. Changing personality to fit his person of choice, Staxius, you’re way scarier from when we first met,’ the hand relaxed for the old sage returned with a few people in tow.

Following the bath, Staxius had a lovely chat with the boy. More details about the frost giants and his village were given over a warm meal. Staxius could but watch – the snuffle from earlier was due to the sudden change in climate. Having lived in the cold to suddenly be brought to a warmer place; must have taken a turn for the worst. The potion given was nothing more than a blend brewed in case of a cold. Kids and teenagers in general were easy to manipulate. Their mind and heart worked in tandem, unlike adults who shrouded themselves into lies and end up believing said lies. A bit of Dark-Arts paired with the inherited charm of being a nightwalker. Getting people’s trust could not have come any simpler.

“Your grace,” a butler called, the boy finished eating, “-her majesty request for thy presence in the throne room,” message given, the butler faded into the shadows.

“Let’s go, Alice,” hand in hand with the boy, they walked.

“Majesty, are you sure it’s wise to send them in this mission this early?” The Old sage voiced with concern.

“Yes, they are to leave as soon as possible, Its my last order as their leader for they’ll serve a new master soon,” Xula remained adamant. In front, the old sage with five people behind. A man wielding a Greatsword, dressed in a crimson armor. A girl with a short and flexible robe who wielded a staff. A man that didn’t stand out, cloaked with a hood and daggers on the belt. An elven girl who wore light leather armor with a giant bow on her back. Lastly, in the middle, another girl, petite with red eyes and pale skin paired with black hair.

“Majesty,” walking out the hall, Staxius came into the throne room. Instantly, the sage and four others bowed – except for the girl with black hair.

“You called for me?” he turned and faced Xula with Alice in hand.

“Yes, my king,” she stepped off the throne, “-I’d like for you to meet my special guard unit,” they stood in line.

“Greetings majesty, I’m Oenus Tuyon, a dragonkin,” said the man who had a Greatsword.

“I’m Magra Yeltris, a dark-elf,” the girl who had a staff added.

“My name’s Rasu,” the voice monotonous and deep, the hooded man gave a quick nod.

“Kearen Ellican,” nothing more nothing less, it was the girl with a bow’s introduction.

“It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance, I’m Serene Balthazar,” red lipstick and unforgiving eyes, the last girl spoke with coy, one potentially deadly.

Once introductions were over, Xula took over, “-these are the people who fought monsters on the behalf of Arda. Now that the crisis is nearly over; I’d like for them to go onto a new mission. To escort and eradicate any potential threat at Mont Blanc.”

“Yes Majesty,” they said simultaneously, Alice let go of his hand and went with said party.

“As I said, majesty, going right now will be foolish. There’s a blizzard waiting to happen,” the Old sage desperately tried to halt the expedition which would take place at this very moment.

Do something, said the sage’s eyes – he tried to get Staxius’s attention, a tiny nod sufficed.

“Majesty, I also think that might not be in the best interest. The adventuring guild is to be opened tomorrow; the evaluation machine will be brought over as well. Why not send back the expedition for a few days later?” composed and without fear, Staxius voiced a decent argument.

“As you wish,” she gave, “-the trip will be on the day after tomorrow.” The reason why she wanted to send that squad out immediately was because of Serene. That girl was a powerful vampire and pretty

ruthless – exiled by the Nox’s clan for killing her parents, the stories about her nature were known amongst the vampire folk.

#### Chapter 244: Cobalt Unit

“Hey Xula, care to tell what happened earlier, you seemed a bit out of it when that vampire girl showed up,” backpack filled with books and a few potions, Staxius got ready to head-out. Time was around one in the afternoon, Lizzie needed to be picked up from school.

“Wise as you are perceptive,” she sighed, “-Serene was exiled from her clan. I’m sure the old sage will give more details tomorrow. She’s very enigmatic, I can never get a hold of what she thinks. Despite reading her mind, it’s always a jumbled mess of thought, actions, and possible outcomes. The one thing that remains common is... her vindictive nature. Once upon a time, my guards had a sixth member. Sadly, that man-made the mistake of calling out Serene and insulting her in the process. It took months, after he went into hiding, months after months till the body was found bordering a river not so far from here. I knew it was her, the bite marks on his neck that resembled two stars, no other vamp has it.”

“I understand,” he walked closer, “-you’re worried about the coronation tomorrow. Aurora becoming the new leader of Nox might trigger a bad reaction,” he gave a reassuring smile, “-even so, if she stands in my way, you might need to make do with four guards as opposed to five,” the face turn blank on the last word.

“That’s to be expected,” a peck on his cheeks later, he returned to the capital.

‘Be careful, vampires are far more conniving than you think. It’s going to be difficult to handle so many things at once. Blood King,’ she turned, ‘-it has a good ring. Almost as if he was the next demon-king,’ with a shake of the head, the queen returned to her office.

“Blood king,” Adete sat atop his head.

“The first progenitor,” he added in jest.

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“Oh please,” she sighed, the bike rushed through the streets till Junior Claireville Academy came in view. Next, they returned home, from there on, he went to Kniq’s headquarters. No new adventurers wanted to join up with said Guild yet. Auic did surprisingly well to handle all the tedious tasks. Sat in his office, Staxius got ready for the implementation of the evaluation orb tomorrow in Arda. By preparation, it was a scroll – he decided to write one that contained the spell Teleportation. As opposed to using it constantly, if a few of said scrolls would be readied in advance – mana could be conserved. A secret for now, for the next few hours, till five came – with Auic helping, paperwork were settled. The adventuring party of Kniq did very well. Their repute grew, Achilles became a favorite at the central guild.

“Thanks for working hard,” he stood, the time had come to leave.

“No worries,” she bowed and left with files in hand.

‘That should handle everything for the next week. Now for the Dark-guild,’ mask on, he teleported to the bar. There, with barely any customers, Jason discussed how the war had been going so far. By capturing the witch – information grew abundant. There were still holes missing, and as Jason put it,

“we’re not shooting from the hip now. The UO isn’t that powerful, their mistakes have been found. The Syndicate is the real enemy.”

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On that note, payment for two weeks of God’s ale was given with a special request, “Dear Shadow, it’s Renaud. Care to do your favorite boss a favor? I want you to experiment and try to figure out this new drug,” a packet of whiteish gold powder got given, “-it’s angel’s dust. Up and coming with a lot of potential, do give it a try.” The message ended.

“The boss is a greedy man through and through, the moment there’s money involved – he gets overly excited,” Jason explained with a smile. A black metallic box adorned with gold was presented. “Another gift from Renaud,” a smile followed by a smirk.

“Let me guess,” the box opened, “-Cigars,” he stared up, “-I supposed this is payment for trying to research Angel’s Dust?”

“No need to look so anguished, you’ll be fine,” a handshake later, Staxius left.

“So much work,” eyes glared at papers inside Pandora. The subject of research was not the angel’s dust, but the taint. A detailed analysis for it would be submitted to the magical guild later. The more precise, the better a solution could be found. Time was of the essence – having stored the curses inside himself and papers. It took a few hours but the process was simplified.

“Miss Clarise,” located in her office inside the Alchemist Sect, he had a meeting with the prodigy.

“What brings you here?” she asked with a not so inviting tone, “-I thought you hated us since Lord Staxius never picks up any of my calls or job requests,” a faint pout.

“You must know that the mana potions being researched don’t fancy my attention. You’re plenty talented, I’d be just a burden,” the voice emotionless with no holes to exploit.

“Ha...” a sarcastic cackle, “-am I supposed to believe that lie?” her face turned red from anger. In her mind, the alchemist before her was an object of fantasy. The ideal researcher with a mind unlike anything she had seen before. Though, with all his potential, seeing it being wasted on Guilds and adventuring, it made her insides boil.

“Animosity apart,” a paper slid across the table, “-these are what I’ve been doing for the past few months. The taint of the monsters; it was hard to acquire living samples to derive my analysis from,” she stared up with intrigue, “-eventually, that’s the fruit of my labor. The curse of the demons, holy water alone can’t cleanse it. A catalyst and a medium are required, one to aggravate it’s spread then a medium for it to transfer to. If done correctly, any type of tainted curse could be removed,” after which, a more detailed explanation was given since she kept on pestering about what and whatnots.

“Very interesting,” the one on one meeting turned into a mini-conference, more and more alchemist joined into their discussion. It got moved to a larger room with a whiteboard and seats. At the helm, Staxius, he spoke as if a lecturer. Even the Master alchemist joined into what he had found. Minutes turned into hours, fully immersed into the scholar side, the explanation on why and how taint could be cured grew profound. It ended up changing to mana and magic, a subject he had massive amounts of knowledge. Subconsciously, a piece of said knowledge was shared – how mana could be transferred into

scrolls or any other medium. Theory for the most part with no practical use, the board filled with formulas and recipes. Some original that got proven in front of so many scholars – the talent he possessed grew apparent. A league of his own, none could but smile. Hand in hand with Clarise, those two could pierce the mystery of death itself.

\*Clap, Clap, Clap,\* “-sublime,” they applauded, “-excellently done,” others complimented, “-with all that, we could now explore another side of the mana-potion. The research came to a standstill, now that Staxius joined the mix, I think we’ll be able to look at it from another angle,” said Clarise with nothing but genuine happiness. The quest for knowledge isn’t one filled with hierarchy or pride – if a breakthrough is made, it’s the whole sect that benefits. A pillar that promoted so many advances in the ways of magic and science.

“That was fun,” lent over a window with a water bottle in hand, he waited outside the conference room. The cold night breeze served to cool the fatigued body.

