

Lord of Chaos by RARhovan, 1540 words

Standing upon the peak he was motionless, unshakable in his calm demeanor. The calm was deceptive as his mind raced through the formulations he had prepared for this moment. His thin arms stretched towards the void surrounding his perch. Clutched in his white knuckled fist the Staff of Immortals marks his office as the defender of this realm. Alive with power the semi-sentient Staff; barely contained by his raw will and training; conjures images into the space around him. Images of power and grace and half remembered truths denied to those shackled to a single lifetime.

The staff is simple in construction though no tool marks mar the perfect surface. Neither wood nor metal, he had never been able to determine what it was created of nor when; bright white in color beyond anything the natural world had ever been able capture. The staff was shaped as a shepherd's crook. He had always mused that the shape of the staff was purposeful – to remind the bearer that they were the keeper of their people. That they must be ever vigilant for any that would wander astray. Found on his many travels across the land, standing in a field of grass and wild flowers as if waiting specifically for him. When he first seized the staff he did not know its provenance or name but it soon informed him of both.

“You have the power here.” A sibilant whispered voice reaches his mind though he cannot say if it is his own or the half remembered thoughts of all those that had wielded this staff through the ages. The voice had always urged him to greatness, but it had almost brought him to ruin over the years as well. It was this voice that told him of the danger of the lava flows that permeate the lowlands of this area – but it also suggested of the power of a being that could withstand those primal forces as they ascended to the peaks above. The voice suggested to him that the dark, while restrictive, dangerous and strictly forbidden to the people of this land also contained the power to conceal and protect. Since he found the Staff now laws had been able to contain him, none of the restrictions of this land held him back any longer.

It was at the staffs urging that he sought combat with his mortal competitors. Before he ascended to his perch or worldly power he had to cast down those that came before. A bitter struggle, quick and violent, saw the previous master of this domain cast down to the lava below. A fall such as this; from which no recovery would ever be possible both in terms of the simple lethality and the incredible loss of prestige if one were unlucky enough to survive. Only the weak allow themselves to be bested in such a manner. Only the cunning and strong such as him could ever make use of such unorthodox tactics.

Twelve long years have led to this moment. As if his very life was brought into creation to face this test in this moment. Untold amounts of research to learn about, to hone and to develop his powers. He has scoured the histories of his people to amass their knowledge as his own. He has invaded the places of dark history to learn from those who had come before, unscrupulous as they may have been. His hair unkempt, his clothing disheveled but his resolve unbreakable

and his gaze steady. His feet bare and planted shoulder width apart in an effort to keep him stable on his tenuous perch.

So soon after his successful ascension, disaster strikes. Summoned from another dimension with a silent explosion of power, a towering being of blinding countenance stares impassively at him. His staff rose as if to ward off the being but such is its power that it does not even seem to notice the artifact in front of it. The being exudes a sense of power that transfixes him as if he were a beetle upon a pin. Its abilities are vast and its knowledge of this world unsurpassed. The very sound of its voice is enough to cause ice to flood a man's veins. With a single word it can cause total petrification, with a look it has inspired dread. Many have attempted to resist this beings power yet none have done so and spoken of it afterwards.

This being was created as an arbiter of law, irrefutable, irresistible and aged beyond reckoning. His many years of effort were as nothing to this being. Unimaginably vast in size and scope as if it occupied more space than it actually appeared to; possessed of innumerable experiences the likes of which a mere mortal would be struck dumb to witness. A being that has created life and based on its current, sudden and foreboding appearance; has certainly ended life as well. An injustice has disturbed the balance of the natural order in this world. The distant and plaintive cry of his defeated opponent existed just barely at the edge of hearing, soon to be lost within the sounds of the boiling rock far below.

Clouds of power pulsed around the being as the vast energy expended in its sudden arrival dissipated to the air near it. Without effort, it knows; without looking, it sees; without request, it will intercede on behalf of those wronged. He sucked in his breath feeling the heat leave the space around him under this being's gaze. His mouth worked to free the words from his throat, to cast some of his painstakingly acquired power at this being of law. Fear washed through his body like a bolt hurled from a storm – electric and invigorating. He didn't expect to be confronted so soon in his rise to power. Time was needed to consolidate his position and learn from the knowledge left behind by his predecessor. That time might never be for his end might have arrived just now.

The staff raised into the air, his free hand rising to balance the weight. He would not shrink or diminish himself in the gaze of this being. He had supped at the table of the all-powerful and would try his hand with one that might be his match but might also be his equal. He refused to balk in the face of this being, refused to accept that he might be proved inferior. While these doubts gnawed and worried at the edge of his consciousness he forced them back and focused his efforts at maintaining his precarious stance in the face of this force of nature. Buffeted by unseen waves of power, standing in a moment that seemed stretched to include all of the years that have existed or might ever exist, he broke into a cold sweat. In that same fraction of a second he recalled in perfect measure the life he lead before his climb to his present predicament. His mind raced through his numberless successes and his few minor failures. He remembered his fears and hopes and dreams throughout his life in equal measure and at times the three seemed indistinguishable from one another.

He was a young boy dreaming of greatness while seated on his bed. His family while loving; never properly understood his grandeur and his hunger for greatness. He was constantly reminded to walk when he needed to run. He was constantly brought short by the limitations of his age – not his ability, but the simple number ascribed to him by fate. He learned everything he was able to learn. He consumed knowledge like a glutton consumed sweetened food. If someone scoffed at his ability to do something he immediately set to mastering it. Sword fighting, hand to hand combat skills, political intrigue and diplomacy were all mastered as quickly as he encountered them. He commanded vast armies against those rival powers that existed in the lands around his. But he was always gracious in his victories. Each skill that he learned was but a springboard to another skill, another talent, another desire learned of. His approach to learning was chaotic but no less powerful because it was undirected. His whimsy and his imagination were always his greatest strengths.

Loud beyond measure, the voice cuts through his reverie and the space between the massive being and himself. As a spear cast by the strongest of the innumerable Gods the physical power of the voice alone was painful. He was alone and he was exposed but having finally reached the heights he always knew he could reach he could not turn away from his fate. Several seconds seem to sneak by as the sound streaks across the distance to the man. The words themselves burned their form into the air around their passage before striking the man's mind as a bullet of sound wrapped in the importance of immediacy. Damnation may await this foolish man and his desire for power but he was unable to avert his fate despite his abilities, despite his preparation for a moment such as this.

“Jason.”

“Yes mom?”

“Get off the arm of the couch.”