

“Let’s test out that new library of yours today.” Terra said with a smile, sitting across from Lifre. Due to the nature of their lessons, they often did not conduct them in the citadel itself. Instead, they had a wide meadow in which they conducted various forms of training.

Lifre nodded her head in excitement, eager to see what new stories had filled her newest divine artifact. She stood up from the small chair she had brought with her, and extended her hand to the sky. “Come to me, Library of Epics!” As she shouted, a golden dot appeared in the sky above her, which gradually expanded to form a circular wooden tower.

This tower fell from the sky until it landed with a resounding crash on the ground behind Lifre. Terra nodded her head, standing up and walking towards the library. Inside, the two were able to see vast rows of spiraling shelves and walkways ascending as high as the eye could see. However, Lifre’s brow furrowed in confusion at just how bare the shelves were.

Terra simply smiled with amusement, shaking her head at the sight of barely a dozen books where tens of thousands could easily fit. “What were the parameters you used when setting up this library?”

“Well, I wanted the greatest stories experienced throughout the world, filled with riveting battles and legend-worthy feats.” Lifre answered with a small pout, causing Terra to let out a long sigh.

“Most stories can’t just be filled with one battle after another. To do so would make the battles seem more tedious than anything else. If that’s the standard that you used, I’m honestly surprised that you got *any* stories at all.”

“Eh?!” Lifre gasped, flinching back and looking at the bare shelves. “Does that mean I need to reforge my artifact..?”

“Not at all.” Terra shook her head. “You can tweak the parameters of your artifact easily enough without going to such extremes. For instance, you could make it so that the stories are of those who obtain achievements related to combat, prioritizing space according to level. From there... you can start writing your own stories?”

Lifre’s head immediately turned a hundred and eighty degrees to look back at Terra, which honestly looked a bit unnerving. “Write my own? I can do that, too!?”

Terra chuckled, used to the slime girl’s antics. “Of course. With your domains of Trials and Adventure, and borrowing my domain of Stories, it would be a simple matter for you to write a story suited to your taste. As one example, you could write a story of a demon king that destroys all heroes who rise to challenge him.”

“With the stories you write yourself, you would have two options. One, you could bring the creatures within the story to life, manifesting the demon king from the previous example. Or on

the other hand, you can do what Dale did, and have the books create the stage for your adventure. Once someone is trapped within the story you write, they will be bound by its rules.”

Lifre thought about that, clearly trying to weigh the pros and cons of both sides. “Which would you suggest..?”

“In most cases, trapping someone within the story would be better in terms of both effect and cost. However, there are exceptions to this. The more the ‘world’ within the story differs from the real world, the more energy it will take to contain someone. Additionally, you have the option of setting the book to only advance as it is being read if you use the Stories domain properly. This would theoretically let you keep someone trapped indefinitely, so long as the book was properly hidden.”

“On the other hand, if you are creating a single powerful entity, or even writing about the legends of an army, it might be easier to manifest them in reality. The difference comes from the world building you put into it, really. If your story focuses more on the world, drag your target into the world. And if it focuses more on the characters, bring those characters to life.”

“Okay, but...” Lifre hesitated. “Can’t I do both?” Terra simply blinked in confusion.

“You want to both manifest the characters in the real world while also trapping the target within the story?” She asked to confirm, Lifre nodding her head quickly. “Those are typically exclusive aspects, you know?”

“Yeah, but... can’t I do both?” She asked again, a smile forming on her face as she got an idea. “If I use my own domains, can’t I set myself as the storyteller, trapping someone within the ‘realm’ of the story that I write as they progress? Oh! If I set it as a trial, I could even reward those who overcome obstacles. It’s like what you said for blessings, use the act of the follower undertaking your trial as fuel for the blessing you want to give. Would I be able to apply that to this?”

Terra blinked, actually surprised by the slime’s thought process. “We were talking about how to trap enemies or summon armies to crush your foes... and now you want to turn it into a training simulator?” She asked, to which Lifre nodded her head again. Terra let out a long sigh. “Alright, let’s practice, then.”

Terra’s body slowly faded into mist, merging back into Lifre. Just as Lifre was wondering what she meant, two figures suddenly appeared. “Hey!” They called out in unison, and Lifre could feel powerful energies from them.

“You are... Lady Terra’s incarnations?” She asked, to which they both nodded.

“That’s right, we’re Terra! Well, I’m Terra.” The divine felyn said, the fallen goddess rolling her eyes.

"No, I'm Terra. You're Firma, remember?"

"Eh, are you sure?" Lifre grinned as she saw the interaction of these two. She had the feeling that they would get along just fine.

"Did she explain why you're here?" Lifre asked to confirm, not wanting to thrust the two into something unexpected. When they heard her voice, they turned to look at her again, blinking.

"Kind of... is your head on backwards?" The divine Terra asked.

"Oh! Right, sorry." She said, turning her body around to face them as well. When they saw that, the twins looked at each other once again.

"She's weird..." The fallen Terra whispered, the divine one nodding her head.

"Yeah, but she seems fun. It'd be worth seeing what she has in store, right? And the big boss upstairs said that this would make us stronger if it works."

"That's a pretty big if." Lifre waited for the two to finish their 'private' conversation, simply rocking back and forth on her heels. Once they were done, the fallen Terra looked over at her once again. "Okay, so, what exactly are you going to do?"