“Staxius,” a powerful voice came from behind.

“Master Alchemist,” he turned, “-how may this humble novice help?”

“Humble novice you say,” hand placed atop Staxius’s shoulder, he stared outside, “-I came to say how much we’re grateful. I know not what goes on in thy private life, however, each job request you complete serves a greater purpose. I was wondering if you’d be interested in joining the Cobalt Unit?”

“Cobalt unit? I’m sorry but I don’t follow.”

“I apologize,” he turned, “-I forgot that you care not for politics. It’s a unit with a large amount of funding where talented scholars of different nations and subjects join. It has requirements that are beyond normal human intellect. Even Clarise couldn’t join their ranks – not now anyway, she’s got more growing to do first.”

“I’m grateful that you’d think of me that way,” the voice uninterested, “-sadly, I’ve more on my plate. I rather enjoy the title of Alchemist. You see, I chose to take the exam out of necessity. I had to open a shop where medical potions could be sold. And for my being recognized as legit and not a fraud, said title was needed. Tis was a means to an end, I’ve no particular interest in joining the Cobalt unit.”

“If I may ask, what’s your drive then?” Flein asked intrigued by what he had said.

“There are people I need to protect. There are a few things I hold dear. I used to be someone who didn’t care about others,” he faced the stars, “-now as a father and husband, I’m slowly realizing that protecting someone doesn’t mean that one must become strong. Other ways exist, my particular end-goal is simple, to have my family smile till death do us part,” he patted Flein’s back, “-I’m still an Alchemist. Do send over job requests, I’ll complete those which seems fun,” with a nod, he headed for the door. In the shadows, through a door left ajar, Clarise overheard their conversation.

“HOW DARE YOU!” inside an empty and dark hallway, a girl’s voice echoed.

“You heard all that,” stood still without facing backward, he spoke monotonously.

“How dare you...” her tiny footsteps approached; “-Grandfather offered to recommend your name to the Cobalt Unit...it’s the dream of every serious scholar – w-why did you r-refuse.”

“Listen,” he turned with cold eyes, “-you may be an alchemist but you’re also a child. Act like one and never try to get in the way of a grown-up. There will also be people who’ll defy orders – I’m one of those people. I care not for your rank or your family name. Get in my way, and I swear,” \*Snap,\* a white flame manifested, “-I’ll dispose of the obstacle.”

“...” no response, the girl froze in place by fear.

“One must learn that the world doesn’t revolve around oneself, there will always be those who defy every move one makes. You decide what path you follow, but don’t project thy thoughts on someone else.”

On that note, he returned home without much trouble. Dinner was already served. Once eaten, he headed upstairs where Lizzie studied hard. The next few hours were spent on teaching what Tempest once told him. The next day would be a chaotic mess, or so what he thought. The shift in power with the coronation of the next Blood King. Today was spent on resolving any issues that may come up in the next weeks.

‘Serene, what might your story be. Are you going to become a thorn or somewhat tolerant? The pace at which everything began to move all of a sudden is whelming. A war fought in the shadows, the Azure’s wall, and now the coronation of the first Blood King. Arda is on the pathway of change. I did find another dragonkin – he might be able to tell more about what Eira has to expect. The guild opening comes as a priority; Undrar and Auic will handle anything that might come up. I trust them, there are but a few weeks separating me from a magical tournament. I can’t wait to see how Eira’s grown.’ Thus, an exhausting day ended.

“Staxius Haggard...” sat beside four corpses, “-king of Arda and now the will be King of the vampires,” Serene whispered. “I know not if we’ll become allies,” her gaze pointing at the crimson full moon, “-Aurora will die and end the Nox’s clan. My revenge has yet to be quelled,” blood dripped off her face, “-tomorrow will decide if you’re ally or foe.”

#### Chapter 245: Evaluation Orb

\*Crack,\* ‘even with all the power we’ve gathered, the seal can’t be contained any longer. Master Staxius, please get out; it’s the curse of the death Reaper, nothing can be done.’ \*Clang,\* a loud noise came from the hall, Adete awoke from a nightmare. Still half-asleep, Staxius followed closely behind.

“Are you alright?” he asked seeing Adete’s demeanor, or rather, sensing.

“Yes, just a little shaken up,” she replied with a smile thought her mind could not have been any different. A vision or dream, she knew not what had happened. The death reaper’s curse seemed to have taken a part of her mind as well. Thus, a new morning rose. It went the same as every other day, after taking Lizzie to school, he made the trip to Pandora. Though, before leaving the house, an announcement was made. One about the possible return being in a few days or even weeks. Not wanting to intrude, the companions sent him off with a smile.

“The Evaluation Orb and machine,” Diane said surrounded by curious adventurers. None was given access to touch for guards had taken a stand before the machine.



“How is one supposed to transfer this thing to another province?” one of the receptionists of Rosenvan asked.

“No idea,” Diane shrugged and waited.

“I’m here,” a voice came from the elevator. Staxius used the portal in the shop.

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“Good,” Diane voiced without much interest, “-Guild Master,” the voice seemed as if holding a grudge.

“Still unpleasant as usual,” a path opened amidst the crowd of high-ranked adventurers.

“Humph,” a roll of the eyes followed by silence for it was supposed to be a day off.

“Tell Raulf that I’m grateful for everything,” five scrolls were taken out his belt.

“Aren’t those magical scrolls?” many asked for it was rare. Rare and expensive; though the man before them had five of the parchments.

“Could you kindly step back,” he asked of which the crowd followed.

‘Obnoxious and always showing off,’ Diane thought, she hated his guts since the man was incredible in every way imaginable. Rich, strong, and unforgiving, a perfect recipe for chaos.

“Do take care of Kniq in my absence,” the scrolls were placed in a pentagram, “-understand? Diane,” he eyed her intently.

“Yes, I’ll help however I can,” she nodded out of respect.

\*Ancient Magic: Teleportation,\* hands pressed together, a purple light came from the scrolls – paired with his spell, it amplified and poof, vanished into a mist of vibrant colors.

“I’m guessing we’re going to stay here till Eira’s tournament, aren’t we?” Adete asked since the duo arrived on the fourth floor of the guild building.

“I suppose, it’s a long time coming. Besides, if things turn sour – anyone can reach me with just a few press of a button. It involved the dark-guild as well. But I doubt we’ll hear from them soon; we did defeat Lord Desmond. Leave it to Cake, let’s focus on the guild for today.” Installed behind a stone brick wall with two seats, one for the examiner and the other for the would-be adventurer, Arda could finally give ranks to people who wished for it.

“Xula,” not even a second wasted, a teleport straight into her office where the lady had her face plunged into paperwork.

“Who’s there?” she asked in a not so healthy tone.

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“It’s me,” he walked over, “-Sorry to spring this on you, but the guild is ready to be opened. All we need is to hire the necessary staff and we shall be golden,” now leaned over the table, he waited for a response.

“STAXIUS,” she stared up and gave a kiss, “-welcome back,” her mood changed completely, “-here’s the list,” she reached for the drawer.

“Impressive,” he took a look, “-I forgot how reliable my wife is,” with a smile, it was settled – the staff was employed. It would take a few days for it to work – first, it was basic training. Staxius called all the workers Xula chose and began a few tests and lectures. The guild assistants were of the elven race, smart and quick to adapt – the perfect match. The ones in charge of the tavern, demi-humans, and beastmen. For the common shop, an up and coming trader, one from the lizardman race. Last but not least, the magical shop – handled by a retired scholar from one of the universities; a dark elf who had lived three centuries. Thus, with maximum effort in explaining how a guild was run – how to evaluate orb functioned, they understood within mere minutes. Ardanian’s were smart, very smart.

“Now that we’ve reached the end of the explanation, does anyone have questions?”

“Majesty,” one of the would-be guild assistants rose her hand, “-Is there any way to contact thy if things are to get loud and uncomfortable?”

“Yes,” he showed the guild card, “-anyone who works the guild will be given my contact info. Do reach out if anything happens, I’ll be there to help.”

“Could we have a demonstration of how the orb works?” another assistant asked, the question rendered the man silent for he thought.

“Give me a moment,” the guild master left for the castle, there; he managed to get a hold of Xula’s guard unit. With her permission, four out of the five members arrived at the building.

Now on the fourth floor, a crowd gathered around Staxius. The evaluation machine was to be used for the first time. “Oenus Tuyon,” he called, “-take a seat,” he offered. A few seconds later, the orb turned on with loud noises. It took a while,

[Oenus Tuyon: Tier 3-Silver]

[Magra Yeltris: Tier 3-Silver]

[Rasu: Tier 3-Silver]

[Kearen Ellican: Tier 3-Silver]

In the end, all got one of the top-three ranks. The potential feature was removed per his orders. During that process, four notification popped up in the guild card. Adventures readied to advance to Tier 2-Gold: Oenus Tuyon, Magra Yeltris, Rasu, Kearen Ellican. ‘They sure are strong,’ he thought and stared the unit, ‘-that should be enough for today, can’t give the gold rank out before they’ve proven their worth first.’ On that note, the guild assistants knew what to do when the time comes.

“Well everyone, I hope the guild becomes a place of refuge and not hell,” the guild master left, leaving the others to prepare for the opening.

“Where are we off to now?” Adete asked whilst flying around.

“Back to the castle, the guild should be fine. It’s going to open in a week; the workers need time to adjust. Supplies have to be brought in for the shops and taverns. Ample time to head for Noctis’s

Hallow," they walked through the ground floor and visited a few stalls and merchants. None paid heed to who he was, business as usual for many.

