

Inside the chamber, Jaania sits beside Princess Brittany who lies unconscious; Jaania uses her healing magic on Princess Brittany, while Akanthus stands watching.

Jaania: This is so bizarre.

Jaania: With each day, she looks better after the treatment, then gets worse.

Jaania: I can't figure out what's causing it.

Akanthus: Have you considered that she's being poisoned?

Jaania: It crossed my mind, yes, but it's impossible. Only you, me and the king can enter this chamber.

Akanthus: Hmm.

Jaania: I'm worried she's not going to make it...

Jaania: I can't have that, not with how little Victoria trusts me.

Jaania: Do you know where the king is?

Akanthus: Lady Jaania, you know where he is.

Jaania: ...

Akanthus: Say the word and—

Jaania: I will **not** be conducting raids.

Jaania: Let her have this little resistance group. Kara doesn't bother me anymore.

Jaania: Besides, I know that the king is in good hands. He'll most likely recover and come back sooner or later.

Jaania: I still don't understand why you said he was kidnapped.

Akanthus pauses to think of a suitable answer.

Akanthus: I have been mistaken, my Lady. It's only human.

Jaania silently accepts this reasoning.

Jaania: With Victoria as acting queen, things will get a little... complicated. I need to finish the spell as soon as possible.

Jaania: With all of the Fissure research, I feel reinvigorated.

Jaania: Have you read them yet? What do you think of my plans?

Akanthus: A spell that can **envelop** the entire mana core, cutting out its influence...

Akanthus: It sounds... like a temporary solution.

We can't afford temporary—

Jaania: Thank you for your input.

Akanthus understands Jaania will not reconsider her plans.

Jaania: It will work.

Imagine...

Jaania: Every new generation of Lore will be cut from the devastating magic indoctrination...

Jaania: ... and every existing generations, until they die out, will be unable to tap into mana... but still be able to enjoy life.

Jaania: A life free of all the torment of magic. A life where they will never experience what I, and countless of others, did.

Jaania: The perfect, elegant solution.

A brand new world...

Akanthus does not indulge Jaania with his agreement.

Jaania: Have the gnomes been cooperating?

Akanthus: They are... problematic.

Jaania: And it's up to **me** to rebuild the trust that you have so foolishly ruined.

Jaania: You and your division went out of line, and now **I'm** paying for it.

Jaania: Always me... paying for everything.

It's exhausting...

Jaania: And now I **need** the gnomes! I **need** an airship! How else am I going to interact with the mana core!?

Akanthus: I've already apologized. I tried my best to follow in your footsteps—

Jaania: Just because you tried your best, doesn't mean it was good enough!

Jaania: Stay here and monitor her.

Jaania: I have to perfect the spell AND deal with this fallout.

Jaania: **mumble** It's like the entire world is against me...

Jaania leaves the chamber.

Akanthus: ...

Akanthus: It's not against you... it just doesn't care about you.

Meanwhile, you are still in Nieboheim, at the Heroes' Guild.

<Character>: The "Guild of Heroes", eh?

<Character>: Not too shabby!

<Character>: Excuse me, could you tell me everything you know about the Magesterium?

Zvezdan: Who are you?

<Character>: **<Character>.** I'm a hero myself!

Zvezdan looks down on the registry paper.

Zvezdan: You're not in the registry.

<Character>: Oh, I'm... not from here.

Zvezdan: No work, no talk.

Zvezdan: Register as a hero, do a job, and then we can chat.

<Character>: That's fair!

<Character>: Hmm, let's see.

Pinned on the quest board are various notes of quests which you can choose to embark on.

<Character>: Oh! I'll take the escort mission!

These are my favourite!

Zvezdan: Very well. Right. Meet with the pepper merchant at the gates and escort her to Sul.

- **Pepper Merchant** joins you as Guest A.

You fight various monsters along the path before reaching Sul; back in Swordhaven, Jaania stands in front of her table, deeply focused on studying the mana core at The Fissure.

Jaania: ... if it's enveloped in a barrier, then that only leaves out the leylines...

Jaania: ... however, if the core's influence is cut out, wouldn't it mean the same for the leylines... ?

Jaania ponders this theory.

Jaania: I don't know.

Jaania: Do I have any books on this subject?

Jaania: There has to be somethin—

All of a sudden, a spark of magic appears behind Jaania which catches her by surprise.

Jaania: What?!

The magic intensifies.

Jaania: No...

It appears to be Warlic and Xan, who have arrived in Jaania's chamber using teleportation magic.

Xan: Hello... Jaania!

Jaania looks infuriated by their arrival.

