

## Perquisition

### Chapter 11

The stumpy, bipedal, cackling and sickly-green creatures surrounded them. The trio had tried to escape from a group of the beasts, but had unknowingly been chased into a dead end up against a cliff. A particularly tall one, about the same height as Sketch, climbed up a tree and started to yell and wave at the others. The ones still on the ground gritted their dagger-like teeth as drool dripped down their chins at the thought of biting down on the 'fresh meat' in front of them. They jumped from side to side as they pointed towards the ponies while speaking in their own incomprehensible language, but so far none had gone close enough thanks to Kickbolt's blades keeping them a step further than a wing's length.

"I hate goblins," the pegasus muttered. He snorted in the direction of one of them that had just taken a step closer. The goblin tumbled backwards, only to blow him a raspberry in response. "Any ideas, you two? They could probably overwhelm us at any moment."

"Not unless you can fly us out of here," Sketch murmured in response. She was gathering every single rock she could reach without leaving the safety of Kickbolt, attempting to arm herself with possible projectiles.

Crimson nervously looked back and forth between the two, sparing a scarce moment of being terrified while attempting to keep himself hidden behind the other ponies. "C-C-Couldn't y-you f-fly Sketch out w-while I defend m-myself with magic, then y-you come b-ba--"

"Back to fly you out of here as well?" Kickbolt intercepted. "I'm sorry, but there's no way that's happening. I could probably get Sketch away, but you're way too big for me to carry. Besides, they'd probably jump at us if we tried anything like that, and I doubt I can get into the air fast enough, anyway."

"Oh..." The unicorn blushed. "S-Sorry..." he mumbled while shuffling his hooves. "B-But..." he tried, but stopped as he continued to flush for a moment.

More and more goblins were gathering. Some, like their encounter in the tower, actually managed to arm themselves with objects that in some cases would inflict more damage than their razor nails. The ones holding old rotten twigs seemed especially courageous, while the few with sharp rocks seemed to contemplate whether to throw it or grab a twig of their own.

Kickbolt was kicking dirt while attempting to stare the enemies down. "We need to do something now or there'll just be more of them coming."

As if on cue, one of the green fiends jumped at him while shrieking, waving its small

decayed branch before the wind pressure snapped it in half. Kickbolt pulled a wing in front of him, blocking the goblin's entire mass before flinging it away by flapping his wing in the opposite direction. As it bowled down four others behind it, more started to charge towards the ponies.

The navy blue pegasus responded to this by scraping up the dirt in front of him with his blades, and then to kick up the loose sand in front of him, creating a smokescreen. Afterwards, he jumped through it to engage the goblins straight on, hoping that his two allies would receive less attention if they weren't quite as visible. But the transparent dust cloud did nothing to help, and the monsters charged from every direction.

Within moments, Kickbolt was well within their ranks, bucking in every direction he could with such speed that they were unable to retaliate. Using his bladed wings to cover any blows against his actual body, he let his hooves do the brunt of the fighting.

The goblins which weren't preoccupied with trying to climb over each other to get first dibs on pegasus wings instead jumped against the other two.

Picking up one of the rocks that she'd gathered earlier, Sketch gave it a precise throw, hitting the goblin closing its distance the quickest in the face and sending a couple of teeth flying as it fell over. Another rock aimed to the monster next to the first one had it doubling over whilst clenching its stomach.

The next couple of goblins closing in stopped momentarily and glared at her. "Anyone else?" the grassy green pony asked while lightly tossing a stone into the air only to catch it again. The ones that had stopped proceeded to charge at her while flailing their naturally uneven arms while screaming more gibberish at her.

She threw the stone she'd tried to threaten them with, knocking one of them over. As she scrambled to pick up another projectile, four others were only a few steps away from her.

Crimson's horn flashed as he projected a wall right before Sketch's face. As if part of a comedy act, one of the goblins ran into it face first, followed by the second one running into that one, and so on. Each bump knocked their heads back and forth. The hollow sound reminded Sketch of tapping on watermelons. While they still stood lined up, a large orange bubble suddenly formed next to them while they regained their senses. It started large, but quickly began to shrink. They ceased their arguing and started mumbling instead before the now eye-sized bubble floated up right up against them and popped. The resulting explosion of air sent the four small creatures flying past some trees and into some bushes.

Sketch gawked at the unicorn, turned her attention back to a nearby goblin armed with a funny looking mushroom, threw a rock in its face and returned to gawking at Crimson again. "How... how did you do that? That was *amazing!*" she dumbfoundedly asked.

