

League of Discord
Chapter 15: Pony, Man, and Monster

“Is this what you want?” Riven didn't acknowledge Rainbow Dash's question for several moments, torn between basking in the long-awaited moment where she could have revenge and the ever-growing influence that Rainbow Dash, Equestria, and the concepts that both presented and represented. The quickly extending silence worried Rainbow Dash, but not as much as Riven's labored response.

“Yes. This is what I want. I want this creature dead. He and Singed are directly responsible for the deaths of my comrades, and he more than anyone else is responsible for the state of my homeland. Yes. I want him to die.” Riven was shaking at this point, but she made no further move to kill the incapacitated Swain. “But I'm not going to kill him. Killing him won't repair my homeland, killing him won't bring back my comrades-in-arms. Killing him would only destabilize Noxus' political structure, paving the way for someone just as depraved with half the restraint.”

“That's...probably more thought than I would have put into it, to be honest, but I don't know much about politics.” Rainbow Dash wasn't quite sure what to say past that, feeling completely unequipped to deal with this situation.

“I'd be lying to both of us if I said those were the main reasons that stayed my blade right now.” Riven finally lowered her wing, letting her blade fall harmlessly away from Swain's throat. “Noxus is a harsh place, and it truly tests the characters of the citizens. Our morals and our ethics are what truly make us who we are. I have always fought for an honorable Noxus, that fights to strengthen itself so that one day we need to fight no longer. Even Swain has some sort of twisted set of ethics, somewhere past the ambition and greed. One day, I will probably kill Swain, but I need to do so on my own terms, if I am to prove the superiority of my philosophy. His death will mean nothing if I end his life while he is unable to fight back, and Noxus will simply view me as another opportunist out to rule. My heritage is that of a warrior. By nature, a heritage that calls for refinement through conflict. Despite this, those who feel as I do value life. It's a sad reality that our world is harsh enough to require conflict, but I believe that it is through mastering the conflict that our world forces upon us that we will ascend past it.”

“But conflict doesn't always require death, though. Couldn't you find a way to prove your point that doesn't involve shedding blood? After today, I don't know how you could stand to live in your world the way you do. I'm gonna have nightmares about wolves for years.” Rainbow Dash wanted to find a way to tell Riven that the world didn't have to be as she viewed it, but wasn't sure how.

“True...Perhaps leaving Swain alive after defeating him could prove the weakness of his philosophy of senseless death in sacrifice to himself and Noxus even more effectively. With the existence of the League, war is much less necessary, but vesting all of our faith in one entity to solve our problems leads to complacency...” Riven paused, thoughtful. “One could still try to keep a guard trained for external threats, but as years of peace pass, even that would grow weaker...” Riven paused once more, as if coming to a horrible realization. “Vigilance is impossible to maintain without constant conflict. The longer we go without threats, the more easily beaten we are by new ones that arise. We can never ascend past the need for conflict. Humanity is doomed.”

Rainbow Dash felt the beginnings of an idea stir within her. “Maybe it takes more than just conflict, though? You're right...your world doesn't have immortal princesses to watch over you...unless something in the nature of your world changes, you'll always need to know how to defend yourself. The way it sounds though, there's almost always some sort of threat to keep you on your toes...and since you already said that refinement through combat can't work, why not keep your knowledge of fighting, and use it to defend yourself while you find a better way? Maybe a way to strengthen Noxus through unity instead of conflict. You may always need to know how to fight, but you can use what you know to make it safe for those who don't while they put their skills to work to make Noxus and all of Valoran a better place!”

Riven smiled softly. “Well, eliminating war and violence may be impossible, but I suppose that trying to diminish them in other ways could work.” Riven's eye's widened as she remembered the original subject of their conversation. “Ah, and speaking of which, perhaps I could begin to show Swain this new method of thinking firsthand...by keeping him from bleeding out. Could you get a medic over here while I stabilize him.” Rainbow Dash was gone in a rainbow-hued blur of motion, while Riven uncorked the last of her health potions.

