

The day the temple fell was... heart aching to say the least. Flames engulfed the ancient building, the barrier protecting the sacred grounds torn to ashes as many fled to escape the eternal flames. Yet there I stayed, watching it in all its glory. Panicked students fled into the woods to escape the flames as our mentors were crushed between wooden beams to save them and all I could do was watch, helpless to the havoc till in the distance I saw him. Standing at the forest edge watching the flames, he was just as in shock as I was. "Koyehn!" I called but the khybris didn't respond, instead watching in horror... or was he mesmerized watching the way the flames danced and moved, the screams bringing a tear to my eye but to him, he looked as if he were in bliss "KOYEHN!" I called again, making a run for him, as slowly he came more into view, the paint halo that surrounded him, as it showed his every emotion wasn't filled with somber blues or fearful purples, but instead, bright reds and yellows like he was happy, like some kind of shackles had been freed from him something the temple had used to hold him down or limit his potential, his emotions, his art, could run free once more, untapped as a crooked smile spread across his face, then followed a laugh, i'd never heard him laugh. The light of his paint and the flames were the only thing highlighting his fur before he turned to me. "Koyehn?! What the hell are you thinking! The temple?! Why would you set it aflame?!" I called out after him Lian soon turning to face me "Me...? What.. what makes you think I did this?" "Stop joking Lian! Look at you! Basking in the heat of the flames! And for what?! Because the mentors had to keep you restrained?!" The artist's expression suddenly changed, his paint turning to deep blood reds as he held a large brush at his side "I'll ask you again Vernon. *What makes you think I did this?!* Someone has been so kind as to free me from my prison... it would be rude if I didn't oblige and leave." I growled in response "WE HAD EVERYTHING LIAN! EVERYTHING WE WORKED FOR IS GONE! AND YOU CAN ONLY LAUGH?!" I felt my own anger bubble out of me, the heat of the flames warming my coat and my face as the artist grew quiet again. "You may have been left here, alone, unsure of your place Vernon, but... this place was never my home, I was sent here because I had something no one else would have even dared to control. And now finally, I can leave, I can explore to my heart's content... I can... *feel* what I want, rather than what I'm told I should. I don't need to hide my emotions behind layers of dried paint on canvas or walls, I can express myself however I feel is right. Even... even if that means blood needed to be shed" Lian's expression only grew into another crooked smile and I... for once felt a little sorry for him he had spent so long here alongside me, where I had thought the mentors took special liking to him, it was all because, his magic was dangerous not only to us, but himself as well. "If you want someone to blame Vernon, perhaps our guardsmen who couldn't even keep a simple flame from growing out of control, or perhaps yourself, for not seeing the truth sooner" All I could feel, was a rage from within, fiery like the flames as parts of the temple fell, all I could do was watch the visionary step into the forest and beyond the darkness. "LIAN!" I called once more, the faint glow of his paint shining off the trees "What will you do now,,,?" he only turned, and smiled "Perhaps what I was always meant to, I'll find my muse, perhaps my true place or calling... or maybe I'll pass on, who knows, the future can only tell so far". As I watched him fade away into the dense forest. I felt helpless, frozen in thought. Till I finally felt something break my gaze *drip* "huh...?" *drip, drip* slowly I started to look up till *drip, drip drip* 'ACK- MY EYE-" I blinked before suddenly the rain had started to pour from the sky, thick black smoke rising through the trees as things started to fall quiet. I took the chance, I ran. Ran as far as my legs would take me before I was huffing at the edge of what seemed like

a mystical village “*Asphodel*...?” The village only told in myths on the island, their guild members generous enough to usher me out of the wet and rainy cold to tell my story. “My temple... My home... my family... gone.. Lost to flames” I retold my story to sympathetic eyes “We could rebuild!” “Yeah!” “Let us help you!” Those poor kind souls “My mentors are all lost to the rubble... I fear there is no point, no reason for me to” I only responded “every temple must start somewhere... perhaps this is your sign to take the lead” one of *Aphodel*’s elders told me... I was never the best at thinking wisely. “Maybe. Maybe you’re right”.

As time passed and with the help of both *Asphodel* and the many students that escaped that flame licked day, we carefully sifted the rubble, and salvaged what we could... even making graves for the damned, soon rose the last wall, the last bucket of paint spread across the many rooms, ground tilled and seeded ready for their harvest. Soon my temple was back to its former glory, adorned in marble, greens, blues, and golds, light danced along stained glass in each room. Inside the students carried on like nothing had happened, although with new mentors, they sang, they danced, they drew, they panted. It was as if nothing had changed, except for me. Now they seek me for guidance, if it were up to me, I'd stay in my green house. No one likes the art of botany like I do anyways, but I'll always be sorta... thankful for that night. It shaped who I was, who I became, as I swore to myself I'd never run in fear, or freedom like those before me but rather, guide others to their own path.