Floating another similar, and already shrunk, bubble towards another couple of adversaries running at them. Crimson detonated it, propelling them into the air. "S-Something I c-came up with while in that d-dungeon." He smiled at her as he conjured another large sphere before him, about the same size as himself, before he started to shrink that one as well. "It proved more effective than I h-h-hoped!" He continued to float it towards Kickbolt's direction, the pegasus being swarmed right now from all directions by anything that dared go near his lightning fast hooves; which apparently was most of them for some reason. With a flick of his horn, it blew up as well in the middle of the swarm, sending goblins flying in all directions.

Kickbolt was bucking everything behind him, hitting the goblins one by one, and using his wings to block attacks to him from the side and front. Giving out a war cry one of the creatures fell from above, having jumped from the branch of a nearby tree and landed on the pegasus' back, pinning his wings down by hugging him tightly.

"Get off me!" he shouted, trying his best to get rid of the unwanted rider. Struggling to get loose, he started jumping around hoping it would fall off. Goblins around them started chanting as if cheering on the one on his back.

It suddenly lost grip from one of his wings and started flying around, still gripping as best it could to his other one, but since it was no longer able to pin them down and was just barely holding on, Kickbolt's wings were free again. However, the sudden freedom was unexpected, and as he was still regaining control over it, he accidentally cut through the arm with the sharp blades, spraying blood over himself as the crippled monster flew away with a screech.

By now, the little creatures were basically running around aimlessly, screaming with their high pitch voices for no apparent reason, considering only one had been injured seriously. One had apparently set itself on fire somehow in the confusion.

With his wings free again, he quickly flew over the mass and back to the other two ponies who were trying to make sense out of what was happening with the small bipeds running around like crazy before them. "Are... are you two okay?" Kickbolt asked, his face pale. "And was that explosion you, Crimson?"

Crimson hung his head but smiled back at the pegasus. "Y-Yeah..." He flinched as his horn flickered. "B-but I c-can't do much more, sorry." He raised his head again and rubbed his horn, looking back over the horde of goblins before them. "Luckily, they seem... *disoriented*." He looked back at the pegasus. "W-What about you? You don't look so well... and you got b-blood all--"

"Don't say it." He interrupted, gritting his teeth at the thought of it. Upon seeing Crimson's initial reaction from being interrupted, he tried to force a smile. "I'm *fine*, don't worry." He wiped some sweat off his forehead. Then nodded off towards the mass. "So what's their problem all of a sudden? It looks as if they're not sure who they're fighting."

“Goblins aren’t known for their intelligence,” Sketch said. She threw another stone which seemed to home in on the skull of another goblin heading their way, maybe by pure chance by the looks of how they were acting. “It’s more like the opposite; they’re known for usually not making any sense at all aside from wanting to take a bite out of you. I was worried first because of the sheer number of them, but this isn’t turning out so bad.”

“I’ll say, halfway into the fighting before I got back out again, I think they actually started attacking each other, I’m not sure,” the pegasus commented. “I think it’s about time we bolted.”

Sketch eyed him. “Bolted? Really?” She sighed reluctantly. “I think we can slip out over there, if we follow the wall. For some reason they seem to be avoiding the actual cliff.

Kickbolt quickly moved forward and started clearing the way by lazily pushing some of the goblins away. They momentarily stared at him before flinging their arms back into the air and began their screaming again, continuing to run around in no apparent pattern.

The mare dropped all of her ammunition and looked over the crowd before quickly following the pegasus. “Okay, this is getting ridiculous. I don’t think this is natural behavior even for goblins.”

“I’m not so sure about that. I told you they were stupid,” Kickbolt replied.

She shrugged as best as she could while running. “I don’t think this is the best time for discussing that. Let’s just get out of here for now.”

Crimson was following right behind them as best he could without tripping. “T-There’s a path up the c-c-cliff over there,” he wheezed out, still not used to running.

They climbed up the narrow path, guided by the airborne pegasus keeping them safe from any potential attackers. After the two landborne ponies managed to make their way up, Kickbolt gained some altitude. Covering his eyes from the sun beams making their way through the treetops with a leg, he squinted.

"I think I see the edge of the forest up ahead!"

"Then can we please get *out* of this horrible forest already?" the earth pony complained.

"Yes, please!" Crimson agreed. "After this trip, I'm pretty sure I'm not p-particularly fond of nature."

"Yeah, I'm with you there. We're almost out of here so hold o--oh."