"Adete," he whispered, "-we're being followed," a cold gaze could be felt, one of murderous intent.

"I know," she voiced, "-use the All-seeing eyes."

The pace slowed, he shared eyesight with Adete, the same as back at the Outpost. With her aid, staring at people and watching every corner and rooftops grew easier. Paired with the ability to sense a person's personality and their aura, the combination was perfect for detecting the unknown. Left, right, he cleverly walked into different alleys till they reached a lesser populated area, a storage site for the army.

"I must have taken a wrong turn," he voiced and stared around. \*Woosh,\* the moment he turned around, a blade veiled in a crimson aura flew at him. 'Got you,' the head tilted back at the last fraction of a second. Another scan later, no one, invisible to the naked eye.

\*Ancient Magic: Teleportation,\* A snap later, "-where did he go?" the man asked.

"Right here," he said whilst leaning over the crouched assassin.

\*Scarlet Prison,\* the attacker jumped back and summoned a cage made of blood.

"A vampire?" Staxius asked nonchalantly to what had happened.

"..." No response for he remained guarded and alert.

"Give me a break," a step later, the cage broke, he dashed behind the assassin, gave an elbow which plowed the man's head onto the roof then vanished once more.

"You're the leader," he teleported a few buildings away to where Adete hovered.

"Impressive, majesty," a familiar voice. Her feet dangled off the edge for she sat atop a balustrade.

"Serene," he voiced and rested next to her, "-aren't you the least bit ashamed for trying to kill a king?"

"Not really," her voice calm and gentle, "-if the king of Arda was to die by the hands of a mid-ranked vampire, then what is to happen to the Blood King."

"Roundabout way to say that it was a test?"

"One could say so," she sighed.

"Care to tell me why you were exiled from the Nox's clan?" he turned and asked.

"A monologue about how I grew to become the person I am now," she turned, "-isn't it a bit cliché. Revealing my plot in front of a hero to then die by his hand after a long and exhausting fight."

"I do agree on that one," he gave a smile, "-why not," he put out his hand, "-rather than fight, let's do rock, paper, scissors for the final duel," the intent was legitimate.

"Seriously?" baffled by what he said, she laughed, "-a match of rock, paper, scissors to decide the outcome," her eyes teared up, "-I accept thy challenge, worthy hero."

"I'm going paper," she said, \*Rock, paper, scissors,\* she pulled out paper and he pulled out scissors.

"Thanks for telling me that you were going paper," he smirked.

"Mind game atop mind games," she sighed, "-fine, what is it that you wish to know?" her laughter turned into a frown again.

"Why were you exiled and what's your intention, in no way am I saying that we should become friends or allies. I care not – what matters is if you're going to stand in my way or not," the tone as cold as hers.

"I'm sure that you know the reason," she stared out into the city, "-I killed my parents. That much is true; I wanted power and strength. Being tied by the ways of nobility and living to just be married off so our clan could grow more is a prospect I hated. In no way was I going to allow such a thing. Then, on a moonless night, a voice called out and said to kill whoever stood in my path. My reply was that I'm weak, then it followed up with, I'll give you power. I found a way out, an opportunity to be set free. The next thing I remember was the bloodless corpse of my father and mother on the floor with grandfather right beside me. I later came to find out that it was he who forced my hands – a desperate need for a successor to take over the clan – one who could control the blood of the first progenitor. After that night, everything changed. A failed host, thrown out to be replaced by someone new," she paused and glanced over to Staxius. "As for my reasons," the gaze returned to the city, "-it's his death of course. I want to make Balthazar pay for what he did, I wish to see him suffer – what better way to kill Aurora and leave him heirless."

"Would that not make you the next heir, exiled or not, if Aurora died, you're to take over the clan. I doubt he has any other heirs laying around. You want revenge; do as you wish, I'm not going to say how one must live his life," he turned, "-but, killing Aurora isn't going to make a difference. The Nox's clan will end soon enough, her alliance to the next Blood King will force their clan into becoming a lesser force. It applies to the other clans as well, nothing you do can stop this truth. Balthazar has already accomplished his goal," after which, he deployed his wings, "-I'm the true host of the Progenitor's blood. I'm what he tried to make you become. It might be unfair," he walked closer, "-the wings and Blood-Arts prove who I am."

"I see," her tone fatigued, "-Blood King," she flew backward, "-my revenge might be for naught," now knelt on the floor, "-I know killing Aurora won't do anything, I know that grandfather has won the fight. Nothing I can do will change the outcome," she stared up, "-which leads to one end," her nails turned into claws, "-I'll kill you since you're what he wanted to make."

\*Slash,\* blood splattered across the roof, "-what a waste," he sighed and crouched. "Aren't you supposed to be strong?" he asked, for her stomach was cut open.

"Heh," she laughed and coughed blood.

"I'll ask you one more time, Serene," he stood and pushed her body with his feet, the eyes emotionless and stance without mercy, "-what is it that you want?"

"I w-want t-to r-return home and p-pay mother a visit," in that instant, her wound closed.

"Good, then you're coming with me for the succession of the Nox's clan," he jumped and landed on the edge, "I didn't spare your life, vampires are hard to kill. Immortal beings require more than claws to

slay," his hand dripped in blood, "-two zero, fight me whenever you want, I'll be waiting," a flap of the wings later, he disappeared.

#### Chapter 246: Noctic's Hallow

'The attack from Serene sure came as a surprise,' now flying towards the castle, Staxius thought about what had transpired, '-no harm was done, I got valuable information about slaying vampires. Just as I suspected, they are very much immortal. A slice from my claws didn't do much. If a fight is to break out, I doubt overpowering them will be enough. How do you kill the one who is unkillable, the same could be said about me – how does one kill me? Two options jump into mind, first, the method Gallienne used, to remove the immortality then strike. A tedious process considering she lost her eye to cast it. The second is a weapon that could bypass the powers, I've no clue on how vampire slayers fought back then. A little thing tells me that a blade infused with special mana is needed.'

"What are you thinking about?" a few meters away from the destination, Adete popped up right behind.

"I'm looking for a way to kill vampires, any ideas?" he asked for getting an answer out of her was the last thing in mind.

"Orenmir should be fine," she said without much thought.

"Excuse you?" the trip stopped momentarily, she gave a peculiar answer.

"Slaying vampires for humans is hard, not for another nightwalker. Considering you have a unique Blood-Arts, the blade of the blood queen isn't just a name, but a real thing. It has a special enchantment that allows for immortal and undead to be slain. In case of a fight, you'll be just fine," she explained without much care.

"How did humans fight though?" the flight resumed,

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"Oh, they used mana to enter contracts with demons – from there on, the demons gave them power. Not much, though it did allow them to fight on somewhat stable ground," despite recalling nothing from her prior life, Adete had information about how the war happened. Information concerning vampires, a living library.

"It's a given that a former vampire slayer would become the strongest swordsman in the continent," they landed.

"Yeah, Raulf with the help of Josiah and Tempest played an important role during the fight against nightwalkers. I'd seriously refrain from speaking their name when we head for Noctic's hallow."

"Welcome back majesty," guards bowed the moment he landed. A nod of his own, Staxius headed inside. Aurora and Balthazar currently sat in the dining hall with Xula. Meal courtesy of her majesty since they would depart on a somewhat hard trip.

"King Staxius," Balthazar spoke for the meal had ended a few minutes prior.

"A pleasure to see you," he returned a smile and approached Xula, "-I assume that preparations have been made?" the question directed at both.

“Yes, you’re free to go,” she gave a gentle smile, “-do be careful,” on that, a maid rushed.

“The u-uprising in the s-south has g-gotten out of control,” she said for the message came from Niroz, “-the general request thy council,” desperate and panting, the task assigned was completed.

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“Excuse me, everyone,” she stood.

“Do take care, majesty,” Staxius said to which she stopped and held out her hand.

“You too,” she said with genuine care, \*muah,\* a kiss on her hand later, she left with the face of one ready to fight the entire world.

“Lord Balthazar,” now alone, Staxius focused onto the grandfather and heir, “-has everything been sorted on thy side?”

“Yes, majesty,” he stood, “-Ruslan shall be joining us shortly,” they headed for the yard next to the entrance. A yard filled with delicate flowers and trees with a fountain in the middle. One could say it was but a garden, however, as people in the castle referred to it as a yard – the name stuck.

“Lord Balthazar, Aurora,” Ruslan came from the left side, “-everything is in place for the succession,” he said with a smile. Apparent was it that the man had waited for this day.

“I shall open the portal granted to us by her majesty,” a silver adorned ruby ring summoned a gateway. Tis was Balthazar’s doing, each allied race had the same ring which linked to their land or town. It functioned the same way as scrolls with a crucial difference. The use of the item was unlimited, ‘I never thought of that,’ the mere sight triggered an inspiration. ‘It explains why the mages here used Staff and wands as opposed to themselves. The assumption that it was but a mere catalyst to amplify one’s strength was baseless. To have the ability to cast a spell infinitely, mages didn’t need to use that much mana.’

“Majesty,” kicked out the spur of inspiration, a familiar voice spoke, an aura unlike another approached.

“It can’t be,” Balthazar’s eyes’ narrowed, the already wrinkled forehead had a few more added. A visible sense of agitation and anguish, the crimson eye lit.

“Have you made thy decision?” Staxius asked impervious to the other vampires’ expression and change in demeanor.

“Uh-hm,” she nodded in agreement.

“No trouble since I won,” a simple line that made no sense to any onlookers.

