

Ulbert tipped his hat with the greatest of contentment toward his creation. Demiurge bowed with one hand swept in front of his own waist at his master's acknowledgement, then fell into step to his master's left to continue down the hall.

*'Six months here in the New World... no sign of Momonga, no signs of anyone. I'd hoped at least Momonga could have made it... I mean this was 'his' invitation. Herohero... I figured he wouldn't be here, but the rest?'* Ulbert thought privately, Demiurge seemed ready to speak, but Ulbert, with his slow stately walk, was not yet ready to listen.

His dark coat fluttered about, a little throw away magical effect bought from a cash shop for a pittance. 'The Everwind effect' always kept a dignified and dramatic flutter to any cloak or cape or robe he wished to apply it to. 'A little vanity isn't so bad.' He laughed at himself over it though, in private... sometimes, and stroked his goat chin.

*'I don't really miss my human body, which is a bit of a surprise, but I do still have 'everything I need' when it comes time to pick someone to have children with.'* Ulbert mused, the battle maids, and for that matter Albedo and Shalltear, even Neuronist, each were willing, though the latter made him shudder to think about it. 'Shalltear may be a walking Wiki of fetishes, but... still, a little bit of a loli, now if I could give her a grown up form like Albedo...?' He suppressed his urge to lick his lips, 'Thank 'you' Tabula for making her a slut.'

*'I'd still like to know how we ended up here, but that's secondary to... the rest.'* Ulbert thought, and glanced at Demiurge. "Proceed."

Demiurge began seamlessly, his hands folded behind his back in the same manner as his creator, he glanced up at the last Supreme Being and spoke with a smile constantly plastered on his face, "Master, for the last six months we've surveyed 'all' of the surrounding kingdoms extensively. As far east as the edge of Baharuth and as far south as the Elf Kingdom. We've identified everybody worthwhile in Re-Estize, the Roble Holy Kingdom, and even the Draconic Kingdom. Few have intelligence worth mentioning, and those that do have all joined us voluntarily. Princess Renner is ready to obey, and Fluder is absolutely compliant."

“And did you approach the Draconic Queen about saving her kingdom?” Ulbert asked, recalling the information about the Beastman Kingdom’s invasion.

“My lord, I asked what she would give to the one who could stop their invasion, and she offered her hand in marriage and her Kingdom as a dowry.” Demiurge replied with a laugh, “She *is* an interesting specimen, that wild magic ability of hers is more valuable than the rest of her kingdom.”

They reached the throne room, and when they did, the guardians knelt in deference to their master. *‘Momonga, if you could have been here, you’d have been thrilled, I’m sure of it.’* Ulbert cast a regretful thought to his past, but carried on into the present.

“I see, is there anything worthwhile in the Beastman Kingdom?” Ulbert continued as they headed toward the Throne of Kings.

“Some golem making skills, but nothing special. The dragon lords of Argland are the only powerful beings that are truly a threat, and they are no match for a combined force of the Guardians and high level summons.” Demiurge explained.

“Good.” Ulbert replied as they reached the stairs and he began to ascend to the throne. As the last member of the guild, the Lord of Nazarick, wielder of the staff of Ainz Ooal Gown, Ulbert Alain Odle was now confident that he could achieve all that he wanted.

Demiurge continued to ascend the stairs and stood at his master’s left hand, while at his right, Albedo waited with a humble downward glance.

When Ulbert sat on the throne, he swept the staff before him, and silence stretched out.

“Now we begin Operation Leviathan. This world is a rotten place. For months we have watched and studied the surrounding lands. We watched as a village was slaughtered, as even a woman and her daughter were killed by laughing knights, their own kind, no less. We have watched the Re-Estize

Kingdom continue to decline, and we have watched the desperate ongoing skirmishes between the demihumans and humans in the Roble Holy Kingdom. We have watched the Beastmen kill and consume intelligent life without regard for their destructive actions. This has left me convinced of one thing." Ulbert held out his hand and raised one long finger.

The Guardians and those in attendance, listened patiently at the edge of their seats.

"This world *needs* me to rule it. If I don't, it will destroy itself." Ulbert pronounced with divine certainty, the bitter memory of the destructive existence of his own world was not far from his mind. '*One day, will that old world be like a dream, and will I forget that it was ever a real place?*' He wondered, but did not have an answer to the question, his bright round eyes fell on Sebas.