"Easy!" Lifre smiled wide. "I'm going to trap the two of you in a story, with myself as the storyteller. I'll throw various obstacles at you while sealing aspects of your power. For every obstacle you manage to overcome, you *should* get a blessing reward based on the amount of effort you had to put in. I'm still working out the exact details and how it will work, but that's why you're here!"

The two blinked at that, looking at one another again, before turning to look at Lifre. "Alright, we're in." They said in perfect unison.

Lifre's smile turned into a full grin as she clapped her hands together. "Then, let's get started. I declare myself the narrator of this tale!" She said, a tome appearing before her. The book flipped open to its first page, in which Lifre could see the Terra twins, though they still stood across from her.

"I guess I need to get this started. The courageous duo found themselves stripped of their powers, returned to the lives they once lived as mere mortals." Her words began to be transcribed within the book, as well as how the twins gasped, the divine and void powers immediately being sealed. However, this alone took quite a toll on Lifre's divinity, though she persevered.

“Finding themselves alone in a dark forest, the pair knew that the only way to survive was to find shelter. The crackling of thunder could be heard in the distance, a sign of an impending storm. Already, the winds were beginning to howl, the branches of the trees shaking above them.” Next, the scene of the library shifted, the twins suddenly appearing much younger as they stood alone within a dark forest, listening to the sounds of the approaching storm.

Lifre was nowhere to be seen, though her voice had echoed around them. “Alright, sis... you heard her. We need shelter.” One of the twins said, their distinctive characteristics no longer present.

“Right...” The other agreed, and they quickly began searching the base of each and every tree, looking for any kind of hollow that they could hide in.

As they did, Lifre’s voice spoke up as if to seal their fates. “The denizens of the forest were not keen on the idea of giving up their homes. If the pair wished to take shelter from the beasts within, they would have to fight tooth and nail for the chance.”

“Oh, that’s just not fair!” One of the sisters shouted, an angry honey badger lunging out of one of the hollows with its claws flailing towards her. The claws in question seemed to be composed of blue crystal, marking this beast as anything but ordinary.

Without her extraordinary powers, the twin was knocked back by the sudden lunge of the animal, doing her best to hold it off of her while its claws flailed about. She found her arm scratched, surprised to see the blood dripping from the wound. This made it clear that it was not only their powers that had been sealed, they had even been given bodies of flesh and blood.

Thankfully, the other sister came by with a particularly sharp branch. “Keep it still!” She shouted, piercing the branch through the beast’s back. Although there was some natural resistance, the creature slowly began to stop its resistance, falling limp within the felyn’s hands.

The sister laying on the ground tossed the creature aside and quickly wiped off her hands. “Okay, okay, that wasn’t so bad...” She said, and could feel a trace of energy rising up in her body.

At least, until Lifre spoke again. “As the fierce beast’s poison began to spread through her body, the pair knew that their salvation could only be found in the herbs collected within its home.”

“Poison!?” The felyn shouted, looking at the wound on her arm. The blood dripping down had begun to blacken, letting them know that Lifre’s words were not nonsense.

“Come on.” The other said hurriedly, pulling her twin towards the hollow. “If it’s alchemy, at least that’s something we can do.”

The twin nodded her head, feeling the strength start to leave her body as she was brought into the dark interior at the base of the mighty tree. Outside, rain was just starting to fall, thunder crashing nearby.

“Okay, just stay calm. Keep your heart rate down.” The uninjured twin said as she looked through the herbs. “Really, poison in all of this... ah!” She found a small red herb with a long, twisting body, as well as numerous large, peculiar leaves.

“The poison... it’s cold.” The other said, causing the one with the herbs to nod her head. “Feels... like it’s invading my spirit.”

“Good, good, just keep calm.” The uninjured twin said as she began crushing the red herb, fashioning a flimsy bowl out of the leaves. She stuck the bowl out of the hollow, allowing it to catch some of the rain, before dropping the crushed herb into the makeshift bowl and bringing it to her sister. “Drink this. Warding root soaked with iron palm leaves.”

The poisoned twin nodded her head weakly, taking the leaf bowl and sipping from it. Lfre’s voice spoke out again, this time seeming surprised. “Eh, wait, that actually worked? I was going to give it to you if you performed well, but to think you actually found something... the injured sister found the quickly brewed antidote remarkably effective, helping her body to combat the beast’s poison.”

Once again, the pair felt themselves both becoming stronger, faster, even able to think more clearly now than before. The complexion of the injured twin brightened again, losing the paleness from the poison that had invaded her body and spirit. “How much more of this do you think there is?”

The other twin shook her head. “She sealed us at the start. Either the trials would continue until we regain our full power, or until she releases us. Given the domains she has, she can probably only link relevant trials together. So, the next threat should be the storm. Either a flood or a tornado, both of which we’d fail to overcome without this shelter. A flood could still be dangerous, with how flat the ground outside was...”

“I’m not that mean!” Lfre’s voice spoke up as if to rebuke the twin who spoke. “It’s just a bad storm! I don’t want to actually kill either of you. I mean...” She cleared her throat to resume narrating. “As the pair hid within their hollow, they could hear the sounds of crashing within the forest, some great beast hidden within the storm, felling trees as it passed.”

“I thought she didn’t want to kill us?” One of the two asked wryly, the other shaking her head.

“We’ve just got to stay quiet and make sure it can’t find us. This isn’t an obstacle for us to face head-on.” After she said that, the pair of them fell silent, watching outside of their hollow for any signs of danger. With their current abilities, it was clear that they would not be able to fight against anything capable of casually knocking down such large trees.