

League of Discord
Chapter 14: Mended Stone

One of the newly christened Battlemages shifted nervously on his feet. In front of him and his comrades, Discord stood at the head of the massive array of creatures that were gathered in front of Canterlot's gates. It was several minutes of an agonizing wait as the Spirit of Chaos heaved against the magical wards Celestia had put in place so many years ago. Discord threw bolts of condensed magical power at the city, causing the sky to light up as his siege exploded against the magical barrier in flashes of crimson and gold. Nopony was hopeful that Discord would be stopped at the barrier. Several were already beginning to ready offensive spells as the blue rippling and flickering across the barrier became more lasting and evident. All of the Royal Battlemages stood apart from the unicorn at the head of the group, though. Ryze was crackling with enough magic and electricity to cause minor burns to anypony that stepped near him, a fierce example to what awaited Discord's forces when the barrier fell. Though his enemy was incapable of being intimidated, the mage knew a show of confidence and defiance would do well for his students' morale. Thus, he continued his vigil as the crash of magic against magic became louder and louder, until, finally, the moment everypony had been waiting for came. The barrier fell.

Discord's insane laughter echoed across the battlefield as chaos erupted immediately. Ryze became alight as bolts of magical energy soared from his horn to the pair of manticores that had smashed through the gates without a second thought. As if a signal had been given, the Battlemages unleashed their own spells, various goutts of flame, ice, and other elemental magics finding their targets. Ensorcelled creatures fell to the ground in droves, their bodies being swept aside just as quickly by the flood pouring into the city. Ryze saw some of his unicorns begin to balk at the effort of holding back the tide. "Hold fast! We must thin their numbers more to clear a path!" The mages redoubled their efforts, but even so, it was apparent that they were being forced back.

Ryze continued, feeling the magic flowing through him and through his enemies. A Canis Major fell to the ground before him, twitching in uncontrollable, electricity-induced seizures. There was almost a berth around him, not because the creatures were avoiding him, but due to the sheer amount of magical lightning arcing from creature to creature. A slight pause in the flood of enemies gave him a moment to take a swig of a shimmering blue concoction, one of many bottles that lined each side of his heavy armor. Unlike most magicians of the League, Ryze preferred to spend most of his battles clad in plate. His connection with magic was innate, and it drew entirely from his willpower and focus. He took pride in not needing some silly ring or enchanted hat to augment his strength, and instead opted to make himself as impervious to damage as he could. Even so, even he was beginning to tire from the flood of creatures. *'Fall back to the castle. We're almost ready.'* Luna's voice had been the only thing he had been waiting on. Signaling a fighting retreat with a bright orange magical flare, he began gradually pulling backwards toward the castle, taking care to make sure every one of his mages made it before him.

With a dull crash, the gates of the castle closed, another delay for Discord to deal with as he continued disarming the magics guarding the city. Ryze rallied his troops. "Okay. Here's the hard part. We have to hold out until Discord himself is inside the castle, and we have to keep his attention on us. When the Elements are almost in position, Celestia and Nasus will engage Discord. While he's distracted, the Elements will deal with him. Prepare yourselves. Drink a potion or two. They'll break in

any second.”

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Discord laughed in delight as he swept aside another barrier. “Beautiful, isn't it, Swain?” The recipient of the statement shrugged, all business as he, Discord, and Singed walked through the rubble that was swiftly becoming the dominating aesthetic of the city. “Oh, fine. Be a spoilsport. In any case it won't be long till we've broken into the castle and found the Elements of Harmony, and then you'll get your just reward.”

“I look forward to each of getting what we deserve.” Swain said, his voice dripping with honey and venom. Discord laughed again, seemingly giddy from the carnage around him. Singed silently trotted behind the group, saying nothing even as they reached the castle walls. The duo remained nonplussed as the Spirit of Chaos began tearing apart the last of the magics barring their entry, only briefly catching Ryze's eye as the gates smashed open and the creatures started pouring into the castle.

Discord raised an eyebrow and smirked gently, a strikingly understated facial expression for a creature who had been so prone to extremes thus far. Swain was instantly on alert. “So, Swain... you have given me many tales of leading your troops into battle, and slaying many enemies. Why do you refrain now? Perhaps there is something staying your hoof?”

“I find it more prudent to save my strength for the real fight. Ryze will eventually be overwhelmed, but there will still be Riven and Ezreal to deal with, both of whom are formidable opponents in their own right. It would be impractical to waste my efforts and strength on the rest of the fodder.” Swain's voice remained flat and monotone.