He raised a hand and pointed to the Head of the Pleiades. "Sebas, you will begin by capturing all those heroes of Baharuth who might be strong enough to merit our attention. Identify their weaknesses, and appeal to them. Money, land, sex, power... doesn't matter. Make them ours, and if they absolutely refuse, kill them and bring their corpses. I want them all here within three days. They will serve me one way or the other. Demiurge will provide you with the information you need."

"Master." Sebas answered with a deferential bowing of his head when the order was given.

"CZ, you identified a curiously talented archer in the Roble Holy Kingdom who could project magic through her arrows, along with a few other worthwhile combat talents, didn't you?" Ulbert asked rhetorically.

CZ inclined her head, "I did."

"Capture her." He ordered.

"Shalltear, what of Gazef Stronoff?" Ulbert asked.

"We recovered his body, master. We have it preserved and waiting for resurrection, and we captured a blue haired swordsman at the grave who we determined from our study of Gazef, had been his rival. His will to live is broken... for now." Shalltear promised.

"What about Blue Rose?" Ulbert asked.

"I can answer that, My Lord." Demiurge interjected, "Renner is prepared to have a trap laid for them at our convenience, and we also have files on all the other adamantite teams, none of them are a match for our forces, but they would serve as a rallying point for any humans who thought to oppose you."

"Good. Good." Ulbert commented, then stroking the little tuft of white beard that hung down from the front of his chin he asked, "What about the Theocracy?"

"They have some connection to past players, but it appears to be remote, My Lord." Albedo answered with a dusky whisper, "They do have 'treasures' from Yggdrasil, but other than the world item we caught that group with, the rest appear to be of no consequence."

"Then Cocytus, commence Operation Gladiator." Ulbert commanded, and the insectoid guardian bowed his head.

"With. Great. Pleasure. Master." Cocytus replied.

"Then begin. At once." Ulbert commanded.

"For the glory of Nazarick!" The guardians and battlemaids said as one.

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Demiurge's tail lashed behind him as he walked through the throne room of the Beastman Kingdom. Beastmen of all kinds were snarling, growling and baring talons, claws, fangs, jaws; whatever other parts of inferior beings that they had to delude themselves into thinking they were a threat to him with.

They didn't attack him, largely, Demiurge assumed, because of his tail, it denied his otherwise evidently human appearance, other than the crystal eyes hidden by his glasses. *'As if they could even try. At best estimate, this Lionman King is no more than level forty, maybe an effective forty-five with his best equipment, and performs at level fifty in the right matchup.'* In short, to Demiurge, he was trash, replaceable trash, while the Draconic Queen... might breed something interesting.

"You are the king, are you not?" Demiurge asked, the lionman was at least eight and a half feet tall, broad and golden furred with a large thick brown mane behind his ears that bristled at the contempt in the voice of Demiurge.

"I am." He answered nonetheless.

"And your heir, that one?" Demiurge pointed to a young male almost as large, but clearly still young and growing.

The muzzle of the king moved slowly as he spoke, "Yes, what of it?"

"Nothing, it's just that things like this 'usually' go a certain way and I wanted to make sure that if it went that way again, your heir would be here." Demiurge said, giving his suit a light tug before folding his hands behind his back.

The lionman king went quiet as he worked that over, as did the rest of the throne room. It was a crude place, basic stone blocks, nicely put together as far as it went, but nothing special, very spartan. *'Nothing special, bland brown stone, much like themselves, nothing special at all.'*

When the king did work out what Demiurge meant, and that it was a threat, or close to it, his golden eyes narrowed from where he sat on his throne. "What did you come here for?"

"To inform you that you will be withdrawing from the Draconic Kingdom immediately. And that you will never be invading again." Demiurge said matter of factly.

Jaws dropped around the room.

“No we won’t. Nothing you could offer could make that worthwhile.” The King answered, and Demiurge shook his head.

“**[Silence]** I didn’t permit you to speak, *beast.*” Demiurge replied with a smile as the jaw of the King snapped shut with an audible clap.

“I am not making an offer. I am informing you that you will be withdrawing and will not go back. If you do, my master, Lord Ulbert, has declared that you will be exterminated down to the last cub. He has no use in his empire for those who do not know their place. Now you may speak.” Demiurge added, and the lionman’s eyes popped open, as did his jaw, which roared as he leaped from his seat and charged toward the slender man with the lashing tail.