After passing the final trees, Sketch and Crimson saw what had just rendered Kickbolt speechless. A massive entrance could be seen down below, which jutted out from the cliff they were standing on. The ground below them was actually part of the ceiling of a temple built into the ground. Huge moss-covered pillars were holding it all up, keeping the way in easily accessible.

Sketch's eyes widened with amazement. "This is almost like the towers back home! I wonder what--"

"Sorry, but no," Kickbolt interrupted. "We're not going in there now. We're tired, hungry and we still haven't gone to that town you told us about. Before we do anything else, *that's* where we're going."

After giving the pegasus a quick glare, she hung her head in defeat. "Fine, but only because I want a nice hot bath." She sniffed the air around her and grimaced. "And by the smell of it, so do you two."

Looking up into the sky in embarrassment, Crimson blushed at the notion. "I'm s-sorry... I didn't r-realize."

Kickbolt on the other hoof sudden turned pale again, and slowly turned his head to see his own back covered in blood from earlier. "Oh... I forgot about that..." Pearls of sweat quickly started forming on his body and his pupils shrank as he felt his own heartbeat. Moments later he could feel one of the apples he'd eaten earlier making its way back up again. He quickly stepped to the side, and vomited.

The other two ran to his side, but careful not to directly disturb him as he 'finished'. "Kickbolt! Are you alright?! Are you sick?" Sketch fretted, quickly digging in her bag for anything that could help.

His lips quivered as he wiped off the puke. His legs were shaking as he slumped down. "I-I'm... fine, it's just..." He pointed to his own back, at the stains and closed his eyes. "...could you please take care of that?"

Pulling out an old rag, she dipped it in a small pool of water nearby, then proceeded to clean his coat by rubbing it against the spots. "... I didn't know you had a problem with blood, Kickbolt." She bit her own lips at the thought of asking, but continued. "Why didn't you ever tell me?"

He sighed heavily. "I'm not proud of it, but it's something I've had to deal with for as long as I can remember, ever since I was a kid. The sight of a nosebleed is enough to make me feel queasy. Look at me, I'm supposed to be a protector, a guardian, a defender." He sighed, covering his face as it dug into the ground. "At the sight of a little red I can hardly keep myself

together. I only barely managed to get out of the fighting, and I was lucky enough the goblins went crazy, or this would probably have been worse than it is.”

“Kickbolt, I...”

*I need to tell him about my problem with water,* she thought.

“I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have anything to be sorry about, Sketch. This is my problem, and I want to deal with it alone,” he muttered. “I’m the one that should be sorry. Just... just see if you can get it off of me for now, please?”

“But I...” she tried, but stopped. Crimson stayed quiet, looking at her expectantly. She shook her head instead. “Kickbolt, if you ever want to talk about it, I’ll be here.” She was finishing up scrubbing the blood away. “I’m almost done,” she murmured.

The pegasus sobbed once, but quickly covered it up by clearing his throat. “Thanks. So where is this town that Kuh-leez told you about?” he tried.

“It was K’les, at least that’s how he said it,” she corrected him. “But no, all he did was give me a direction, saying there would be a ‘pony town’ if we went here. Could you fly up again and look around maybe? If you’re okay with that right now...”

“I d-don’t think that will be necessary. Look.” The red stallion pointed off towards the distance. Now looking over open plains much like their hometown, they could easily see some small buildings in the distance, between the mountain and the forest.

“Huh.” Sketch said. “I wonder how we missed that.”

Kickbolt looked away. “Sorry. Probably from me distracting you.”

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They approached the wall protecting the village, similar to that of their own hometown, but it wasn’t finished yet and had several spots that still required construction work.

Sitting in the middle of a hole, an old tan stallion with a half gray half straw-coloured mane was working on raising bars that would make the foundation of the wall. As they got closer, to saw something resembling a bellow blowing air on a fire for his cutie mark.

The trio walked up to the still unaware earth pony, peeking inside the city through the open wall while doing so. Several houses weren't finished yet either.

"Excuse me, sir?" Sketch tried. "We're a bit lost, could you please tell us where we are?"

The old pony continued his work with trying to dig the metal bars into the ground, oblivious to the fact that right behind his back there were three ponies attempting to communicate with him.

*"Excuse me, sir?"* she tried again, raising her voice.

*"What?"* he bellowed, turning around. *"Who's there? Who are you ponies? What are you doing here?"* he shouted.

Sketch cleared her throat. "Um. Hi, sorry. We're a bit lost, so we were wondering if you please could tell us where we are?" she grinned sheepishly. "It's a long story."