“Very practical, very logical.” Discord nodded sagely. “It also reeks of lies. You saw the way I dealt with both Nasus and Celestia without any real effort. I already told you that you weren't here for your power so much as your brain, and perhaps if you'd remembered that you'd have made a more convincing lie.” Neither Discord nor Swain took their eyes off one another, and neither one of them heard a pop and a faint fizzing noise nearby as Singed uncorked a bottle and began to chug. Continuing to smirk arrogantly, Discord sidled toward Swain. “Of course, you're not a stupid pony, by far. Who would honestly trust the Spirit of Chaos to be honest and straightforward? What you don't get is that it doesn't matter, though.”

Discord began to raise a paw toward Swain, but Singed was faster, slamming Swain aside in a rush. The bolt of magical energy whizzed harmlessly past the pair. Infuriated, Discord began snaking a magical grip around Singed...only for the stallion to slip to the ground a few seconds later, laughing as foam and spittle leaked out of his mouth. Huffing and sputtering, Singed regarded Discord. “Mercury...Also known as quicksilver...magic absorbing properties...Makes nice boots...” Discord, utterly confused, but no less enraged, began casting fire and lightning at the stallion, becoming increasingly frustrated as the unnaturally quick stallion continued to evade his grasp, not noticing Swain fighting his way past the hordes to get away from the scene.

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Ezreal shifted restlessly on his hooves. He, Riven, and the six bearers of the Elements of

Harmony had been waiting, silently hidden in a side room whilst the battle raged in the courtyard. He had participated in his fair share of ambushes, but most of those that he had been part of in the League had been rather spur-of-the-moment, and didn't involve waiting this long. They had been huddle in the relatively small room for over three hours now, and it had only been thirty minutes since they had heard Luna give the order to retreat.

The wait had been hard to bear, and each second seemed like a minute as Discord's forces slowly pushed the defenders back. The six Element Bearers had taken the time especially harshly, and Fluttershy was practically in tears at the stress of knowing only she and her friends could defeat the monster. The others weren't faring particularly better, though Rainbow Dash seemed at least somewhat composed. Twilight Sparkle, Rarity, and Applejack were engaged in hushed speculation of how the battle was progressing. Riven and Ezreal were both silent, the former slightly annoyed at the security risk the chatting posed, but unable to find the heart to tell the inexperienced ponies to be perfectly still and quiet under an immense stress. To do so would be unreasonable and might detract from their performance later.

More waiting. Discord had become distracted by something after breaking down the castle gates, but was now beginning to move in, slowly dismantling the magic hindering him along the way. It wouldn't be long before he was in position. Ezreal practically jumped for joy when the order finally came from Luna. *'Elements of Harmony, move into position.'* After taking a brief moment to shepherd Fluttershy out of her corner, the eight began moving toward their target.

Ryze was only mildly surprised when Singed went flying past him. “You? What the h-Why are you here?”

Singed laughed madly, and coughed up some blood. “I decided to try being a pegasus. Discord helped, but I decided it wasn't for me.” Singed managed to get up and wobble a few steps forward before collapsing. Ryze wasn't moved by much pity.

After telling one of his mages to 'clean that mess up before someone trips on it', Ryze surveyed the situation. Discord was approaching just as steadily as before, though he looked a little less jolly about it. The tide of creatures hadn't subsided, but had faltered slightly. “When our surprise arrives, focus on clearing out the creatures around them. They'll have a hard enough time without being distracted.” Ryze took a swig from a health potion and cast the bottle aside. *'Any time now, Luna.'*

'Celestia and Nasus, engage Discord. The Elements are almost in position.' Luna's voice echoed though Ryze's head, and he turned to look at Discord as the penultimate step of their trap was sprung. Nasus and Celestia appeared in a blinding flash in front of Discord, who staggered backward in surprise.

The Spirit of Chaos had to take a moment to recover. He had figured that Swain would betray him, but only now, as the two former statues stood before him, did he understand the scope of Swain's deceit. Words escaped him as he began to consider how he would wreak vengeance upon the general once he had dealt with the Elements. He was interrupted, however, by Nasus and Celestia taking advantage of his stunned state. The former charged straight at Discord, his dull golden armor adorned

with emeralds that gave off the same ghastly shimmer that appeared when Nasus had previously fed off of the wolf. The latter began strafing, firing streams of concentrated, bone-dissolving light at Discord. Discord howled in pain and outrage, lashing out at Celestia with his talons. The blinding light shining off of Celestia's own brilliantly finished armor proved too much for his eyes, however, and his claws swiped harmlessly through the air. Nasus took the opportunity to ram all of his considerable bulk into Discord, toppling him over.

In but a moment, Discord had recovered, his eyes glowing briefly as they were altered in mere seconds to suit the new situation. Flinging Nasus aside, he summoned a telekinetic spell, hurling a large section of the castle's ramparts at Celestia, who barely avoided the speedy projectile. Nasus was back on his hooves almost as soon as he had landed, his eyes pulsing as he summoned his aging spell. Discord only paused for a moment before shaking off the effects and waving a paw toward Nasus, who was catapulted into the air as the ground beneath him erupted upward, ripping a noticeable gash in the armor on his stomach and paving the way for a few drops of crimson to fall to the ground. Celestia's assault hadn't abated though, and Discord soon found himself using his power to rid himself of a host of new burns along his back and head, giving Nasus time to consume the spirit of a nearby wolf to close his own wounds. This back and forth continued without any sign of waning for several minutes, and true to the plan, Discord had no knowledge of the eight ponies that were rapidly getting closer.