“Stupid brute.” Demiurge stated, “Disembowel yourself.”

The lionman stopped dead in his tracks, and his own eyes filled with fear as his claws betrayed him, reached his guts, and began to tear open his own flesh, spilling intestines and stomach onto the ground at his feet.

Demiurge approached with a stately air as the lionman fell onto his back. The court watched with disbelief as Demiurge approached the dying monarch, and began to stomp his head into mush. When the visitor was done, he pointed to the heir.

“You are the king now, am I wrong?” Demiurge asked.

The young lionman stood from where he sat, and Demiurge ordered him, “Bite off your left hand and swallow it.”

Before the young heir could understand what he’d been ordered to do, he was howling with pain, then choking as his own hand slid, fur, claws, and all, down into his guts, tearing open his insides as his own claws seemed intent on his torment.

"You will withdraw from the Draconic Kingdom, and you will never invade again. Say it." Demiurge commanded.

"We... will withdraw from the Draconic Kingdom. And we will never invade again." The lionman sputtered, and wings burst from Demiurge's back.

"I will not return, if my master has to visit, you will regret that you lived long enough to have regrets at all." Demiurge uttered, and then batted his wings and flew out the window to go inform the Draconic Queen that she should start planning a wedding... and meet her groom.

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Cocytus emerged from the gate and found himself standing a stone's light toss from the gate of Kami Miyako. "Send. Me. Your. Champions!" Cocytus shouted.

Guards on the wall, drawn to the shout, looked down to see the white ice-like Cocytus standing there. The shout reached the wall again, and Kami Miyako fell into chaos in a matter of hours.

First it was a dozen common guards sent to kill the mad monster... and they were swiftly put down... in pieces.

"That. Is. Not. How. You. Duel." Cocytus rebuked the city walls.

Then they began to send scriptures... and that went no better.

The dirt, stone and grass around the insectoid monster began to turn a deep crimson, and within the sacred chamber of government, the cardinals argued.

"If we feed him our people piecemeal, he'll just keep chewing them up, we have no choice but to send out our best, backed by our best, and... even ourselves if we have to." Raymond argued.

"That's a big risk." Berenice replied.

"Too big." Dominic growled, "What if we lose?"

"What is happening *now*?" Ginedine replied, "So far he's killed elite guards and the entire Windflower Scripture. He seems content to fight outside the walls... whatever he wants, he doesn't seem to kill anyone who approaches him unarmed. A number of travelers ran past him to get to the gate and he didn't so much as swing at them. When a woman dropped her infant when she fell, he picked it up and gave it back to her. As monsters go, it has another goal."

"Why not ask it what it wants?" Maximilian proposed, "If all it wants is to fight strong beings, then it will go on its own when it's done..."

"Humiliating us?" Berenice pointed out.

"Alright, fine, but if we put Zesshi into the fight and she loses..." Raymond frowned at the thought he didn't dare to finish.

"Then we're already done for if she can't win." Dominic begrudgingly admitted.

"Fine, I'll buy time to talk to it, get the Black Scripture together, and Zesshi, and the lot of us will take that thing down." Maximilian said, keeping to himself the quiet fear that this thing might really be unbeatable.

Thirty minutes later, he was approaching the towering ice monster with his hands up.

"What is your name?" Maximilian asked, the insectoid ice being slammed the butt of its long spear into the ground as a gesture of 'peace'. The message was somewhat lost under the weight of the smell of blood, but it was something.

"Cocytus. Are. You. My. Opponent?" Cocytus asked.

"What do you want here?" Maximilian craned his neck to look up at the faceless sort of head. The mandibles and eye 'orbs' offered no readable

expression, making the monster functionally faceless, and setting the Cardinal's hairs to standing on end.

Icy fog breath came out of the monster's mouth. "My. Master. Wishes. To save. This. World. You. Are. In. The. Way."

"Save the world... from humans?" Maximilian stared, aghast, briefly horrified, only for Cocytus to shake his head.

"You. Have. A. Place. If. You. Submit. All. Who. Obey. Will. Live. Well." Cocytus answered.

"Then why...?" Maximilian cast his eyes about the bloody field.

"To. Show. Strength. And. Mercy. They. Will. be. Revived." Cocytus answered.

"Get out of my waaaaaay!" Maximilian heard the voice from behind him and sighed with exasperation just before he dove aside.

Black and white hair sailed through the air behind Zesshi Zetsumei as she smashed her scythe toward the monster.