“Yes,” she knew what he implied. Subtle as he was, only she noticed his hand tapping gently at a sword. A threat that if she made any move to try and hurt him or Aurora, instant death. The fear settled in, without a weapon and with her best move – a single blow sufficed to bring the lady crashing down. A display of power that none could dare to contest.

“Do pardon my curiosity,” Ruslan asked with a not so inviting tone, “-what is she doing here?”

“Serene could jeopardize the whole succession,” Balthazar added.

“Not to mention that she’s known to drink blood from her kind without much remorse,” said Aurora in turn.

“Good arguments all around,” Serene said with a merciless gaze, “-but she isn’t here to cause trouble,” Staxius interjected, “-Serene will be my guide for the entirety of the trip. If she does try to make a move, I can reassure that a flash of light will be the last thing she sees,” a gentle gaze behind which hid an unquenchable thirst for bloodshed and carnage.

“As his majesty said, I’m but a guide. Exiled from the Nox’s clan, I now serve the royal family of Arda, nothing more nothing less,” her speech settled.

“If you say so,” grudgingly, Balthazar stepped foot inside.

“Don’t provoke them,” he whispered, “-I’m glad that the invitation was accepted. Nonetheless, don’t do anything that might force me to slay you, Serene. I’d hate to lose a fighter to something stupid,” he entered.

A city divided into two halves, of which the separation was a wall. Three third, of the town, was given to the commoners and lesser vampires whilst the remainder was where nobility stayed. Elevated since the land here was slated – it gave them more power for they live at the top whilst the others remained down. The only way inside the noble district was a stairway that came after the wall.

Two different types of life, the lesser weren’t treated that badly. Considering they had an ounce of vampire blood coursing through their veins, they were given ample freedom. Living conditions weren’t that bad either, small as it may be, the houses were beautiful to look at on the exterior. The people wore formal clothes and felt well-mannered despite being the inferiors. A gloomy atmosphere and grey sky were what one could expect. The seldom sun remained a rare guest – a good thing considering their weakness. Reason being the location; long ago, a barrier was put in place to stop any sunlight to ever reach down. A secluded refuge for nightwalkers.

The blessed lived like kings and queens. Money, fresh blood from humans, and much more. Feeding off blood grew from a means of survival to a delicacy. The few who were unlucky humans to have bad-tasting blood were thrown to the lower level. There, they would be kept alive for the sole purpose of their blood. Drained, day after day as if cattle, many died shortly after.

Four clans remained atop the hierarchy, they ruled over the land. Namely: The Nox’s clan, with its leader being Balthazar. Onyx, led by Alaric Eoin, the Sabbath led by Julia Fawn. Last but not least, Gabrielle Izora of the Lié par le Sang clan. Together, these four held power over nightwalkers.

The Onyx’s clan, a group of individuals who craved human blood. Their sole purpose was the search of said delicacy. Short in numbers but influential for many of its members held the title of Viscount and above.

The Sabbath clan, the group in charge of taking care of public order. The guards that serve to destroy and kill any who ventured into their domain. Close allies with Nox’s clan, both leaders were intimately tied till a few decades ago.

Lié par le Sang, which translated into tied by blood, is the only recognized clan from the lower class. As a member of the Ardanian's council, the lady represents the lower class as a balance to Balthazar who represented the nobility.

The Nox's clan were a powerhouse, even if the three other clans could one day join together and fight, they'd end up being destroyed without mercy. Reason being, Balthazar and his special guard unit – vampires with both the blood of a vampire and demon. Monsters that once unleashed could ruin a whole city in mere days. Even so, never has it come across the leader's mind to take over the whole city. Quiet and peaceful with people having a place to belong – a good way to live considering their numbers. Needless bloodshed was to be avoided. Since vampires had a low chance of conceiving, it's dishonorable to take one's life. Having a kid run around the street was rare, and when it happened, none could but smile and laugh. From the outside looking into the community, the only thing one might take out of it is oppression. There were always two sides to the same coin, from the inside looking out – the inhabitants were happy. Tied by blood, noble or not, they had a place to belong and live. The job of the four clans was to protect its citizen without care for class. The purity of blood affected how powerful someone could be, thus the discrimination.

As a whole, the four clans were friendly. Behind shut doors, a few individuals wanted but one thing, the collapse of the current hierarchy. A shift in power, the thirst for greater strength and authority. What better way to put those who wished to disturb the peace down to earth than the mighty fighters of Nox. Simplified as a whole, tis was the situation in Noctis's Hallow.

"For one who was supposed to be exiled, you sure know a lot," teleported just shy of the stairway. Staxius commented after a summary of the area was given.

"I'm thy guide after all," they followed Balthazar up north. Good looking mansions with the residents outside walking and chatting. Kids were rare but a few ran around from left to right playing tag.

"We are here," said Balthazar once they reached the upper sector of the city. Three separation – a giant roundabout. In the middle, the mansion where the Nox's clan resided. To the right, The Onyx and the left, The Sabbath. A five-minute walk from each other – they were very much far apart.

"Aurora, go to thy room and get prepared," the old man ordered.

"What about us?" Staxius asked.

"Ruslan will take care of the next Blood-King," he replied with a smile.

"This way," Ruslan said, Serene followed closely. A nostalgic feeling whelmed her mind from each step.

"I doubt that the succession and coronation ceremony will happen on the same day," Staxius voiced for it seemed that preparations were yet to be done.

"On the contrary, majesty," Ruslan led the way inside, "-it's imperative that both are performed on the same day. The crowning of the Blood-King in front of the other clans to avoid a shift in the hierarchy. Messages have already been sent. The leaders should come around soon enough."

Chapter 247: Succession



For the next few hours, the Nox's mansion was readied for the succession. Its yard slowly filled with carriages as opposed to cars. Inside, on the first floor, a massive banquet hall for it was mandatory for the leading clan to own. Inside, a high ceiling with tables filled of glasses containing a red liquid. One might make the mistake of it being wine, sadly, it was a present from the Onyx's clan – the blood of countless humans, still trapped in dungeons or caves.

Before it all began, in the company of Ruslan and Serene who reminisced about where she grew, they strolled around. The décor, minimalistic yet elegant; Balthazar vanished the moment he entered earlier. Aurora, on the other hand, got dressed for the occasion.

"Lord Ruslan," a butler with spotted black ears called, "-the guests are due to arrive in the coming minutes. Master Balthazar said to stand at the door with Serene and Staxius," a demi-human, out of all the races – they were less likely to be targeted. Their kind has always been the weaker out of the alliance – consequently, nightwalkers were the strongest. The weak working for the strong and the strong providing for the weak. Tis was the arrangement, the butler seemed to enjoy his life; what could one need more.

"With pleasure, do tell Lord Balthazar to get Aurora readied," Ruslan sent off the messenger.

"You seem quite accepting of demi-humans," Staxius said having observed the little interaction.

"We're not that heartless," he paused unnaturally as if the words were jumbled up, "-let me rephrase, we are heartless as well as accepting of other races," he headed for the door.

"It's true," Serene voiced after Staxius glared with skepticism.

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"What's the sudden outburst for," the tone changed to one baffled, "-all I did was take a glance," he sighed.

"Yes, a glance that could trigger a blizzard," she voiced with a sigh of her own.

"Could you both stop sighing," Ruslan voiced in a harsh tone, the sighing grew out of hand.

Now stood on the right side from where the guest would enter. In a line separate from butlers and maid, they waited for guests. "Is there something peculiar I must do?" he asked after the sound of hooves clapping on the stone bricked path echoed.

"Not really, just greet them as you would any noble," Ruslan replied after which neighs followed. The first to arrive in a black and red carriage on which had the crest of fangs with a drop of blood.

"That's the Onyx's clan," Serene whispered and stood in line, her attitude changed to one respectful.

"Greetings Lord Eoin," a man dressed formally with shortened black hair and circular glasses. One who seemed to have a refinement the same as well-aged wine.

"Greetings Ruslan," he spoke with delight and entered with the company of two ladies and three gentlemen. 'Judging by their attire, nobility, lower – probably above the title of Baron and below Count,' Staxius made a mental note of all who walked in.

“Who might this dashing young man be?” Eoin turned his attention to Staxius, “-you seem rather elegant for someone I know not,” the gaze went up and down in a flirtatious manner.

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“The same could be said about you, Lord Eoin. If I may be so bold, I’d go as far as say that thou embody the truest sense of the word refine,” Staxius said with a dignified tone and unfaltering posture.

“A sharp tongue to boot,” he grew closer, “-I’d like to know more about you,” another step back – he went further inside. The nobles behind exchanged a few words of their own then followed suit, on the way inside, Serene and the Lord stared one another closely.

“Eccentric,” Staxius mumbled after it returned to them three again.

“That’s Lord Eoin for you, quite a pleasurable fellow to have a friend and a relentless bloodsucker. That man’s thirst has never been quenched,” a quick summary given by Ruslan, “-majesty, you sure know your way around with words and tone,” impressed by how the situation was handled he could but give a compliment.

“It’s not that difficult, vampire or not, every conscious mind has a faint weakness when it comes to interaction with another being. Finding said thread and pulling on it can end in many different results,” interrupted by other carriages, he stared out the door eager to know who had come.

“Ruslan,” as opposed to a gown, a lady approached wearing a suit. The crest on the carriage was one of a sword covered with blood. Around her waist, a white and silvery scabbard.

“Lady Fawn,” the same empty exchange and compliments. Though, her voice was sharp and strong – very much different from Eoin.

“Staxius Haggard,” she took a strong step towards him, “-I heard many things from the shadows,” she glared. ‘Intimidation I assume,’ he thought.

