

1. Ethereous

Here was I, the "Thousand Eyes," analyzing the beautiful world of Ethereous. Lustrous forests teeming with life existed almost everywhere. Clear skies and perfect weather, it did indeed seem like a world like no other. Fairies in this realm live among each other as perfectly as they can...

My friends, in this realm it was indeed so much more peaceful than any other world I had come across, but a dark oppression existed among the fairy folk of Ethereous. It was not a case of authoritarian rule that seeks to corrupt the entire land and its citizens. It was not a case of being threatened by an unforeseen, wretched creature that seeks to destroy everything. No my friends, in the beautiful land of Ethereous, warlordism is as normal as breathing.

Concepts such as law and order would only exist in the minds of peaceful fairies who want to maintain it as much as they can within their own little communities. Others fight for the glory of territorial expansion, gathering of resources and defeating any other form of competition.

As such, fairies outside of their communities do not venture out much, and said communities and territories are vastly spread throughout the world itself to avoid unnecessary interactions with other territories, though friendly relations are not impossible. Venturing out more into the land, as beautiful as it may be, awaits a completely different reality. Ironic as it may seem with just how vivid and rich the land is, it feels more like a desert wasteland of scars, flesh wounds, broken bones, lawlessness, blood, and death.

More than half of the entire population of Ethereous participated in warlordism and the fights within it. The other half was incredibly isolated, but interconnected with other peaceful communities for extra protection from the other violent half of fairies, albeit only when they truly needed extra protection and reinforcements. The reason so many of these peaceful communities know each other in the first place is due to the Arcana ability of a daughter of a fairy clan leader, Markus Beanley. Said daughter has also been the one person who had changed the entire landscape of the land of Ethereous, which I will get to later, my friends.

Markus Beanley resides in a territory the size of a small village. Surrounded by grey cobblestone walls about 19 meters tall, with three even taller outposts around the area, and a large steel gate at the front. The houses' walls are made out of bricks of mud and straw. Said circular walls sporting a mesmerizing pattern of colors being painted as overlapping zigzag lines, straight lines over and under the zigzags, and dots in the middle of the zigzags for extra depth. The only color schemes are green and yellow, orange and purple, and black and white. The cone-shaped roof tiles are made out of wood planks and are only painted as either red or blue, though the roof tiles of the clan leader's house are painted grey.

Life is peaceful here as it should. Everyone had more than enough food and water, shops of almost every kind being readily available at dawn until midnight comes, mineshafts that are ever so busy beneath the ground, and livestock of familiar animals. The only downside I would consider in this community is that it doesn't have enough space or the conditions for green

agriculture. These people only got their source of nutritious fruits and vegetables from other peaceful communities via trade. They were all found in the wilderness as none of them were ever properly cultivated due to the unforgiving nature of the battlefield outside.

There were only a select few of semi-elite fairies who were required to gather such resources. Ones who were very talented at high speed combat, agility and as well as supernatural visual perception, precision and accuracy. Even with such seemingly lowly resources, the warlord clans were ever so keen to have these resources for their own. In doing so, some of the warlord clan members have adapted to the blindingly fast semi-elite fairy gatherers.

One such member was by the name of Urchil Glass. His Arcana was called "Chaintooth." It allowed him to manifest a mass number of chains from his hands with sickle-like blades at the end, about the size of bastard swords. Aside from using it to carve up his enemies in equally blinding fast succession, he also used the chains to grab onto enemies before killing them and stealing their resources, as he can also dispel the blades at the end whenever he wants. He used this technique to his advantage. While he was very creative with his power, he's physically much, much slower than the semi-elite fairy gatherers. One of them became his main enemy who also told her fellow comrades to sprint back into the clan before other opposing ones will come for them and their resources. As two of the semi-elites were already killed by Urchil's own bloodied hands, the situation became very desperate.

"Everyone! Run back to our home, now!!!" she exclaimed.

"Martha, don't play hero here! We all need to go back!" another man shouted, whom she knew very well. Then, at a mere 1/16 of a second, he felt a sting hit onto his right cheek, having enough force to make his body twirl around like a pinwheel, and landing sideways face first with a tree slowly knocked over, then he felt even more pain. "Oww! What the fuck was that for?!" he exclaimed.

"Stupid fleabag..." she says as she slapped him after without anyone noticing, with a shaking raised fist near her shoulder, "If I come with you he'll follow all of us and we'll all get diced!!! His chains are far too nasty to handle for you youngins..." At an equal fraction of a second, she noticed a downward chain blade targeted into her right arm. Luckily for her, she was quick on the uptake so the attack merely grazed a lock of her hair. Urchil was very much ready to cut off her power with their encounter.

"She's right in one regard about my chains." Urchil said in a very demeaning manner, "However, I'd rather just have all of you diced up right on the spot!" After saying the last word, multiple chain blades protruded out of his hands. The one problem about this battle is that the five "youngins" (who in reality are at ages 21 to 24) have much yet to learn with their visual perception and accuracy compared to Martha, who excelled at it. Had it not been for her, they would have had all of their heads flying off into the distance. At one fell swoop, she swung her arms to all of them by the waist, which pushed them down into the ground. Urchil apparently

knew she would do this for her own comrades. Another chain blade appeared at blinding speed, gashing Martha's back.

