June 26th 2013, Hogwarts Library , Hogwarts, Scotland, 5:00 PM BST

The next day was a busy one. With Ravel gone and all of the Sanctuary's books with us, we had more than enough material to start searching for leads. Hermione had been roped into the search, and China seemed to have taken a shine to the fat bottomed bookworm, delighting in sharing her love of books with the younger generation.

Val, meanwhile, was still recovering from the binding. My spell had drained me, the staff, and even her own evil piece to fuel a process that, had I been missing any of the factors involved, would have been impossible.

Her evil piece restrained her true name, the Spells of Astaroth demonic symbols manipulated demonic energy in unique ways, and the colossal amount of power I'd drawn from my full complement of Dremora and a world of my own made it all possible.

Not that I regretted it. Even if I hadn't been willing to sacrifice my power for Val (which I was), her binding had an unexpected side effect that was paying dividends.

The connection between us was open, and her power was overflowing. She was still recovering, and her evil piece was drained, but once it filled back up, the overwhelming strength of a true name sorcerer boosted by the power of a Queen piece would flow through me and into the staff like a waterfall.

I was fairly certain I could hit high class within the next few weeks, and the staff's world would be expanding rapidly. My split second decision to help my friend had been a good one from any perspective.

Sadly, the news wasn't ALL good. We knew what Voldemort wanted now, and it was a problem. "So, we know Voldemort was involved with the attack on the Midnight Hotel to free the Remnants. But if he just needed Fletcher, why risk him to try to release them all?" Asked Daphne solemnly as we all sat around a table in the library.

"Necromancy," said Skulduggery. "His army of undead is powerful, but aside from Wormtail, they're not on the level where they can effectively stand against some of the more dangerous forces waiting in the shadows. The Vampires, for example, are unlikely to be easily influenced. The Remnants provide a power boost and a method of control all in one."

"I suspect," said Natasha calmly. "That Voldemort ordered the Remnant in Fletcher to do this in an attempt to form his own army to resist his masters. The Faceless can't be trusted, and Voldemort is notoriously paranoid. If anything, he may have arranged for Fletcher to escape on purpose, to buy time for his attempts to enhance his forces, so he can negotiate with The Faceless on more even terms when he finally fulfills his part of the bargain."

Looked at from that perspective, a lot of things made sense. Voldemort trying to gather power before the Faceless arrived made sense. “But if that’s the case, why would he be actively searching for him now. Assuming he is.”

“The New Moon,” Skulduggery said. “There are thirteen in a year. Delaying is one thing, but if he misses the window for this month, which is on July eighth, The Faceless are likely to take it as an insult. Negotiating with them from a position of strength would be tolerated as long as he was respectful, but The Faceless don’t abide failure.”

I groaned. “Ok, so we need to kill the bastard AND prevent him from finding the possessed teleporting lunatic that can help him rip a hole into a hell dimension to release a bunch of lovecraftian ghost gods. Fantastic. Speaking of, you girls have any leads on killing him?”

China beamed at Hermione. “Well, with such a brilliant little assistant I’ve been working at maximum efficiency. The good news is, we’ve identified how The Unnamed was defeated last time. The bad news is that he isn’t dead, they just shunted him into the Darklands, where he remains prisoner to this day.”

“So…we have nothing?” I asked in frustration. “This was all pointless?”

She shook her head. “Not exactly. You see, in studying The Unnamed, we believe we’ve uncovered the process they used to achieve their state. The Unnamed was a master Necromancer as well as wizard. He managed, much like Voldemort did, to recreate Necromancy as a wizard, inverting his spells to recreate the effects of a branch of sorcery.

“While wizards don’t have a true name in the sorcerous sense, Necromancy is the inversion of magic, and they DO have a Necromantic true name. The process of uncovering and binding it is complicated and involves an extreme amount of death, but we believe that’s how he managed to become what he is. The Sorcerers who dealt with The Unnamed didn’t have the context to understand what they were dealing with, and so they had no idea how to defeat him.”

I grinned at her. “But we do,” I finished for her. “So, how do we do it?”

“Godslayer weapons,” she said firmly. “They were made to kill the Faceless, which means they destroy on a spiritual level. If you want to destroy the Necromantic equivalent of a true name sorcerer, you need to destroy the spirit, where the name resides. Luckily, we happen to know where to get those.”

“Or rather, I do,” cut in Tanith smugly. “I happened to be on a crew who stole four of them years ago. I don’t have any on me, and I honestly don’t know where they went…but I did learn some very interesting things during my preparations. Namely, how they were created and where.”

That brought me up short. “So you’re saying we can make our own?” I asked with interest. “I don’t want to risk the staff, but we have a few other items we could work with. Where exactly is this special place?”