“My little ponies...my faithful and loyal subjects...today, we have seen blood shed in Equestria for the first time in many ages. Discord's treachery will leave scars upon Canterlot and the Everfree Forest for many generations. Today we have fought for our lives and our values.” Celestia paused, letting her words sink in as she addressed the citizenry of Canterlot. “But today is not a day of sadness, but of joy and revelry. Discord is vanquished, and soon we will give to him a prison from which he cannot escape. Harmony is free to reign in Equestria once more, thanks to the heroism of a few brave travelers, the bearers of the Elements of Harmony, and the brave soldiers who volunteered to become Royal Battlemages. Now, more than ever, I would like to thank the latter, for without your aid, the Element Bearers and their guardians could never have accomplished their task. My own role in the battle is laughable beside their bravery in the face of conflict the likes of which they had never seen or been trained for previously.”

Another dramatic pause. “It is thanks to this assembly of heroes that Canterlot will live to see another day, a day of a Canterlot not only restored, but surpassing the beauty of its former self, to better reflect the persona of the brave souls residing within it. To this end, I will not be commissioning the royal treasury, but my own private funds as Princess of Equestria to aid in the reconstruction of Canterlot. I will also be lending my own strength and magics to speed the process along, and I urge any who wish to show their appreciation to our heroes to do the same. I say that we show our own bravery in the face of such evils as Discord who would seek to destroy all we hold dear, and embrace the future with everything it brings, for despite what chaos might seek to rend us asunder, despite what hatred might fester in the hearts of dark beings, despite what evil ambitions might try to drive away our love for each other, we are one. Harmony prevails! Equestria prevails!”

Celestia stepped down from the piece of rubble she had been standing on, her brilliant white coat still immaculate despite the dust and debris around her. Striding regally through the applauding

crowd, occasionally smiling at one subject or greeting another, she eventually drew her way into the castle, where a somewhat smaller crowd awaited her. Twilight Sparkle and the other bearers of the Elements were waiting inside, along with Princess Luna, Ezreal, Riven, Nasus, and Ryze. “You all did very well. I’m proud to call you my friends and allies. Canterlot will be rebuilt, and the Everfree Forest repopulated, and we’ll be stronger for it. I won’t make the same mistake twice, though. The Royal Battlemages will be merged back into the rest of the Royal Guard, and this time the role will be more than ceremonial. If another Discord emerges, we will be ready.”

Nasus stepped forward. “Myself, Ryze, and a few of the unicorns from the University of Canterlot finished the spell you requested. It was difficult not to permanently damage his soul in the process, but Discord has been severed from the greater bulk of his magical ability. He will be ready for release and rehabilitation at your discretion.”

“Very good. That brings us to our next matter...It has truly been an honor to know you all, but a bargain is a bargain, and I would not begrudge you your homes. Shortly before Discord attacked, the University also completed a spell that we are fairly certain will send you home, to be executed by the Elements of Harmony. As for our other two...allies... They fulfilled their end, so I see no reason to make myself a liar. They will be sent as well, as soon as they are fetched from incarceration.” Celestia nodded in respect to the warriors. “I wish you all the best of luck in your travels. We will reconvene in an hour to begin the spell. I must take my leave of you for now, as there is much to be done. I will see you all again when it is time.”

Tearful goodbyes were exchanged, some more tearful than others as Ryze couldn't find the heart to keep the six Element Bearers from hugging him as they wished him and the others well. Even Riven found herself hit by a pang of regret as she realized that she would most likely never see the one who had showed her what she had lacked again. “Soldiers of Noxus were taught never to say goodbye...it meant that they didn't think they were coming home again. I don't think I'll be coming back, but I still can't find it in me to say it. I think that perhaps I'll still think of this place as holding a little bit of home for me though, and be sure I will not forget you.”

“Yeah. You're pretty cool, you know that?” Rainbow Dash laughed, pretending that she didn't feel any wetness at her eyes. “Maybe if you had the time, you could become almost as good at flying as me. Life's dumb like that sometimes, yeah?” Riven laughed with her, and the two walked away, their conversation succumbing to the bittersweet nature of friends parting ways.