With her screaming in agony, others exclaimed her name, "Martha!!!" they all said.

"I told you, run back! This is our duty!!" she exclaimed in return as she panted heavily, "Don't go around saying as if this is 'too much food.' My niece needs food, our people need...ugh...I'll hold him and his fat ass off for a while...ugh...shit..."

With her resolve acknowledged by the others, they went back to the clan as fast as they could. After standing up ready to face the enemy, Urchil then said to Martha in another demeaning manner, "I would have just cut off your right arm and then your head, but you're a pretty fun lass to play with. Show me what you've got." as he chuckles, swinging around the bloodied chains on his left. He swung for a second aimed at her face, noticing that she just stood there, with an angry and determined look. Urchil was confused, but he saw it as working in his favor. He thought to himself, "Well, maybe she does want to die..."

Then, something unexpected happened. The chain blades bounced back away from her face, then hooked onto a nearby tree instead. Another thing he observed with said incident was that it wasn't that her own face made the weapon bounce back. He realized the moment it was *near* her face, it was quickly repelled as if some incredibly strong, concentrated form of air resistance formed in front of her.

Urchil, who was once confident that he was able to land a blow to her, went into a state of confusion. "What the hell was that?" He thought to himself, "So this is her Arcana..."

Martha on the other hand, gladly did the honors to answer *some* of his confusion, saying "My Arcana is called 'Deflect.' This will be the only thing you'll know in our fight." At that moment, she went under him, gave him an uppercut to the belly, enough to send him into the air, then pounded his head back into the ground. Going back into the fight, she noticed that while there was indeed a hole where he should be, he was gone. Behind her, numerous chain blades flung at her, all of them coincidentally repelled away from her.

Urchil analyzed the situation further, thinking to himself, "I see, her Arcana seems to work as a shield that deflects any attack that comes near her body, hence the name, but surely there's something fishy about it. Otherwise, she would be a clan leader by now." After that ordeal, he was feeling understandably very, very dizzy. Yet he still pressed forward.

"Are you done gawking at my back that you slashed?" says Martha behind Urchil, "I guess I just have to return the favor!!" Having felt the punch going straight into the right side of his back, he flung away at about 40 meters. Understandably screaming in tremendous pain as Urchil was, his composure still stayed mostly the same, he only screamed for a short moment. Urchil analyzed the situation even further, this time only for a moment as well. His next move had to be

a swift one, even when he had three broken ribs on his right side. Barely able to walk, he could only kneel on the ground and with his right hand touching a tree trunk.

Martha also knows full well that he is analyzing their fight, but she doesn't really have much plans in her head for him as she has already gotten the upper hand in their battle. "I gotta do what I do best... I guess I should also be extra careful... Warlord affiliates like him aren't the only ones around..." she thought to herself. At that exact moment of her thinking, she got slashed onto the right leg. The gash went as far as to her thigh, as she fell to the ground. Screaming like she never screamed before, all she could do at that moment was clutch her right leg as she shakes around, and when the screaming stopped, "Fuck you!!!! bastaaaaaaard!!!!!" was the only way she could ever possibly respond to Urchil. By now the screaming and agony both sides experienced has shook the entire wildlife in the vicinity, from the sky, the trees, the earth, and even beneath it.

The two were on the verge of just simply going all out, but they had doubts to that notion. Either one of them would win or lose, it was all dictated over how fast they are on their actions. Yet against all the doubts, they decided this was the only way either one of them would win. Thinking logically was already outside their minds, and both believed any more of it would tire them out faster than moving. By using up barely any energy and stamina they'd had left, they forced themselves to stand up and run towards each other.

Urchil used Chaintooth immediately, then Martha did something she hadn't done before. She avoided Chaintooth by using Deflect to make herself jump into the air higher and faster than normal. She then used it to redirect her movement right into Urchil, grabbing his face and pinning him down. She started rabidly punching his face, which created a concave mark on the ground. As the punches kept repeating, Urchil couldn't help but strangely laugh out of nowhere. At that case, it had a very maniacal tone.

"What the fuck is so funny, you shit-eating bastard?" said Martha.

"Because, lass...haha...ha...hahahaha...you...you showed me something that I DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE!!!!!!" Urchil quickly dug his fingers unto the ground. Martha also felt a violent shaking around Urchil, still maniacally laughing. A mass of chains sprouted out of the earth, all directed right into Martha's head. Without a moment to think at all, she raised her hands to utilize a high concentration of Deflect against the chain blades. Without her noticing, a sharp cut was dealt onto her right shoulder. The chains went back into their original position as fast as a microsecond, and were all directed right unto her torso.

Martha, jittering around in place and gasping for air, was pushed away by Urchil with the blades still stuck inside her, then directed another chain blade into her throat.

"I like your trap shut rather than open, lass," said Urchil. "It would have been better that way."