She jerked a thumb at Val. “Under her house.”

We all turned to stare at my Queen, who looked dumbfounded. “Wait…it’s where? What do you mean it’s under my house?”

“Just what I said,” Tanith shrugged. “Gordon was one of the world’s leading experts on Ancient magic. He built his estate on top of the caves where the godkillers were created. The process I have no idea about, but we know someone we can ask.”

Val nodded. “Echo Gordon,” she said. “The Echo stone would have stored all his knowledge on the subject. He can tell us how to make a weapon that can kill Voldemort.”

“Not alone,” I said bluntly. “If we’re doing this, we need someone with experience. Someone with a dozen lifetimes of practice making powerful items. We need Flamel. Nat, obviously you could be helpful too, and I won’t turn down Amelie. But Flamel is our best bet at creating a proper weapon in a decent amount of time.”

So we left the library. China and Hermione decided to dig into the books to try to find some way to track a teleporter and to hopefully remove the Remnant from Fletcher without killing him, which would render the whole thing pretty much moot anyway since he would never open the portal if he wasn’t possessed.

Flamel, meanwhile, was up in Dumbledore’s office, enjoying a cup of tea with the headmaster, and when we approached him, he seemed more than willing to discuss things. “A weapon synthesis using Ancient magic techniques?” He said with interest. “That sounds fascinating. I would need to see the construction premises and speak to this…Echo Gordon, but I’d certainly be interested in taking a look.”

“Which brings us to the main problem,” I grimaced. “Voldemort has hit Ireland with a vengeance. Sanctuary aside, Val’s house is pretty close to Dublin. We might be noticed.”

“Easily addressed,” Skulduggery all but purred. “You can simply allow me to wreak havoc among his army to draw attention. Unless he or Wormtail appear in person, chances are good none of them can hurt me, and even Wormtail should be possible to deal with. I can take Tanith and the Rooks. Valkyrie will obviously need to go with you.”

I didn’t like that. Distraction missions were dangerous, and sending two of my girls and members of my peerage out to roust an army of dangerous undead specifically so they would get attacked gave me a bad feeling. I considered our options, then finally said. “If we’re doing this, we need to do it right. Four of you won’t be enough to get all eyes on. Not without Val and I

there. We need to up the ante. Give me a minute." Opening a small circle, I called Seras up to the office, and when she arrived I filled her in on the plan. She was fine with it as it was, but I pitched my secondary idea to her. "Can you gather the Vampires? I know we have a deal with Roran, but I don't know what timescale they move at."

She pondered. "I think I could get them together within a day or two. Might need to provide some travel accommodations. They don't exactly concentrate. You want to use them to attack the army and pull focus?"

"Yup. Between Alucard and Roran and whoever that other Master Roran mentioned was, Wormtail and even Voldemort should be manageable. They might not win, but they can hold them off while you all retreat." Especially Alucard, who was a devil vampire with several centuries on Seras.

"I'll get in touch with them," she said diligently. "When exactly do you want to do this? And why can't we just teleport into the caves and avoid all of this? Ireland is a big place, why do you think they'll notice."

"Tanith says Gordon had the caves warded," I sighed. "We don't have permissions, and the Echo Stone is just a recording. It can't give them to us. We need to bust them open to get in. Not to mention Voldemort took the Sanctuary. They had that mad of magic used in Ireland they used to find us for Iscariot, we have to assume he'll use it."

We'd actually wanted to take the map when we fled the Sanctuary, but the Roarhaven mages had hidden everything, and we didn't have time to do a thorough search before Voldemort's forces managed to break in. We'd freed a few prisoners and brought them back here with us, but we hadn't gotten most of the really useful magical artifacts.

Still, we had a plan. In order to increase our odds though, we needed some advance preparation time. So I had Tanith, the fastest of us, teleport to Val's parents place and run to Gordon's to get the Echo stone. Hopefully the miles of distance would prevent anyone who dropped in to check out who had jumped in from connecting it to the estate, if they even bothered reporting it.

With the stone in our possession, Nat, Flamel, and Amelie began consulting him on the process of creating a godkiller weapon. We needed to make best use of our time when we sprung our distraction, or we might not finish it. The delay might actually help, giving Val time to recover and me time to upgrade to high class with the excess power she was feeding back to me through the link.

I could feel my heart pounding at the thought of what was coming. This was going to be it. Once we had the weapon we would take the fight to Voldemort. With all his Horcruxes gone, this would be the final battle, and we could finally kill the bastard once and for all.

Silently, I sent a quick thought to my dad, hoping wherever he was, he was happy to be avenged. Once Voldemort was gone…well, I'd still need to deal with Gaunter, though who knew how I'd manage that. Oh well, one problem at a time. For now, I had an invincible Lich to kill.