Jaania: Leave.

Xan: No need to be so **cold**, hahaha!

Jaania gives Xan a disapproving look, then turns around, attempting to ignore them while continuing her studies.

Warlic: Hello, Jaania...

Xan: Did you like the flowers I sent? Hahaha, good memories!

Xan: And look!

Xan: We're best buds now!

Xan: And I am normal again, hahaha!

Jaania continues to ignore Xan.

Xan: Everything is back to normal!

Jaania continues to ignore Xan.

Xan: Hahaha!

Warlic appears worried about how Xan will react to Jaania's apparent disinterest.

Xan: Hah... ha...

Xan: W-why are you ignoring me?

Jaania continues to ignore Xan as she is deeply focused in her research.

Jaania: ... the spell will take a while to cast, depending on the length of the incantation...

Warlic: Spell? What are—

Xan: **SHUT UP, WARLIC!!!**

Xan: Jaania!

Xan: Please, look at me!

Xan: Do you see me? I have a face now! And everything is like it was before, in school!

Xan: Remember?

Xan: Everything... is like before...

Xan: We're good now...

Xan: And Warlic's good!

Xan: Like old times!

Jaania: ... but what about unforeseen complications...

... it would be risky...

Xan is trying to keep it together.

Warlic: Xan... I told you—

Xan: **LOOK AT ME!!!**

Jaania continues to ignore Xan.

Xan: Look... look... don't ignore me.

Xan: Please.

Xan: I did this for you!

Xan: I changed... for you.

Xan: Can you see it?!

Xan: I put aside everything. I even worked with Warlic. No more revenge, really really!

Xan: For you.

Xan: I'm...

Xan: I'm sorry?

Xan: I'll be good now!

Jaania finally acknowledges Xan's presence by uttering three simple words...

Jaania: I'm busy.

Jaania: Leave.

Xan: You're...

Warlic understands his plan has not worked, and they are not welcome in Jaania's presence.

Warlic: Xan, we should leave.

Xan: No...

Xan: No!

Xan: NO!!!

Xan: I DID THIS FOR YOU!

Xan: DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT TOOK!?

Xan: DO YOU THINK I **WANTED** TO FORGIVE WARLIC?!

Xan: I DIDN'T!

I DID THINGS THAT I DESPISE!!!

Jaania glances back in Xan's direction without turning around.

Xan: I LOVE YOU!

Jaania: My Alexander died in that basement.

Xan now has tears streaming down his face.

Jaania: I do not care for love. Or for you. Or you.

Not anymore.

Jaania: I am on a verge of something great. And you are inconveniencing me.

Jaania: Leave... please.

Xan appears to have lost his composure; Warlic's eyes dart from Xan to Jaania and back.

Warlic: Xa—

Xan: Ha...

Xan: Hahahahaha...

Xan: Hahahahahahahahaha!

Warlic: Alex—

Xan is triggered by Jaania's words and starts burning incessantly, letting the fire envelop him once more.

Warlic: No!

Alexander!

Jaania: No!

My research notes!

Xan's inferno stills for a moment, only to explode and grow even stronger as blue flames engulf his body, turning what was once his human appearance into his skeletal look.

Warlic: IT'S GOING TO BE ALRIGHT!

ALEX, STOP!

Xan continues to burn.

Warlic: ALEX!

Xan disintegrates the last of the flesh off his body, unleashing a massive explosion; the impact of which is so large that it destroys the top portion of Swordhaven's Ivory Tower; back in Azaveyr, you seemingly felt the impact of the event.

<Character>: **shudder**

<Character>: I just had a sinking feeling that something terrible has happened.

You pause for a moment to process this unsettling feeling.

<Character>: Huh...

<Character>: Well, job's done, time to get back and get the info!!

You get back to Nieboheim; back in Swordhaven, Warlic and Jaania saved themselves with their protective magic shields; Xan kneels, now just a skeleton engulfed in burning white flames, with his heart still beating; Xan is about to fall backwards as a result of his weakened state, but Warlic manages to catch him.

Warlic: Alex...

Warlic: No...

Warlic: W-what... what have I done.

Jaania: He did it to himself.

Warlic: He was in pain!

I had to help him...

Jaania: Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

Warlic: Alex, talk to me!

Warlic: Alex!

Alexander: Haaaaaa...

All Xan can muster is a maniacal laugh.

Alexander: Haaaaaaaaaaa...

Warlic: He hoped... I...

Warlic teleports away with his deformed companion; Jaania seems relieved that they're gone.

Jaania: Hope is the first step on the road to disappointment.