He stared at them for a moment before opening his mouth again. *"What?"* he asked, putting a hoof to his ear. *"What was that?"*

The smile from their faces slowly began to fade away. "Umm... I think he has a hearing problem," Crimson said.

*"I said,"* Sketch started yelling as loud as he was. *"Do you know where we are?"*

The stallion once again just stared at her, slowly beginning to squint his eyes as he looked at the three of them. He put a hoof to his chin as if in deep thought. *"Let me get my ear trumpet,"* he yelled again, and turned towards a bag behind him. After some quick rummaging he pulled out a big horn that he put to his ear, facing it towards them.

*"Now what were you saying?"* he asked.

*"I was asking if you know where we are!"* Sketch tried once more.

*"Whoa there!"* He flinched, pulling the horn away for a moment. *"There's no need to shout!"*

Kickbolt leaned towards the unicorn next to him. "At first I thought he was yelling all the time because he had bad hearing, but now I think it might be the other way around," he whispered.

*"What was that?"* he asked, immediately turning his attention, and horn, from Sketch

towards Kickbolt. *"I heard you say something, what was it?"*

Clearing her throat again, the tan old pony looked back at the mare in front of him. "I'm sorry, is this okay?" she asked with her normal voice.

He cracked a smile and nodded carefully. *"Yes, that's good enough. Now was that so hard?"*

*Don't answer that*, she thought, and instead forced a smile. "No, not at all. I was just wondering if you could tell us where we are. Long story short, we ended up in that forest over there, but we're not sure where we are." She pointed towards the mountain behind the village. "Is that mountain possibly High Top's Hill?"

He slowly turned around to glance at the snowy peak visible in the distance. *"Indeed it is, and this here town is the newly established 'Hill's Base', we only began building it a couple of weeks ago."* He put a hoof to his chest. *"The names Full Bellows, village smith. Now who might you three be?"* he asked very loudly. By now he was eyeing Kickbolt suspiciously. *"Are you maybe from Ever City?"*

"Huh, me?" Kickbolt asked. "Well yeah, but we didn't come *from* there right now. How did you know?"

*"Your wings, that harness. There's only one shop you can get something like that from, and that's in Ever City. Now what did you say your names were?"*

"Sorry, we didn't. I'm Map Sketch, but just call me Sketch."

"Kickbolt here," the pegasus said, raising a wing.

"And I'm C-Crimson..." The unicorn smiled weakly. "...Aegis! Crimson Aegis," he added, blushing slightly at having forgotten his newly adopted second name. "But g-go ahead and just call me Crimson, please."

The mare nodded after introductions had been completed and stepped in again. "We're explorers from Fourtow. We were stuck in these ruins in a cave, but near the end we found a portal that led us out. The thing is, we ended up in that forest over there."

The tan pony raised an eyebrow. *"Fourtow? You mean with the four towers?"* He snorted. "I can't believe how dull the naming was back then..." he grumbled to himself.

"What was that?" Sketch asked.

*"Nothing,"* he quickly assured her, putting on a fake smile. *"So you were explorers?"*



*Since you came from the forest, you probably saw that temple on the way here.*" He pointed back towards where they had come. *"It's still visible from here."*

The green mare nodded. "Yeah, we almost went in to check it out, but after our recent ordeal we could use some rest first. We were hoping you could maybe help us with that?"

The elder rubbed his chin and stared off towards the temple before answering. *"I may be able to do something, if you're willing to work out a deal. Tell you what, I can get you a house here for a day if you're willing to do something for us tomorrow,"* he hollered right into their faces as if he was speaking casually.

Wiping some spit off her face, Sketch's eyebrow began to twitch. "I... guess. What exactly would you have us do?"

He pointed back towards the temple and grinned. *"Go in there. Now come on, let me show you to where you can stay for the night. I need to talk to some ponies before I can give you the details."* He left his work, picked up his bag and headed into the town itself.

"*T-Talk to some ponies?*" Crimson quietly repeated.

He stopped only a short way in, before a two story house. *"I'm pretty sure no one's staying here yet, so you go ahead and make yourselves comfortable. It might lack furnishing, but it should have beds to sleep on and running water already."* He started to turn around to face them, squinting his wrinkly eyes as he stared at them and did a long sniff. *"And a bathtub."*

"Wait, we can have the whole house for a day? Doesn't anypony live here?"