No introductions. No formal duel. No nothing, just the urge to fight. She spun her scythe to take Cocytus's head, only to fail when his spear came up out of the ground, he began to fend her off, and the Cardinal's heart began to sink.

Zesshi was moving faster than even he could see, the Black Scripture members were emerging from the city gate, as were the cardinals with them, but Zesshi was on such another plane of being when it came to combat that they knew intuitively that they would just be in her way.

And that made the monster's easy handling of her... horrifying. She shrieked and howled like a banshee, tearing into the insectoid monster, and yet it gave not even a step, only moving to continue facing her, the ground rumbling and shaking like small earthquakes were hitting the area, rumbling even the high walls of the invincible city of Kami Miyako.

"You. Are. Alright. I. Guess." Cocytus said as the small woman flailed against him.

"Beat me, and you can 'have me' monster." Zesshi promised with fanatical urgency through gritted teeth.

"That. Is. My. Master's. Choice. He. Is. Stronger. Than. I." Cocytus replied.

Zesshi's eyes lit up like candles in the dark. "If I surrender will you let me go fight him right away?"

"I. Can. Ask." Cocytus suggested, and backhanded her across the face, sending her sprawling to the ground.

She got up, wiped her jaw free of the blood it shed, and perked up immediately. "Let me fight him, and I'm yours."

"Agreed." Cocytus replied.

A groan went up from the cardinals and their scripture backups.

Five minutes later, the functional government and greatest human power in the Theocracy were all defeated, dead, or prisoners.

That night, any remaining important governmental figures 'disappeared' from their homes, from the Pontifex Maximus to the departmental heads of state.

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"Who are you?!" Neia asked, aghast when she saw the pretty young woman with the curious eyepatch and unfamiliar equipment standing in front of her.

"Someone interested. You may be useful." CZ answered with a cryptic, but somehow banal voice.

"That... tells me nothing." Neia said and took up her bow and bravely nocked an arrow.

"Do you want your kingdom to die?" CZ asked.

Neia froze where she stood. She didn't lower her arrow, but she didn't fire it either. Her murderous eyes leveled at the woman in front of her.

"The demihumans are ready to cross the wall." CZ said point blank.

Neia remained frozen, her heart wavering, the young woman sounded so confident, and she sounded like she was telling the truth.

"I will prove it." CZ swore.

Neia was about to ask how, when CZ seemed to have taken only a step, but then Neia felt herself sailing forward toward a hole in reality that seemed to appear out of nowhere.

When Neia landed, it was on the other side, and she was no longer in her barracks, but instead atop a tower on the wall facing the Abelion Hills. Neia knew exactly where she was, having seen it once as a child.

She sprang up and stared at CZ, murderous urges ran through the squire, in the distance, her sharp eyes told her there was an army ready to cross. An army that would take years to fend off, if the Holy Kingdom was lucky.

"Why... Why did you bring me here? Why are you *showing me this*? What are you? Who are you? Is this... a threat, a warning?" Neia didn't know what to do or to say.

"A gathering of heroes, to save the world." CZ explained, "They are a tool." She pointed to the army beyond the wall. "Offer your life, and your kingdom will be saved."

Neia thought it over, *'It could be some sort of cruel joke, a mockery of a demon, but then, why bother? It doesn't make sense, can I fight...?'* Neia wondered, she could, and might even have a chance at killing a great many,

and yet... she couldn't win, or even really slow it down, and there was nowhere to go.

The only hope she could find, is that the curious girl was telling the truth. "My head, for my kingdom." Neia said, dejectedly, and went down to her knees, dropping her bow and lowering her head to allow easy access to her neck.

"Just make it quick." Neia answered. *'This isn't what I hoped my end would be like, but... it can't be helped. A life for a kingdom is a fair enough trade.'*

The squire shrugged, and waited for death.

Another gate of whorling black opened in front of her. "Not what I meant, but... you will understand in time." CZ added, and Neia found herself sailing through that gate without a proper explanation, just like she had the last one.

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Emperor Jircniv sat behind his desk, a few stray hairs were on the paper in front of him. Worry rampaged through him like bulls through a glass shop. "This is going from bad to worse." He said to the four walls. "How can so many heroes just... *disappear?!'*" Blue Rose... Gone. Red Drop. Gone. Even the workers were disappearing. But almost *more* troubling than that, was the lack of consequences for it.