“I’ve also heard many things about you, Lady Fawn,” the stance remained strong and stern, a direct confrontation, “-a strong swordswoman,” with a tap, Orenmir appeared, “-I’d like to cross swords with you sometime my lady, for the clashing of blades is the best way to know our opponent’s soul.”

“None could have said it any wiser,” she stepped back and kept the strong face, “-well met, Staxius, well met. I shall hope that thy soul is as strong as thy aura,” on that, she headed inside followed by seven nobles, all women with swords and weapons.

“Are you insane?” called Serene, “-that could have ended badly,” her concerns were well-grounded.

“May I ask how you knew she was a good swordsman?” Ruslan asked.

“I lied, anyone who carries a sword must be confident in their ability,” on that, the last carriage arrived. One not that impressive for it was Gabrielle, leader of Lié par le Sang Clan. Her crest, a dead tree with no leaves.

“Majesty, Ruslan, what are you both doing here?” her speech seemed shy and not that powerful. Being in the Ardanian council, she knew who stood before her. In the transition to making a courteous bow, “-Lady Izora,” he interjected. “There’s no need to lower thyself here. I’m but a visiting guest, not the king

of Arda but a fellow nightwalker,” her stance seemed fatigued, almost fragile. Black hair ending with white, dark circles under her eyes and a frown that could barely make a smile – the representative stood with none behind her.

“I see,” she stared up weakly, “-thanks for that,” her rather slumped posture headed upstairs.

“That should be it for everyone that is of consequence. Other nobles might come; however, we need not worry about them,” Ruslan returned. The three powerhouses were present. Stood in different corners with their own group, the hall divided quickly. It seemed most of the men didn’t want to approach the Sabbath clan. Onyx was a little weird for they all remained at the table sipping blood. The majority were closed in on Balthazar and Aurora.

“This should be interesting,” Serene voice, she stood beside Staxius at the farthest corner in the back of the room.

“It might not seem like it but there’s a definite quandary here. The clans aren’t united in the least. The leaders haven’t once dared speak, much less stare at one another. From what I can see, Gabrielle is alienated from the rest. Lady Fawn has been trying to approach Lord Balthazar for the past few minutes now, her face seems flushed.”

“Well they did have a private relation going a few decades ago,” Serene added.

“Yes, something about that was said earlier on,” the scan continued, “-is it me or does Eoin act eccentrically to push people away from the real agendas he might have?”

“Who’s to say really,” Adete came forth, “-sleeping in the back pocket sure is inconvenient,” now stood on his shoulder, the two watched.

“Who might you be?” Serene asked.

“I’m Adete, this man’s precious lover,” she added in jest.

“Lover, it could be farther from the truth, first progenitor,” he fired back sarcastically.

“Yes, I am the first progenitor,” her head held high, “-bow before me, you who have inherited my blood,” she said for the jest continued.

“May I have your attention please,” a butler spoke loudly, the little back and forth ended. “-Lord Balthazar wishes to have a word,” on that, the nobles moved in closer to the front of the room. A little podium had been built expressly for today.

“It begins,” Staxius followed, “-and remember, Serene, no trouble. Once this whole thing is over, you’ll be free to do what you want.”

“I know majesty, I serve the royal family, do have a little faith,” her tone seemed tired.

“First and foremost, I’d like to thank you all for coming on so short notice,” he took center stage, “-today is an auspicious day. Long has it been I’ve ruled over this city we’ve built. A community where the four clans reign supreme. As time flows, the world around us age, but we, immortal beings, never seem to age. We’re stuck, a relic of the past, one may relish the thought while another might hate its implication. The fact remains that time has relinquished its grip over our bodies and mind. The body might not have

changed, but the mind sure has grown tired. My goal, as the holder of the first progenitor's blood, was to always carry out her will. Said task has been accomplished," he called onto Aurora. "-my purpose as the leader of the Nox's clan is complete," another ring, one made of a crimson and dark color on which their crest lived – was taken off. "Aurora from today forth will become the rightful successor of the Nox's clan," a succession that happened without anyone knowing. It came out of the blue, a smart move considering the possible risk of an uprising if it had been announced.

A wave of shock and confusion rattled the crowd, though none dared to speak.

"I, Aurora Balthazar, solemnly swore to uphold my duty as the leader of the Nox's clan," the ring handed over, nothing could be done – in that instant, the power shifted.

\*Clap, clap, clap,\* slow applause from a single man, Alaric Eoin. "That sure was a smart move from you, Lord Balthazar," he moved closer, "-a succession that came almost without our knowing," the face held a smirk. "You must have known, the moment you stepped off from the seat of power, another clan would come forth to take its place. Survival of the fittest, the strongest is he who deserves to lead us," a speech that echoed into everyone's heart.

"Alaric," Fawn moved in and stood between the two clans, "-dare to make a move onto Aurora and I'll have thy head onto a stick laid out for all to see," her aura, murderous and unforgiving.

"Fawn, my dear Fawn, isn't it a bit too much. A holding passion for that man who killed and his own kin and alienated his own blood for the sake of a personal agenda," footsteps echoed, "-Serene Balthazar is the worthy successor, not a pretender."

'Did he just say Serene,' in that instant, the girl vanished. She stood near Alaric, '-that wink they gave to one another earlier. It must have been long time coming. Don't tell me that she plotted with them before,' flash images rushed the mind. 'It's obvious that she knew. The fight against me was to check if I truly inherited the first progenitors' blood. Sending messages back and forth, she knew what was to happen as an inside man,' he glared towards where the commotion happened. What awaited was a smirk and a wink, she had outplayed him without even realizing the underlying truth.

"Lord Balthazar, you have grown dull," Serene spoke out, "-I'm the true heir to the Nox's clan. Aurora would have been but a figurehead. Listen to me all, he planned to bow down to – \*SLASH.\*"

"AHHHHHH," screams echoed all round the hall.

"I hate when people lie to me," a sword pierced straight through Serene's stomach, "-you should have known better," he whispered, "-I care not who anyone is, lie to me and I swear I'll end thine life," a downward slash opened her body.

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, YOU FOOL," Alaric summoned his wing and rushed forth with claws, \*Slash,\* both hands cut off the moment he tried to grab Staxius's back.

"Survival of the fittest was it?" he spoke in a monotonous voice, Alaric fell to the floor, "-are you the next to stand in my way?" a dark aura went around the room, more than chills, the nobles were glued to their feet. Even Sabbath couldn't move. Blade pointed at Alaric's neck with Serene bleeding on the floor, \*snap,\* the void flame conjured after which her body turned to dust.

Chapter 248: Serene Balthazar

“Settle down, majesty,” from behind the Sabbath’s protection, Balthazar came forth.

“Don’t do it,” asked their leader worriedly. An open palm thrown towards the left gave the signal for the guards to stand down. It included lady Fawn.

“Give me a reason to settle down, lord Balthazar. What is it that stops me from taking this weakling’s life?” a murderous gaze fueled by wrath; the thirst to kill grew strong.

“Heh,” Alaric laughed, “-I knew from the first gaze that you were strong, Staxius Haggard, King of Arda,” he stared up, “-WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR,” the head turned, “-GET HIM,” instantly, the five nobles who had accompanied him sprouted wings and pounced.

‘Better fall back,’ he thought then jumped. The five made a wall between Staxius and Alaric.

“Serene’s intel stood true,” from knelt, the man stood, “-you sure are powerful,” he walked nonchalantly toward the sliced off arms. Not much effort was required for it to be reattached.

“Alaric, is this really the path you chose?” asked Balthazar, “-do you wish to be traitor to the four clans?”

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“Yes, I’ll be a traitor if it needs to be. I shall never bow down to someone weaker than you, Balthazar. The one who took control and ruled using sheer strength and power. The ideal leader for our kin. Little number as we are, if the people are to follow a weakling, we’ll go extinct in mere years,” he stared at Staxius, “-in no way do I crave power. What I crave is a strong leader – one who can guarantee our survival. Serene is the perfect fit, she has the blood of the progenitor in her veins – the true leader of Nox, not Aurora.”

“Alaric has a point,” Fawn voiced, her hand seemed to grip her sword tightly, “-I acted on emotions as opposed to logic. If it’s survival of our race, then I can’t help but switch sides, I apologize,” from guarding Aurora; they stood behind Alaric.

“What about you, Lady Gabrielle,” Balthazar turned and asked her who had tried to remain inconspicuous.

“A-as a council member of Arda, I’m duty-bound to side with my king,” she walked over and stood beside Staxius. Clans versus clans: Nox and Tied by Blood against Onyx and Sabbath.

“Be that as it may,” Balthazar took a strong step in front, “-as long as I hold this ring,” their crest shone, “-I’m still the leader of Nox. All who opposes my will shall perish without an ounce of mercy.”

“W-what do you mean?” Alaric asked the nobles who gave him their support. “Don’t listen to him,” a special kind of blood arts, one that allowed the user to transmit thoughts and utilize telepathy.

“It’s simple,” said Staxius with a smile, \*Ancient Magic: Teleportation,\* a blueish dim turned into a blinding light. “You were outplayed from the beginning,” Serene reappeared. ‘A plot that I had no part in. Her words were vague, her smirk and wink, she truly wanted me to kill her. It felt wrong from the start, her words and action sometimes were incohesive. The two major lines that told of this scheme were, her yearning to go back and the resolve to serve the royal family. Many blank spaces were left,’ he stared at Serene, “-you wanted to find out any traitors. Tis was the true purpose; a selfless play with thy

life as collateral,” Staxius voiced, no one else knew what she had done, “-her majesty the queen would be proud,” a pat on back to congratulate her efforts.

