

The Detectives step through the portal, and the announcement comes down from Alduin declaring that the Nightmare Detectives have won. Cheers rain down upon the group.

That joy, however, is fleeting. Other fights are still going on, and there are more to come.

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Callista is looking up at where Paola stands, a distance away. She asks what she's doing here, and if she knows where she is. Paola says that she does, and that's part of the problem. She called in a favor with the All-Mother to let her have this time—only 5 minutes.

Callista asks her how long she's known the All-Mother and Amos, and Paola tells her to make a guess. Callista admits that what she's afraid to hear is that she's known her for longer or as long as they've known each other. Paola says that they've known each other for a very long time—but that she's known Callista for a long time too, longer than two centuries. Callista's memories are still coming back, but Paola's had hers since her passing. They've known each other now for around 2 millenia instead.

Callista doesn't know how to take this. She asks Paola where she's been the past two centuries, and Paola instead asks her to recount what Callista remembers about her death. Callista asks bitterly 'which one?' to which Paola clarifies the second one.

Callista describes waking up in bed and seeing the sunlight streaming in through the window. "It was a lovely morning, and I was waiting for you to join me in it. And you didn't. That's what I remember."

Paola quietly asks about the first death, and Callista admits it's a bit hazy. She remembers coming home from town with fruit for a pie Paola wanted to make and finding her out in the garden with her throat cut. She remembers going up to heaven and seeing a fellow Captain of hers, and when she awoke again they were all dead.

Paola tells her that the missing pieces in her memory will come back to her, but Callista did not wake up in a room in heaven. Instead, she became the Calamity. The Sturgeonites know that day as "the day the sun went out." Paola then, in tears, tells her that she can stand telling her this, but she can't stand seeing her after all these years and not being allowed to touch her. She'd forgotten the way Callista looked, and, more importantly, looked at her. She needs to focus on why she's here, and Callista asks why she is—because if it's for the All-Mother and Amos and not her, she can't bear it.

Paola says she's here to apologize, and to tell her that after it's all over, they'll have all the time in the world to catch up. She says she wants to hear everything Callista has been through. She also tells her that she needs to do whatever she has to do.

**Callista:** Paola... I will not fight you.

Paola breaks through and hugs Callista tightly, and Callista immediately hugs back. A rift begins to form in the Garden, and the light of Creation seeps through, turning everything white. Paola tells her to hold on just a little longer, and Callista admits that they're not sure they can. Paola tells her she's waited this long—she can get through it now.

Callista says she loves her. Paola says she loves her too.

Everything goes white.

Callista wakes up on an airport strip—a lounge area, where she sees blurs of people going past. She begins to recognize it a little. It looks like her work area where she ferries the souls of the dead, but bigger. A lot bigger. There is one exit gate that stands out to her though, and a man sits behind the desk.

Callista walks up slowly and says that she is lost—she needs to get back to where she was. The man sympathetically asks if she wants him to call anyone for her, and Callista tearily says no, she just wants to return to Sturgeon. She tells him she works for Lady Death and is a reaper, and while she's used to this sort of thing overall, she doesn't recognize this terminal.

The man gives her a drink and urges her to sit down. Callista downs the drink in one gulp, and the man smiles and says they would get along well.

The man tells her that although there is a bar with the same name (which is a copyright issue), she is in The Spaces in Between. In fact, she's in what is known as the 'main hub.' He tells her that he will grant her a temporary return even though he's not supposed to, and gives her a free coupon to return back to The Spaces in Between whenever she needs to. When she does, he tells her to reach out to him.

Callista tells him that she appreciates his help immensely. Before she goes, she asks for his name so she can find him again.

He says his name is Rodney Lever.

Callista is sent back home.

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In between fights, while Flebs is soaking in the pool and Victor is playing Mario Kart, Jimmy helps Fala load the Calamity-Callista-angel onto a stretcher. While there, Jimmy also pays a visit to the Council of Spiders—who have all molted, aside from the Duke.