Since the disappearances had begun, the monster appearances that called for heroes and adventurers to handle them had *also* dried up. *'Like whoever has been kidnapping or killing adventurers has also been ensuring we don't suffer from their absence.'*

But worst of all were that his four knights were gone, Leinas had vanished first, then the others days later from their own homes. Part of him wondered, *'Is she involved?'* His gut said yes, but guts weren't a form of investigation, and there wasn't even anywhere for him to begin to do so.

The emperor ran his fingers through his hair and watched several more strands fall down, "There's got to be a solution to this... but I just don't see it."

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Evileye sat in the Nazarick bar across from the archer from the Holy Kingdom, at the other chair sat Queen Draudillon, and across from her sat Princess Renner.

"So... the drinks are good, but... I'm not used to being a prisoner, and I don't like it." Evileye groused. "I mean it beats the Frozen Prison, even if I don't care for the cold, but..."

"*Guest, Prisoner.*" Renner reminded her, "And I told you, it's only temporary, Master Ulbert is very cunning, in a few more weeks, everything will be done. Then you won't have to worry about anything. I threw that 'monster hunting' clause into the deal just for your sake."

"Well that's great and all, but how do you know they'll *keep* it?" Evileye asked.

"They have captured everybody." Neia pointed out, "From me, to you, to everyone. If they weren't going to keep it, they *obviously* have enough power that they didn't need to make it in the first place."

"Exactly." Renner said and waved a hand to Leinas Rockbruise and Lakyus. Leinas wore an enormous smile on her face fairly constantly, though her fellow knights were less than pleased, and weren't on speaking terms with her at the moment, none of them had a bad thing to say about the hospitality or treatment they'd been given. But out of all of them, she was the happiest and having been completely cured of her curse, had thrown all her loyalty into one decisive camp.

"Right." Leinas said, waving and approaching the table. She reached for a fifth chair and pulled it over to the large table, sitting between Evileye and Neia at the round table. "They didn't have to cure me, but they did."

Honestly if this was a war, it's already over. Master Ulbert seems to have planned out how to do this with minimal losses."

"It's a lot better than what Emperor Jircniv was doing to *my* kingdom. Bleeding us dry and all. In a few weeks the Emperor will be urged by Fluder to join his army as a morale booster, and the international observers from the surrounding nations will be... 'borrowed' by Master Ulbert, and when he's annihilated that single army... he'll issue terms with the demand of an immediate answer. And just like that...?" Renner snapped her fingers. "That will be the end of all our conflicts."

"This isn't how I thought I'd end up married, but... he *did* save my Kingdom. And I could do worse... who am I to complain about his inhumanity? I mean my great grandfather is a dragon." Queen Draudillon pointed out with a snort.

"As long as you don't mind if he takes a mistress." Zesshi answered from behind as she came up to the table and put a hand on the Queen's shoulder. She had a mug of beer in her hand, some thick stuff called 'Arrogant Bastard Ale' that she seemed to genuinely love but which was a bit too thick for Draudillon's taste.

The Queen shrugged, "Again, kingdom saving... I can't complain, though he's the first man I've ever met for whom the term, 'goatish man' is literal. Besides, much longer and it would have been me and Cerebrate." Draudillon shuddered. "I'll count this one as a win for me."

Nobody argued with that, given the man's reputation.

It was enough that everybody took a collective drink, as if to wash the taste of the man's name from off their tongues.

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A few weeks later, Ulbert sat behind his desk, the staff hovered at his side and Albedo sat across from him. "So now we're ready for the last stage? I am really impressed by Emperor Jircniv, a lesser monarch would have been all but crippled after losing so many subordinates so quickly."

"Yes, master, as humans go, he is capable, should we keep him on the throne?" Albedo asked.

"People like the familiar, if his popularity holds, keep him, if not, have him surrender and arrange his suicide, then pick a replacement." Ulbert said with casual indifference.

"And... master... after this, what next?" Albedo asked.

Ulbert's long goat face was difficult to read, even for her, but the intense stare behind his glasses made his answer clear.

"That should be obvious... we spend the next ten years consolidating... then prepare for Operation Leviathan two... three, four, and however many it takes, until the whole damn world... is... *mine*." Ulbert answered.

"Yes, master." Albedo said with a sinful little smile, squeezing her legs together to disguise her own arousal at his supreme power, and they went back to work planning for the next few years.