He shook his head. *"We're still constructing this town. Most of the ones meant to live here won't be coming for another month, when we're done building. Until then, most of these houses will be empty,"* he said loudly. *"Make yourselves at home, I suppose. As I said, the more important furnishing should already be there. I'll go tell somepony that you'll be staying here, and send some food for you."*

The blue pegasus picked his ears after all the shouting. "Okay, mister? Sorry, but you're yelling a lot, and I'm not sure how much more my ears can take."

Turning around with a horrified expression, Sketch pushed his face away before miming something he understood as *'What are you doing?'*. As she turned around to face the old pony again, she was met with a few confused blinks.

*"I'm yelli--"* He cleared his throat. "I'm yelling? Why didn't you say so in the first place! My hearing is pretty much gone from a life inside a smithy, so I'm used to having to raise my voice a lot." Suddenly, his tone was very normal compared to before, but still slightly louder than any

pony would normally speak. "As I already said, I need to speak to a few ponies about you being here, just make yourselves at home." He walked up to the door and opened it for them, then turned to walk away.

"Um. Sir?" Sketch stopped him as he began to walk away from them. "Thank you for all of this, but could you maybe tell us a bit more about that favor you wanted from us tomorrow?"

Full Bellows bit his lip. "I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to say right now, but I have reason to believe we need to send somepony in there, and soon. You said you almost already entered it, so I reckoned that you wouldn't mind checking something out for us. This is what I need to talk to somepony about before I give you any details, sorry."

"I... see." She smirked. "Well, I *would* love to see the insides of that temple. Do you know anything about it yet?"

"By the looks of it, you seem like the type that'd go in whether or not I told you to avoid it, am I right?"

"Pretty much," Kickbolt spoke up from behind, before getting shoved in the face again.

The tan old pony nodded twice. "Then I might as well tell you what I know as a friendly warning so you can prepare yourselves for tomorrow. Basically, the entire temple messes with your mind!" He waved a circle next to his head. "I've been told you lose memories, gain *false* memories, hallucinations among other inexplicable things. Either way, most of it seems focused on the brain, and apparently monsters can't stand it so they stay away."

The trio quickly shared a look with each others. "*The goblins!*" they shouted out in unison, all making the same realization.

Rubbing his the ear he had used the ear trumpet in, Full Bellows flinched. "What'd I tell you about yelling?"

Sketch giggled. "Sorry, we just realized something weird that happened earlier. That last thing you said with monsters would explain why these goblins we encountered behind the temple sort of just went crazy."

He lowered an eyebrow. "Crazy goblins? *That* I'd like to see."

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So far everything was calm and going as expected. Sitting in a rocking chair, slowly

moving back and forth, Master Red Thread was enjoying some knitting.

*Under the fence*, she sang in her mind, sticking in the needle under the red piece of yarn, through the loop.

*Catch the sheep*. She hooked the needle around the thread.

*Back you go*. And pulled it through the hole again.

*Off you leap*. Finally, letting the threads slip into place.

Years of practice allowed Red Thread to do this absent mindedly, but she still had a habit of humming the knitting rhyme she'd learn as a young filly. Knitting had become more of a hobby to ease her mind, rather than something she used to make things out of convenience. By now she already had way more sweaters and scarfs than she could use, but the weather around Fourtow was too warm to use them normally.

As she was about to put on the finishing touches on her work, the door in the next room could be heard creaking open, multiple hoofsteps following.

"Master?" a female voice called out. "Are you here? We need to talk."

Raising her head and leaning forward, she could see a pink mane with white streaks somewhere behind from the other side of the counter. Putting her knitting aside, she hopped out of the chair.

Master smiled at the sight of the explorer's return. "Pledgie! Geary! Glassy! You're all back, and so early too! I expected you to be gone for a least another few days."

Pledgeward's lips were tightly sealed, considering her next words carefully, before she decided to just go straight at the beast. "What are you hiding, Master?"

The elderly mare just smiled calmly. "What do you mean, dearie?"

"Don't take me for a fool, Master. I've known for a long time that something suspicious has been going on regarding our 'exploring'. You've been asking our team to search and find for new P.O.I's, caves or anything. You've been sending us to a new area every time, having us do the exact same thing, but in a new location." By now her voice was clearly getting louder as she started to speak through her gritted teeth. "*Then why is it that every single one of these places has a corresponding map down in the archives?!*" she yelled. Putting a hoof to her forehead and sighing, she pulled out some papers.