Jimmy asks to make a deal—for the Council of Spiders to protect Fala at any cost, including his own vitality. The Duke asks Jimmy to look into the container, and when he does, he is sprayed

with hairs which take him to a strange place not unlike the Fractal Summit. There, the Duke tells him that without Maka Maka, they need more mana to make the deal happen. They can only carry it out if Jimmy forfeits his immortality.

Jimmy agrees.

He is mortal from that moment onward.

After he is returned to the room, he walks over to Fala, looking down at her. He asks her for a favor: to give Jericho something, at a later date. "You'll know when to give it to him." He pulls out an envelope to give to her, and she backs up, asking him why. "Just a feeling, that's all."

Jimmy says he hopes she will not have to deliver the letter, but if she does, she will know when. Fala says that banking on something bad happening can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and Jimmy says that everyone takes that chance.

**Fala:** We don't all write goodbye letters, Jimmy.

**Jimmy:** I didn't either.

He's lying, but Fala doesn't know that, and puts the letter in her pocket. Jimmy leaves the clinic, and leaves Fala with a very ominous feeling.

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Jericho calls into Grandmaster Cornilius at the Order of the Moth, and reports Eustace's death. Lily Quinn goes white, and leaves the room promptly while the two are talking. Cornilius informs him that Lily and Eustace were 'involved,' and Jericho says he'll talk more personally with her later.

Cornilius says that at the end of the Tournament there will likely be many more funerals. He asks Jericho if there are any other fights that they need to be aware of, and Jericho says he is on his way to check on the rest of the tournaments currently going on.

Cornilius thanks him, and disconnects the call.

Jericho heads to the main arena. The fights currently going on right now are Minion vs Chameleon, Gravediggers vs [redacted], Black Workshop vs Dream Team, Antikythara Unit vs the Anti-Human Liberation Front, and the NFC Elite vs the Order of the Antlion. As he's looking at the series of screens, Callista appears behind him.

Jericho greets her casually and asks how death was. Callista says that of her experiences so far, she 'wouldn't rank this one very high.' Jericho apologizes for bringing it up and queues up the Dream Team vs Black Workshop battle on his screen.

Fala goes into the Spaces in Between to sit at the bar, and though **Sully is not there**, Cheddar is. Cheddar jumps up to greet her, and Fala orders a drink. “Abacus and Son’s Milk and Concoction,” which gives her an advantage. She turns on the TV, and the Antikythara Unit vs The Anti-Human Liberation Front battle comes on.

Callista and Jericho watch as Babylon calls out for the other Dream Team members, who are separated from each other. Around them is the click-clacking of wooden joints running around. Unbeknownst to Babylon, a spider-like doll descends from the rafters and is inches away from the back of Babylon’s neck when—in a flash—Babylon ignites it without even turning around, activating the Brimstone. The spider screeches as it burns.

The Dream Team has won their fight. After Alduin announces it, she leaps up to begin her fight in the NFC Elite.

In the Anti-Human Liberation Front, Cabbage, Zephyr, Wendy, Amelia, and Dr. Waylund fight against Charon, Tiamat, Belobog & Chernobog, Rat King, Shoujou, and Azathoth.

Cabbage is the first one to step up to the plate, and Shoujou is his opponent. Cabbage tackles him down to the ground and wails on him as he yells that all the nightmares want to do is survive and live peacefully. Shoujou takes it for a while, but then he volleys a punch to Cabbage’s stomach as it winds him. Shoujou tells Cabbage he is doing his job and serving a greater purpose rather than fighting with emotion, and that it is not personal. Shoujou takes the drum off his back and smacks it three times, then hits Cabbage on either side of his head before he is uppercutted.

Callista and Jericho, both watching the screen together, realize suddenly that Shoujou isn’t human. He’s using a veil to disguise his appearance, and while Callista first thinks of a demon, that isn’t quite it. Jimmy, from where he watches, mouths the word ‘Raijin.’ The veil falls away and Shoujou reveals blue skin, massive horns, and fireballs circling his back. He looks over the body of Cabbage. He pours out a drink, ignites the club-like weapon he holds, and slams it down onto Cabbage’s head, marking one point for the Antikythara Unit.