“Serene, what’s the meaning of this?” Balthazar asked while the others could but stare and watch.

“I wanted to go visit mother and father’s grave as well as bid you farewell, grandfather. This grudge I’ve held in the end had no purpose. I met new people and made new friends, Queen Shanna gave me a home and a new goal. Never can I turn my back on her, she’s done so much I could spend an eternity repaying and still come short,” she faced Staxius, “-I made it painfully obvious that I had used my king to accomplish a selfish goal. I remember the first time I heard about King Staxius, it was decided that he would be the perfect candidate. A scheme that relied on one factor alone, the mercilessness and a thirst for killing,” she bowed, “-I apologize for having used thy in such a way, majesty.”

“There’s no need. It was very well executed, the strike I gave was true and meant to kill. However, the words you whispered before dying, take care of Shanna, and lead our kingdom to eternal happiness. Parting words that changed the whole ordeal,” he stared at Alaric and the nobles behind. “Drop the act and give up, you have been defeated by the wit of an exiled vampire.”

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\*Slash,\* four strikes aimed at Alaric’s limbs. “Can we remove these disguises now?” asked one of the nobles.

“Yeah,” another one agreed. The skin decayed and revealed half-demons. “Guess the pawn has accomplished its purpose, what you say One?” a lady asked.

“Gullible and wanting to protect his race, how chivalrous,” said the lady named One.

“Those ancient marking on thy forehead,” the aura around Staxius changed, “-there are in demon tongue, aren’t they?” \*Death Element: Unleash Aura,\* “-numbered One to Five, do you serve the demons who attacked the late King of Hidros?”

“So dense,” complained Serene, it nearly forced all who stood on their knees.

\*Tap,\* the real Orenmir uncloaked and remained sheathed.

“Scary...” laughed the boy named Three, “-Five, can I please slay him?” he licked his lips.

“Not yet, Three,” said Four.

“King of Arda,” the leader, one with the number Five tattooed onto his forehead walked forth, “-strong as one might be, we’ve got two of the vampire clan’s noble as a hostage,” he referred to Alaric who bled and Fawn who remained dumbfounded.

“Heh,” \*Death Element: Unleash Aura x2,\* “-hostage you say?” a black mist emanated from the floor upwards, it formed a head that had its skin burnt perpetually. \*Ancient Magic: Teleportation.\*

“Yes, Hostage, the ones that stand behind us,” the boy named Three voiced and pointed, “-where are they?” he asked confused by the sudden disappearance. The unleash Aura had no visible effect on the five half-demons, though it did put their guard up.

“Teleportation without touching the target, how impressive,” the leader clapped.

“Who said I didn’t touch them,” \*Blood-Arts: Crimson Thread,\* the thin, almost invisible line that traveled through the floor came out and sliced the lady named One’s head clean off. No regeneration nothing, her body turned into mist and vanished.

“SISTER,” screamed Two, “-HOW DARE YOU,” wings sprouted from her back and charged without warning.

“WAIT,” Four tried to reach out but came up short, another thin line appeared. From head to toe, said thread used the lady’s momentum to slice her body horizontally for she flew. A slump of organs and blood fell to the floor, \*Blood-Arts: Bloody Mary,\* now readied, Adete stood atop Staxius’s head and turned all their blood into crystals. Not turning into an orb, the blood now shining, levitated, and formed a halo.

“Stand back everyone,” the leader, now shaken up by how easily One and Two were killed, halted any presumptuous attacks, “-using your blood to touch the hostages and then teleporting them away. We might have bitten off more than we can chew here boys,” with a smirk, he glanced over, “-how about a trade, information on who sent us for our lives?”

\*Death Element: Magical Barrier,\* summoned to cover any escape, the leader got his answer. “It was fun while it lasted,” he turned to Three and Four then charged.

“Fools,” \*click,\* the cursed sword unsheathed, a projectile of miasma flew straight towards him. The pressure from said weapon sufficed, the screaming souls manifested and blocked the attack then proceeded to attack the assaulter.

“Thanks for falling for the bait,” whispered Three, the tip of a blade stood mere millimeters from Staxius’s head, \*clang,\* faster than the eye could track, he seemed static. Behind, the vertically sliced body of Three fell on either side.

“Four, we’re officially fucked,” said the leader, “-even so,” they held hands, “-if we die, we’re taking you all with us,” their markings lit, a heavy sound echoed. \*Slash,\* the nails on both thumbs grew sharp and sliced off Staxius’s index fingers. \*Blood-Arts: Bloodied Gate,\* an oval-shaped barrier engulfed the duo, \*Spell: Augmented Mana Output x2, Death Element: Magical Barrier,\* hands pressed together, the pentagram on the palm lit vividly. Simultaneously, a pair of ethereal hands pressed against the scarlet-colored barrier. \*BANG,\* the muscles around his elbows and arms blew open as the explosion got contained. \*Dispel,\* with a sigh and bones out for all to see, the attackers’ corpse, now mist, fell to the floor peacefully. Time taken was three minutes. Most of the moments didn’t register even for a nightwalker. In their eyes, Staxius remained untouched till the last moment where both hands were pressed.

“Adete, how’s the quality of the blood?”

“Meh, not worth the time. It has the texture of part Monster and part demon,” she got to take a bite from the halo that turned Orb. “What about you,” she hovered before his face, “-how was the fight?” she held a smirk.

“Entertaining,” he winked, “-now then,” regeneration kicked in, “-what is to happen to the succession?” now facing a crowd of nobles; his eyes narrowed.

“Are you serious,” Serene knelt instantly, “-I apologize for sending that assassin earlier today,” her voice filled with fear.

“This is a first,” Balthazar laughed, “-to witness the Protector of Arda in action,” he bowed, “-such power and skill deserve the utmost respect.”

“About that sparring match,” Fawn bowed in turn, “-I humbly refuse.”

“Can we get back to business, what is to happen to the succession?” Staxius got all on track again.

“Yes, the thing at hand,” clearing his throat, Balthazar spoke, “-all the traitors have been taken care of. It’s shameful to see that some of our members were killed as if insects,” he headed back onto the podium, “-even so, my decision remains,” the ring was now handed over.

“N-no...” a faint whimpering disturbed the silence.

“Have you not learned thy lesson?” asked Fawn for it was Alaric, he breathed.

“Lord Alaric,” Aurora, now officially the leader of the Nox’s clan, took strides and stood before Staxius, “-what you said about us needing a strong leader holds,” she knelt with her gaze at the floor. “Lord Staxius, I, leader of the Nox’s clan, wishes to pledge my alliance to thy crown.”

“What’s the meaning of this?” Fawn asked, a little confused by her choice of words.

“Could you kindly?” Balthazar whispered.

“As you wish,” he took a deep breath and sprouted the wings. “As the true heir to the First Progenitor, I accept thy pledge as the Blood-King,” she took his hand and kissed his palm. A ceremony to show one’s allegiance.

“Before questions are asked, let me recount a tale,” interjected Balthazar. He told the story of the birth of vampires, his goals, Staxius’s involvement, and much more. It gave more context to Aurora’s actions. The fate of their kind remained in one person’s hand – the hand of the Blood King.

“I, Alaric Eoin of the Onyx’s clan, pledge my clan and my name under thy rule, Blood King,” healed thanks to the blood from the table, the one responsible was second to accept Staxius.

“I, Julia Fawn of the Sabbath clan, pledge to serve and protect, Blood King.”

“I, Gabrielle Izora of the Lié par le Sang clan, pledge to support the Blood King any way thou desires.”

The birth of the Blood King’s faction and backed by the influential clans of Noctis’s Hallow, a new rule fell in place. There exist more vampire clans out there in the world, concerning Hidros, there were a few here and about. Hidden for the most part; none paid heed.

‘It’s done Xula, the vampires shall soon rejoin the Ardanian crown soon. The half-demons did seem a bit out of place. Rumors about Balthazar’s half-demons and half-vampires does fit their involvement. If that’s the case, both grandfather and granddaughter have an uncanny talent at conspiracies. I might have just played into their hands, first Serene, and then Balthazar. Best be on the look-out, can’t get



complacent for at every turn there's a conspiracy brewing. Else, I might be looking at this the wrong way,' he stared at Balthazar,'-things might get humorous soon.'

#### Chapter 249: Blood-King's Faction

Shrouded in darkness with the midnight sky somber for the moon was hidden by cloud, with bats who went on the prowl at night. A girl stood before two gravestones on which the name of a man and a woman had been engraved. It ended with Balthazar, "-so this is where your parents are buried?" a deep voice came from the left.

"Yes," she replied without much concern. Crackling of leaves and sticks followed as the figure approached. Together, each paid their respects. A tiny smile paired with a few tears on her petite face. Said droplets gently grazed across her visage to end up on the floor. A little dirt pasture, dark for normal humans – grew moist. Each drop had its own shape and size. Each one meant someone new, "-thanks for everything," she turned with squinted eyes.

"There's no need for that," he handed a handkerchief, "-Serene, you're the reason why the traitors of the inside were exposed. All and all, the coronation went without trouble." Dressed in formal attire for vampires, Staxius stood with the gaze fixed on said graves.

"Can't believe that almost a week has gone by," her stance returned, the woefulness around subsided, "-we're leaving tomorrow," the first step taken, she headed back to the Nox's mansion.

"Go on ahead," seeing her stop at the gate, Staxius said to not wait.