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Riven stepped carefully over one of the necks of a recently felled hydra. The massive, multi-headed reptile had only proven a slight delay for her and Ezreal, each too focused on their objective to allow something so large and clumsy to obstruct their path for long. In the distance, they could hear the sounds of Discord battling Celestia and Nasus, and before long, the battle was in sight as well. Even more than the battleground around them, the site of the immortals' fight was littered with destruction and debris. What had taken years of crafting by the ancestors of Canterlot's citizenry had been destroyed in hours. Majestic spires and lovingly constructed domes lay in ruination now, the one beautiful motif of black, gold, and white now almost completely obscured by the gray clouds of dust and red glow of fire. Ezreal was eerily reminded of various ruins he had previously explored in his time on Valoran, though most were not on fire.

The six bearers of the Elements of Harmony trailed behind, but not by much, their expressions ranging from Fluttershy's sheer terror to Pinkie's almost oblivious bouncing through the carnage. Rainbow Dash, Twilight Sparkle, Rarity, and Applejack had remained completely silent, their faces set in grim determination as they waded through the battle. The latter of those had even on occasion lended her efforts to plant her hooves squarely into the face of a wayward wolf that the two guardians had been too busy to deal with at the time. Sooner than any of them expected, Discord's form loomed in front of them.

Nasus and Celestia, under instruction from Luna, had saved their most ferocious attacks until now, and as the group approached the Spirit of Chaos from behind, they beheld a strangely beautiful, yet almost blinding mixture of Nasus' emerald magics and Celestia's pure white conjurations. A familiar sandstorm had begun to kick up, dust and embers flying through the air around the area. Discord wasn't anywhere near done though, and as the assaulting animals began withering and dying in droves around the storm, he reached for his most foul magics.

Discord felt the chaos of the battle flowing through him like a current of electricity. The entire

time that the fight had been raging, he had been basking in the death and destruction, growing stronger for it, and finally, like a vessel as cracked and broken as his mind, the chaos stored within Discord unleashed itself. Reality seemed to implode, and time seemed to move at half of its normal speed. With a roar, the mixture of dust, debris, and fire coalesced into a solid tendril of molten stone, which slammed into Nasus with enough force to leave a crater. The ruined buildings themselves began to animate, shifting and morphing until they could begin dragging themselves toward the defenders. As the ground shook and heaved, the Elements could barely keep their footing as they continued their approach. Ezreal reeled backward when a previously fallen wolf stood to its feet, blood dripping from its neck, and howled before staggering toward him to be put down again.

Discord couldn't even bring himself to laugh or gloat, barely withstanding the flood of wild, uncontrollable chaos magic flowing out of him. As Celestia squirmed within his grasp, he wanted to say something, to convey what he was feeling, but the magnitude of his own strength was scouring his mind as thoroughly as the city around him. Overwhelmed by chaos, he did not see Twilight Sparkle behind him, a jewel-encrusted crown atop her head glowing in tandem with her eyes. He did not see the six bearers of the Elements of Harmony lifting into the air as the ancient powers of the artifacts took hold. He did not see a beam of light emitting from each of the magical necklaces that adorned the other five. He did not see each beam wrap itself around a central, shockingly violet pillar of light generated by Twilight Sparkle. He did not see the light unravel itself into a wave of colors, gleaming with every part of the spectrum. The only thing he saw was Celestia's proud smile toward her student. A moment later, he saw nothing at all.

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Reality seemed to shift back into itself a moment later. Riven sidestepped as a recently animated building collapsed on itself. Riven wandered the battlefield for a few minutes, feeling an unusual restlessness and incompleteness about herself. Becoming more and more agitated, she searched the battlefield, not quite sure what she was looking for. It wasn't long before this search became a frenzy, as she madly dashed over the ruins and rubble toward the smashed gates of Canterlot. It was there that she finally comprehended her search.

Swain wasn't quite unconscious, but he was delirious enough from blood loss not to notice Riven's arrival. Scattered around him were dozens of slain creatures, ranging from manticores to Canis Majors to a few hydras. Riven felt a strange sense of calmness as her previous frenzy subsided, and she seemed to be almost on autopilot as she staggered numbly toward the barely breathing form. In the back of her mind, she was vaguely aware that she hated this being. She barely registered that as her overwhelming instincts told her that this being needed to die.

Riven extended a bladed wing toward Swain's throat...