Zephyr steps up next and says that it looks like the Antikythara Unit has an advantage. They propose an all-out rumble, one match, winner-takes-all style. Azathoth shakes his head and says that if they want to die that badly, he’ll take all of them on himself.

While they’re talking, Wendy darts over and roundhouse kicks him in the jaw, and teases that Azathoth shouldn’t have let his guard down. Amelia transforms as Zephyr powers up and Waylund removes her gauntlet. Fala notices Amelia is praying—which means she is beginning her transformation, and she needs to either be stopped or escaped from.

Jericho has a flashback of training with Tiamat, practicing switching between the Fractals. Tiamat is calling out fractals for him to change to, but he is tired and not quite getting it, either failing or barely making the switch. Tiamat, who is usually quiet and calm, yells at him that Amos

will not hesitate to kill everyone he loves, and what he's doing is not good enough. "There are threats out there that you aren't even aware of, Jericho!"

"Then tell me about them."

Tiamat says she will tell him something, but he cannot tell any of the other Detectives for fear of breaking their resolve. She tells him that long ago, Amos was split into two pieces—his power was separated between two figures. One was the Amos they see, and the other...

In the present day, Jericho murmurs, "The King in Yellow."

In the battle, Azathoth begins to glow with a yellow hue. He's zapping Zephyr's energy, which Jericho can see with his third eye. He takes off his yellow cloak, emotionless, and disappears. He reappears with Waylund's head in his hands, disconnected from her body. He looks at it and says, "In the long-run, it doesn't matter. You're going to be erased anyway. The best I can do is make it quick."

He tosses Waylund's head to the side, and Zephyr channels an air bullet with the Squall. Wendy transforms into her form, and she demands to know why Azathoth won't let this happen—freedom for all creatures. She kicks Azathoth, but it doesn't move him. Neither does Amelia's Bless magic.

When Azathoth disappears this time, Jericho and Callista both see the same conclusion in different ways. Jericho observes that this looks like fractal magic, which is the closest approximation. It's like he's stepping out of time, except Victor still has the fractal. It looks the most like Godspeed. That's when he gets to the same conclusion as Callista—this is Void magic, at the farthest end of the spectrum.

Wendy and Amelia are thrown backwards, but are caught by Zephyr's air pocket. Azathoth looks at them sadly, and reiterates that this is a job, and "our will is stronger than yours. We have business to attend to. Let's get this over with."

Zephyr re-charges their air bullet, but there's something different in it this time. Their voice comes through not just through the speakers, but through the air itself, across the entire building. "I hope you're all watching, Sturgeonites, cause this is the biggest stage the Anti-Human Liberation Front has ever had. I want you all to think about something: the importance of standing for what you believe is right, for those who don't have a voice. For those who truly believe in the freedom of all creatures, and will put their lives on the fucking line. I have to admit, I wish we'd gone toe-to-toe with the Nightmare Detectives. That would've been quite a show. But this is where we make our last stand. So fuck it."

Wendy and Amelia power up their attacks while Zephyr gives one sincere smile to the camera. "Let's make it memorable."

Bewildered, Azathoth puts his hands up. Jimmy receives flashbacks of Wendy's training as he watches her move forward with fluidity, focus, and power, and he can't bring himself to rage. Jericho thinks of Zephyr, and Flebs and Callista think of Amelia and how they saved her in the Hotel.

And Azathoth charges up an attack that goes up to the nape of his neck as his eyes go white, and a blast explodes outward. Amelia shields Zephyr and Wendy, and when the dust clears, all three of them are lying on the ground, battered and beaten.

Azathoth puts his coat back on and walks to the Antikythara Unit, who all bow.

The crowd has gone eerily silent as the Anti-Human Liberation Front fades away.