Six days had passed since his coronation and the whole incident involving the half-demons. The first after which the announcement of the new Blood-King was made, many nobles dropped by for visits. Balls and parties organized to celebrate the occasion; Onyx's clan handled all the entertainment. It went on for two days until every noble had been satisfied. The third day, with the help of Gabrielle, they snuck out to visit the lesser vamps. Many were taken by surprise, pamphlets containing Staxius's portrait and title as King laid about the streets and walls. The news had reached every ear. It was given that he who was king came strolling downtown without protection. Led by Gabrielle, at a small meet hosted by her clan – he interacted with the lesser nightwalkers. Many seemed weak and fragile, their faces slumped but kept up a strong front. When asked if there was anything they wanted to change, the reply was but a simple, "-we're content with all we have. A home to live, a place to smile, and spend the rest of eternity hidden from the sun. What more can we ask, the four clans have been very diligent when it came to handling our situation."

If people were happy, there was no need to refute their feelings. That in mind, he joined into some of their practices and played along. The first emotion sensed was reluctance and skepticism. The more time he spent, the more attached the people grew. Forced by his guide, the third night was spent in the company of Gabrielle and her clan.

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Next came the fourth day, the target now was Julia Fawn. The latter had witnessed Staxius's prowess with a blade and the sheer strength wielded as a vampire. The confidence as a guard began to fade. The Sabbath, a clan made up mostly of females and a place restricted to men, was stormed in. Alone with Adete as a back-up, the Blood King barged through the front door and demanded a duel. King or not, he

had brought trouble for he was male. The response from the maids and fighters was to try and vanquish the intruder.

Armed with only a wooden sword carved out of dead-wood; the entirety of the Sabbath clan, presumably, the strongest people here in Noctis's Hallow, were defeated. Not by overpowering – the deciding factor was the speed. Eyes closed with shadow-step active and fueled by the augmented body – hit after hit, Julia's army fell.

"What's the meaning of this, majesty?" barely awake, the lady came downstairs.

"I've come to test out how mighty thine forces are," he proclaimed whilst standing in front of a pile of unconscious bodies. "-Here," another wooden sword got thrown her way. Impressed yet somewhat insulted, she dashed down the flight of stairs and fought. To his surprise, the lady could keep up.

"That's enough," for a second, the velocity he had turned down for the sake of fairness, maxed out. Her mind had no time processing what happened, the next thing was her body faced upon the ground.

"It might have been a bit harsh to barge in and take down thy forces," he bowed and stared down, "-I do apologize but if I'm to trust that the city is to be protected. I need to have thee work harder. I sensed it the moment I walked in, you and your girls think that thou art invincible," the posture straightened, "-it's sadly not true," the face fixed on the guards who now woke. "Get up," he held out a hand, "-there's work to do," on that, without much instruction, he left. A show of strength to force their motivation. A swordsman however skill he might be, must always strive for greater strength. A lesson Tempest burnt into his core and now handed over to Julia.

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Two days remained; most of the focus turned to set up a council. The same as Arda had; a place where all had a hand in deciding what came next. The prior rule was that of strength, what Balthazar said was law. This all changed, the four clans had a place to voice their inquietudes and oppose any decision if it was out of line. Julia Fawn, Gabrielle Izora, Alaric Eoin, Aurora Balthazar, not to forget, Staxius Haggard who presided over the four clans. It came as a surprise when Alaric was offered a new chance to serve the city again. When asked why he did such a thing, "-betrayed and then given a chance to live. Alaric won't dare to go against the council ever again. It's as simple as that. What he witnessed was true strength – it's for the best as opposed to bringing another unknown in."

Exiled by her family, Serene could never go back to the Nox's clan. The other families were too scared to take her in; the misunderstood rumors about her lingered still in alleys.

Then on the sixth day, the same day she visited the grave, a meet was called.

"Is something the matter?" sat inside the Nox's mansion, Lady Fawn asked.

"I have an important announcement," loud and clear, Staxius spoke as if something major was to happen, \*Click,\* the door opened and revealed somebody unexpected. "I've appointed someone as proxy between me and the nightwalkers," footsteps echoed, the girl was none other than Serene.

"Finally," said Alaric with a sigh of relief, "-lady Serene is the one who made all this happen," still regretful, the man tried hard to reconcile with all.

“Cousin Serene?” Aurora said the name inquisitively.

“It’s as the Blood King says,” she stood beside him, “-I’ve been appointed as his majesty’s proxy and secretary.”

“Are you sure about this?” asked Gabrielle with a cough.

“Listen up,” the tone changed, “-the only reason I took part in this coronation was for one purpose alone. To halt any uprising following Aurora’s succession. My goal is to join the Blood King’s faction to the Ardanian crown again. To that end, the four council combine have the same power as me, the king. In case of emergencies or trouble, without anyone breathing down thine neck with some personal agenda – I’d like for you all to resolve the issue. I’ve seen first hand how people live. They are truly happy, it’s a peace I wish not to disturb; hand in hand, I do believe that the four noble clans are worthy of such an endeavor. Serene being the proxy, will make the trip back and forth from here to the capital when needed. In no way am I going to neglect my duties. I will protect this city and the kingdom of Arda from outside threats. The threats that are on the inside is to be handle by you all,” he paused and stood, “-is there anyone who wishes to speak up?”

“No majesty,” said Lady Fawn, “-it’s best this way. Nightwalkers aren’t that popular; this city is the only asylum we’ve got.”

“There won’t be the threat of a coup d’état, you’ve made that painfully obvious,” said Alaric with a chuckle.

“Joining back with Arda is the smart choice,” Gabrielle added.

“We might have wished to be separated at one time,” Aurora stared at Alaric, “-should be fine, for if that were to come to pass, our city might become known to all.”

“I’m glad that everyone is on the same page,” Staxius stood, “-thank you all for making the trip so late at night. The fate of this city is in thine hands,” they stood in turn.

“Have a safe trip home,” they gave their best regards and headed out.

‘That should handle everything for now. All of them combined have the same power as a king. This means that they can also take away my power and alienate the Blood King. Serene working as my secretary and proxy should be fine. I don’t need to change anything as of yet. My job here is done, tomorrow will be the launch of the Adventuring guild,’ now in bed, the lights turned dark.

Meanwhile, in Arda, Xula got the news that the Blood King decided to return to the Ardanian alliance. The day the news of the coronation reached the capital, many of the representatives were scared. For if that new faction was to set-free, a possible war could break out. Neither of the vampires was present in the castle for all had been called back home. The elven and other races prepared for the worst. Each day ended with the fear of a declaration of war. The paranoia set in; during council meetings, Queen Shanna remained equanimous.

“Majesty, why haven’t you call back the Royal Guards yet?” Niroz asked amidst the meet.

“Simply because I have faith,” she gave a poetic response, “-the Blood-King does sound scary, however, I know he’ll make the right choice,” only a few people knew the identity of the mysterious ruler. Not wanting to cause trouble, she ordered all who knew to remain silent.

Morning came faster than usual, Staxius awoke with a yawn. Dressed and ready to leave, with Serene in tow, the council gave their goodbyes. “May you have a safe trip. Leave the city to us,” on those words, they returned to Arda. News about the Blood-King seeking audience with her majesty reached many ears. The representatives of each race jumped the gun to witness what was to unfold.

“Welcome to Arda, Blood-King,” sat on her throne, Xula spoke loudly. The upstairs was filled with people; they each held their breaths. They might have seemed childish and needlessly paranoid, however, the war against an immortal race was a nightmare. Everyone knew how strong they were.

“I’m grateful for the warm welcome,” face hidden by a top-hat, the man walked in with a girl dressed in black.

“May I know the reason of thine visit?” the Queen asked in a sharp voice.

“With pleasure,” the tone unfaltering, “-I’ve come to wage war,” it sent chills down their spines.

“INSOLENCE,” the guards jumped and made a wall between Shanna and the Blood-King.

“We’re doomed,” called one of the nobles.

“Not if I can help it,” a foolish elf drew her bow.

“Care to let me finish?” the man spoke again, “-I’m here to wage war,” the top hat removed, white and red hair rolled down, “-against monsters.” he turned and winked.

“King Staxius?” they eyed one another, “-Is this for real?”

“HA-HA,” both he and Xula laughed at how paranoid the nobles became. A few minutes went by, the confusion settled and the mood lightened.

“In all seriousness,” he spoke once more, “-I, Staxius Haggard, the Blood-King, on behalf of my people, wish to join the Ardanian crown.”

“I, Queen Shanna Islegust, welcome thee with open arms, my king,” thus, the issue of succession and nightwalkers came to a close. As expected, there would be mishaps soon enough; though that would be handled in due time. Serene joined back with Xula’s personal guard. The expedition and extermination of the frost giants could start at last. In the grand scheme of things, Staxius becoming the Blood-king meant nothing at all. Just as Xula ruled over the other races, he ruled over the vampires.

#### Chapter 250: Arda’s Guild

The joke, a farce with the sole intent of causing a little bit of mischief was well received. Announcements were made, the Ardanian crown had the Blood-King’s faction. The latter joined in goodwill, if a time of crisis would arise, the alliance would be twice if not thrice as strong as before. Immortal beings fighting on the frontline, the sheer thought sent jolts of excitement down the General’s feet.

A week had gone by, with the possibility of a coup now nullified. The attention switched to the Adventuring guild. On the day the evaluation orb was brought in; many asked questions as to why said building was up in the first place. On the second day, the official announcements made by her majesty, stating all the facts and knows about the guild got publicized. They who fought without pay on the front lines for the sake of their home – had a purpose given to them. The Royal Guards, still occupying a few makeshift outposts near goblin camps and monster hordes; were told to slowly pull back their forces. The operation was due in the coming days after the guild got up and running.