Farewells given, belongings gathered, and friends present, the six champions entered the ritual chamber. In olden days, when the superstition that magic was bound to words and not mind was present, the room had been used for elaborate incantations and processions. Now, the room found use as an isolated and quiet location for groups of unicorns to cast complex spells without being disturbed.

Twelve ponies encircled the group, alternating between a University researcher and one of the six Elements of Harmony. Celestia and Luna both stood in front of the group, the former finishing her explanation of the spell's mechanics to the six. “Anyway, the spell will take you to the closest thing it can interpret to home. If there are no more questions, we are ready to begin. Good luck, and farewell.”

The unicorns began their work quickly, each of the Elements' artifacts beginning to light up on a brilliant array of colors as the spell took hold. The colors swirled around the six, engulfing them in a blinding vortex as they began to rise into the air.

The world went white.

Swain opened his eyes, swaying slightly as his vision came into focus. He smiled slightly as he lifted his hand, flexing it as the flood of familiar sensations reached his brain. Around him, the trappings of a general of Noxus surrounded him. Taking a moment, he let the satisfaction of a job well-done soak in. To his delight, the saddlebag he had previously been wearing was on the floor behind him. Peeking inside, the gleam of the shattered Nightmare's Regalia greeted him. Allowing himself a moment of pride, he paused only when he saw something else behind it. Pulling out the scroll, he unraveled it.

We have had combat. Surely we will have more. Now, I desire words as well.

Riven

Swain cocked his head. It was going to be an interesting night indeed.

Singed followed a similar pattern of actions to Swain, at first. After adding the samples he had gathered from Equestria to his stores, he set the giant potion bottle that normally adorned his back aside, and strode out onto his balcony, giving him a wide view of his home city of Zaun. Singed felt a pang of nostalgia as he surveyed the smog-filled skies of his homeland, and inspected the clusters of magical industrial complexes. It was slightly unfortunate that he'd have to make the commute to the Institute of War again, but perhaps he was due for a vacation anyway. Maybe a trip to Ionia, perhaps a week or two on the beaches with a surf board. Clear his head, sort out his new inspirations for various compounds he was going to make with his new samples. Walking back inside, he opened one of his cabinets, searching for an entirely different sort of chemical.

Singed poured a glass of the white wine, and began packing.

Riven froze. Something wasn't quite right here. It was her home, yes. The scraps of armor, the broken and blunted blades, the war mementos... Everything was exactly as she left it before preparing for that last, fateful match on the Twisted Treeline, but her instincts were screaming at her that something wasn't right here. She stalked through her home, hefting her broken runeblade. Her personal armory was as it should be. Her food stores were intact. Her bedroom was...The blade clattered to the ground as she beheld the unconscious form before her. Words evaded her.

Twilight Sparkle awoke, and tried to rise. She promptly fell to the ground as she failed to get her hooves beneath her...A problem she soon realized was caused by her lack of hooves. After a few seconds of panicked flailing, she managed to prop herself up on her new appendages, only to see Nasus and Ryze before her. The former turned to the latter. "We might have a problem."

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End – League of Discord

To be continued in The Redemption of Jericho Swain

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A word from the author:

So yeah. This has been an interesting journey. I gotta say I didn't expect my first venture into writing in so long to be A)well-received and B)Pony-related. Gotta say, totally didn't see either of those coming.

Anyway, as implied, this particular part of the saga may be over, but I actually intend to make this a three-part series, so if I haven't bored you yet, stay tuned. While I'm at it, I'd like to thank all of my friends for their support, as well as the bronies from League of Legends who have read my stuff.(If you play league and want to play with bronies too, go to the chat rooms and open 'bronies'. We pretty much rock.) I'd also like to thank Stofen from the League of Legends forums for posting my story on the forums and helping me get a few more readers. Anyway, I've had tons of fun, gonna be writing bunches more stuff soon, so if this little abomination hasn't turned you away, keep an eye out for the further adventures of the mane six, now with 100% more Runeterra.