"Look, this is the map we finished a bit earlier. And *this* is an exact copy I was able to find in the archives. Not to mention all the data I found giving detailed information on all the dungeons! I, for example, saw that the very cave you sent Sketch's group to is not only very deadly if approached the wrong way, but that they are most likely to end up on *the other side of*

*the world!*

Gearbox and Spyglass stood behind her, but didn't say or portray anything, even if they knew Pledgeword was right after the recent proof they had just seen first hoof.

Master's eyes were wide, and her jaw was slack. "You... you..." she mumbled.

The purple unicorn took a decisive step forward. "Yes, Master? Anything you have to say for yourself?"

"You..." she repeated herself. "You... you actually managed to *find* something in the archives?!" She sat down on the floor, rubbing her head while in thought. "Clearly I'm not as good at this as I thought."

"*Explain!*" Pledgeword exploded out, stomping as hard as she could.

The elder waved her hoof nonchalantly. "Fine, fine. But just for the record, I'm doing this for the good of all ponies."

Spyglass rolled her eyes. "This had better be good, another one of Master's stories from her youth, I'm guessing."

"Darn right, Glassy!" She grinned at the yellow pegasus. "Although this one is actually true, not like all of that other stuff I make up."

Gearbox suddenly piped up. "F-Fiction?" he asked, feeling a lump in his throat.

"Oh, yes Geary. I'm sorry." She shamefully looked away. "I know you love to hear my stories, but they're all made up." The cold nodded meekly at the answer.

Giving everyone in the room a fast annoyed look, the unicorn stomped again. "Could we *please* get to the bottom of this?!"

"Right, right," Master said. "The reason why there are finished maps in the archives is because..." She waited a moment before continuing, trying to create suspense. "... they were already finished years ago!"

Pledgeword frowned. "You don't intend to tell us anything at all, do you?"

She chuckled. "I'm sort of hoping if I can drag this out long enough, you'll just drop it." Her smirk died out and she looked Pledgeword in the eyes. "Anyway, you've caught me... I'll... start talking." The elder took a deep breath.

“Yes. Almost every single mission I’ve sent your group on has not actually been for exploring; all those areas were already fully known about. You’ve actually been scouting for... possible threats.”

“What? Threats? What are you talking about?” Pledgeward demanded.

“I’m not entirely sure myself, which is why this is so hard.” She bit her lips. “I have reason to believe that this world may soon enough be in more trouble than anypony even dares to realize. I... I *tried* to take it up with the council in Ever City, but they wouldn’t have any of it. Or rather, my old teammates tried to, but were deemed ‘unfit for exploring’ because they were suddenly seen as crazy. I had... stayed behind when they confronted the council, so it didn’t happen to me. Instead, I feigned ignorance; we had agreed it was the best thing I could do at the time, considering the circumstances. So I’m doing the best I can while being inconspicuous about it.”

Pledgeward stared at Master, as did her two teammates behind her. “You’re... not making any sense. What’s this threat you’re talking about?”

“You probably wouldn’t believe the rest I have to say regarding that even if I tried to tell you, so I’ll just hold my tongue on that subject. Just know that I have good reason to keep sending you out on these missions. It’s not exploring I intended for you to do, it’s... keeping guard and looking for any signs. I don’t know how to explain it any better than that. I’m sorry, dearie.”

Pledgeward gave a slow nod, but didn’t break eye contact. “And what about Sketch’s group? Why did you send them to the cave, and possibly to the other side of the Ever City?”

Master’s face scrunched. “That’s... relevant. I suppose the best way to say this is... I once walked through the exact same path they’re walking in now, and I’m hoping they’ll see the same things I did.” Her voice began to fade out. “Hopefully more. We need answers.”

[~Chapter 10~](#)

[~Chapter 12~](#)

(Author’s note: I’d like to thank ARBPW and Roxor for helping me with editing on this chapter. If you liked it, please leave a comment, they’re probably the biggest source of encouragement I’ve yet to encounter. Don’t forget to rate!

So... Sorry that this one took so long. At first I had a wisdom tooth pulled, and I used the pain as an excuse not to bother writing. After that, I had just gotten a bit lazy before I got back on track.

Something I had forgotten to mention earlier is that Glory Blaze is trying to make a role playing game based on this story! You can check it out [here](#)! For some reason it totally slipped my mind that I could mention this in the author notes, so I'm sorry for that. You are now all victims of my forgetfulness!

As always, you can contact me directly at [diexna@gmail.com](mailto:diexna@gmail.com) if you want to make any suggestions to the story or send me anything. Or just talk, that's rather nice too.

Thank you for reading! And thank you even more if you rated it and commented, hopefully constructive, you know there's a *reason* why all writers keep nagging regarding this. :P)