Under obnoxious looking chandeliers, inside the dining hall with a feast on the table. Staxius and Xula had lunch. Everyone else was ordered to stay outside said room. A moment of privacy. Neither wanted to disrupt the peaceful moment for the focus laid upon the succulent slices of meat.

“May I ask how the village down East is coming along?” a reference to the place which would spearhead the alliance between both Kingdoms.

“It’s coming along quite nicely,” her fork rested atop the table, the meal finished, “-part of the Royal guards are stationed there to provide security. Goblins have been stealing supplies from the temporary warehouses.”

“I see,” he finished up as well, “-today’s the big day I suppose,” he glanced over, “-Arda will finally have the means to fight the monsters. The Royal Guards are admirable, to fight such a threat for over so many months.”

“Yes,” she said with a warm tone, “-you’re here to handle the monster situation,” a peaceful smile, “-I’ll leave the burden of monsters and guild on thy shoulders.”

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“Thank you,” he stood and walked over to where she sat, “-I’ll be sure to support how-ever I can, my dearest queen,” a tight hug from behind. She could but rest her head on his muscular arms.

“Quick question,” she said whilst leaned on him.

“Go ahead,” he had his face and chin resting atop her chin.

“Will you be going back to the capital again?” a good question.

“Yes, once the guild is open; I’ll have to link some of the portals together. The new guild card allows me to view what will happen here and Rosepire. It’s quite handy,” the voice soft, “-there are a few things that need to be fixed.”

“I see,” she seemed reluctant, to which she gently placed his hands atop her belly.

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“What are you doing?” he asked confused by why she’d do such a thing, “-wait,” as if blinded by a dazzling light, the realization hit like a meteor crashing upon a planet. She turned, face flushed and eyes warm. ‘I sense two presence,’ they locked eyes, ‘-no this can’t be real.’ Surprised, he took a step back and nearly fell. “-A-a-are y-you?” the words didn’t come out.

“Y-yes,” she no longer could stare and averted her gaze, “-I’m pregnant.”

Hands immediately covered his mouth, each breath taken felt as if it burnt the nose's passageway. His heart raced, a feeling unlike any other rushed from the core upwards, "-you can't be serious," he dashed and hug her tightly, "-I c-can't believe it," the face lit in glee.

"Seriously," Adete came out the back pocket, "-a child from a Vampire, God, and Fairy who turned Angel..." her eyes narrowed, "-what kind of genes will be inherited, I dare not think about the possibilities."

"Xula..."

"Staxius..."

"Xula..."

"Staxius..."

"Look at them both," Adete sighed for the couple had alienated her presence. Bathed in the warmth of a new life being formed right before their eyes; it was understandable. 'Staxius, I hope that everything works out. The happiness you're feeling right out will never be topped. I'm afraid about what could happen if it all went down-hill. That dream I had feels more real than fiction. The Curse of the Death Reaper, I dread that day solemnly. I just hope the vampiric power can support whatever that egg has inside.'

"Has anyone known about this?" he asked; overwhelmed by how much the emotions had toppled the composed demeanor.

"Just you," she said coyly, "-I haven't told anyone else yet. I wanted to make sure first," her warm gaze peered inside his soul, "-did you sense it?"

"Yes," he said with a smile, "-there's another aura inside you."

'I understand now. Xula is such a caring person. I'm going to become a father...' the news had yet to settle in, '-vampires supposedly have a low rate of conceiving. So, what brought about this change. This feels like a repeat to when I first took in Eira. In no way am I going to get imprisoned before I get to see our child alive and well. If it ever comes down to it, when that feeling of dread settles in, I promise to completely disappear from their lives if it means that my curse can be averted.'

\*Did you think that a demon like you could ever experience happiness,\* the mental image shattered.  
\*How childish and nonrealistic, grow up, heir to the death reaper.\* The voice came from inside the mind. \*You'll never have an heir, it's thy curse as the harbinger of so many curses. Tis thy punishment to watch as the world turns to ruin, suffer and never wake up.\* "Seriously," now stood inside a black and white room, "-another curse," he sighed, "-good luck trying to possess me," a snap of the finger later, the dream broke.

"Guild Master?" a warm pair of hands gently tapped atop his face, "-wake up," it said, "-people are waiting impatiently."

'A dream,' he awoke, '-Xula isn't pregnant. It's all a dream,' devoid of feelings, he stood. 'A premonition, I can't help but think that it might have had a hidden message. Too frequently, those dreams are getting a tiny bit annoying. Waking up from a moment of heavenly joy and bliss to then fall into the complicity

of reality. What a bad joke,' he walked, '-guess it's to be expected. I can't ever hope to make a child; tis impossible.'

Time was around one pm in the afternoon. The date, 31st of January, the day the guild opened its door. Staxius and Serene arrived a few hours ago. The part about the meal with Xula was real. The dream kicked in after lunch was over for he got called to the adventuring guild. Last-minute preparation had to be made; at around noon, he entered the office and fell asleep then dreamt about Xula being pregnant.

Down on the ground floor, a few curious fighters had joined a queue. Pamphlets detailing what the building was, the risks, and what it meant to be an adventurer were given to all. The majority of future adventurers were Beastmen, a few Lizardmen, and one or two elves. As a way to simplify the procedure of opening guilds. It would become chaotic if the adventurers didn't have a path to follow, thus came the birth of; Skokdrag's Smithing guild; the Dwarven Forge.

The first Trader's Guild, led by Haru Gel, was also implemented. As a demi-human and very wise with the ability to adapt any situation; her talents would prove useful for they would be the one to act as a proxy to Rosepire – the name; Gel. Not very inspiring nor innovating.

A Mages guild under the command of Ryul Traxina was also created. Talented and wise, none other could handle the new-comers. Stardust was what he chose as name in the end.

None other would do when it came to fighting than Mieshre Nufry. A prideful wolf with the determination and skill that could bring down opposition. Her name was well known, and beastmen respected her authority. Therefore, any who wished to follow the path of the warrior would sign up with them. Orion was the name she adamantly asked.

For now, those four guilds were the principle. A Fighter's Guild, A Traders Guild, a Mage's Guild, and lastly a Smithing Guild. Some might have noticed whilst the majority ignored what laid before them. A single thread linked those four guilds together. They were each from different races and were under the command of the Ardanian Council. It was to not cause any trouble for the thirst for power was quite addicting. Individual Guilds were not allowed at the moment. Either join up with one of the guilds, find a party, or go on solo adventures, none would judge. Monster drops and Qaisar would be exchangeable at any of those guilds.

"I really appreciate the representatives to join me in this endeavor today," now stood before a screen with the four-representative sat silently, Staxius spoke. "I won't take much of thy time with the trivia of monsters and such. Each of you has an Adventuring Tag paired with a crest that makes thy status as a Guild Leader. As opposed to how adventuring is done in the capital, I decided to set-up major guilds first. Each directly tied with the Crown. Thy duties are to assist in whatever way possible to help foster adventurers. Often, many teenagers in search of glory set off on quest armed with a dagger and no training. What usually returns is but a bloodied Guild Tag. This is why I decided to create a haven; a place where even a novice could gain some experience before going out in search of monsters. The Fighter and Mage guild will help any who wishes to go off on quests to get some training first. Mieshre and Ryul, I'm counting on you both. Only when an adventurer has gotten a seal of approval from either camps that will he then be allowed to go out and fight. Without the seal, the central guild will not accept his or her to go on Quests. Though it isn't full-proof, tis the method I think will be beneficial for all of us in the long run,' he paused to catch a breath. "For the Trader and Smithing guild, your job is simple, to

make and craft items depending on how many adventurers there are. More fighters will mean more weapons; and the more trained said fighters are, the more drops will be given; this is where the Trader's guild jumps in. Haru, you're to handle negotiations with Rosepire's many guilds. So, you see, each guild ties with one another to make a chain that could elevate our kingdom's profit as well as its fighting force."

\*Clap, Clap, Clap,\* "-you sure are knowledgeable," said Ryul in a mellow voice, "-I'm grateful that you chose me for such a responsibility. The training regime will be forwarded to thy desk as soon as next week."

"If they wish to follow the way of the sword, then come get some," said Mieshre in a confident tone.

"A chance to make connections and trade with the other kingdom," Haru licked her lips and purred, "-also a way to make contact with any of our comrades."

"The more we get to smith, the better it is," Skokdrag; an alcoholic as well as a workaholic, the perfect combination.

"What about a Ranger's guild?" asked Ryul, "-elves are sure to join. Our prowess with bows can't be kept out of the loop."

"I did think of implementing a Ranger's Guild. No candidates have been found as of yet. For now, I'll send over someone to assist in training the potential Bowman at the fighter's guild."

A few meters away, four-building with two floors directly opposite one another, with each having a large backyard – was spotted. Previously used by the guards; it transferred over to the Adventuring guild. The perfect place to train and sell items from when the day is over.

"Any more questions?" he asked.

"No, majesty, on behalf of everyone, thank you for being diligent and going step by step of what you want to accomplish. Nothing beats a good, well thought out plan," with a nod, they left to their respective buildings.

'Two birds with one stone, doing the responsibilities as representatives as well as Guild Leaders shouldn't impose much trouble. Rather, they would be closer to the people and know more of what is to be done to satisfy their races.' Perfectly aligned as if clockwork, Staxius showed his prowess and efficiency at getting what he wanted. Those who worked under him thought that they were to win in the long run – a game of chess was what it was.