

THE HOUSE OF AVARICE



In the glittering gold halls of a gambling house, a so-called “house of avarice,” Malik and Eiryene stood out like a sore thumb. In a world where all else was drowned by the sounds of cheering and the click-clacking and whirring of the machinations of “fortune,” these two stood lost in the crowd, their eyes wandering from person to person, from gaudy decoration to gaudy decoration. Figures shifted to and from their sight, the details melding together and becoming nearly overwhelming to fully process. However, despite being surrounded by a sea of inebriated wastrels and high rollers, there was an air of isolation between the two, as if they held no dominion or existence in this world, not unlike a stone in a stream.

“All the better,” Malik thought aloud, his words barely being even picked up by Eiryene, who stood right next to him. “Hiding in plain sight. We can make use of this.”

“That’s *if* we find her. You’d think some talking panther would be all people would be talking about here. Make our target easier to find.” Eiryene retorted, readjusting her black hat and brushing her two toned hair off of her face. Malik shrugged, his blue eyes scanning the crowd one last time, this time just simply looking for a place to walk.

“In the halls of cupidity and materialism, one does not think beyond their imagined futures, no?”

“Waxing poetic, are we?”

“I’ll make it easier to understand, then: Let’s move. Hang to the left side.”

The blue and white haired man led the group forward, finding just enough room to snake through a boisterous group of casino goers and big spenders. They kept their eyes trained in separate directions, scouting out the area ahead for the so-called “Silver Tongued Panther of Avarice.”

Medea Blaise, their next assassination target.

“You think she knows she’s a wanted woman?” Eiryene mused, taking specific precautions to not look at the men that passed her in the eyes as Malik tapped his forehead with his index finger in thought.

“Knowing her, she’s more than likely gambling on the chance that she isn’t found, that the crowds will serve as her masquerade.”

“You really have it out for this place, don’t you?”

“This is a den of rapacity. Preying on the weak. Our target is no better.”

“Can’t say I hold much of a love for this place myself. Stinks like the shit stuck at the bottom of my shoe.”

“Then we find the excrement and follow her movements. And erase as needed. Omagatoki beckons.”

On the opposite end of the hall rested a single golden table, somehow untouched by the crowds that passed it. Just out of sight of Eiryene and Malik, a well dressed and yet recklessly put together casino staff suit began to approach the table, twirling a chair around on a single leg as a single deck of cards plopped against the table. With a knowing smirk, the suit sat the chair on the ground and scrapped it against the floor, creating quite an inelegant wail that betrayed the atmosphere of the casino. This immediately caught the attention of Malik and Eiryene, whose gaze almost seemed to part the sea of people and allowed them to focus on the table that previously escaped their eyesight. A table headed by sight most uncommonly seen: a panther with shaggy, spiked short orange hair and brown fur, whose eyes locked almost nearly instantaneously with their own.

Medea Blaise, who stared death in the face with nothing but a sneer and a grin.

“Well well, it isn’t often I see total green thumbs here. Welcome to the show.” Medea winked, bowing towards the two and betraying any notion they had of her beforehand. Mailk narrowed his eyes with a tilt of his head, analyzing the panther and her movement. She wasn’t even trying to go unseen. Was she truly so ignorant of the mark made against her? Or was she just brazenly fearless?

“Do you make it a point to embarrass newcomers?” Eiryene asked wearily, which brought out a surprisingly loud laugh from Medea.

“Embarrass? Honey, I can promise you that people will pay no attention. Not here. Nobody sees anything beyond their imagined futures, yeah?”

The question froze the two in their tracks. A single question, repeated from Malik nigh verbatim, was all it took to immediately turn the tide against them.

“Eiryene. Careful.” Malik warned softly to Eiryene, who took a step back from the question and took an uneven sigh.

“Sheesh. Deja vu.”

“What are you two whispering about over there? C’mon over. Nothin’ to be scared of.”

Medea’s calls toward them did little to give them agency. A single question, a single offer, and their entire equilibrium was thrown off. It couldn’t have been mere coincidence, right? The smirk on Medea’s face did little to give away her intentions, and so, with more questions than answers left in their mind, the only thing Omagatoki could reasonably do was follow through on the request. Malik took the first step forward and proceeded towards Medea, who graciously set chairs up for the two of them before sliding back over to her side of the table in one slick movement, almost as if she had boiled down this routine to a science. Eiryene leaned back in her chair and crossed her arms, taking a far more relaxed stance compared to Malik, who sat as stiff

as a board. Both looked equally as out of place, their statuses painted vividly just through the table setting alone.

“I’m sure you two already know, but the name is Medea. Medea Blaise. Something something Dice Lady, something something Boss, yada yada.” Medea introduced herself excitedly, pulling her chair back and taking out the deck of cards in front of her. Malik kept his eyes trained on the cards, which prompted an amused quip from the panther.

“Eyes up here, friend. Relax yourself. You’re in a *gambling hall*, not a penitentiary.” Medea winked, tilting Malik’s stiff head upwards with her pointer finger. The touch was gentle and eerily warm and inviting, which did little to soothe him.

“You’ll have to forgive me. As you pointed out, we aren’t familiar with this place.” Malik growled, causing Eiryene to lean forward in her chair with her fingers interlocked in thought.

“These places don’t tend to house those of strong moral profiles I’ve noticed.”

Medea's smile grew larger as she pulled out two strangely iridescent red and orange chips from her front suit pocket, flipping them with her thumb into the air and catching them absentmindedly in the other hand.

“Here? Nah, the only thing you might have to deal with here are your occasional egotistical dickheads. Losers who haven’t learned to stop sucking at the teat, yeah? People unsuited for your caliber. I think you’re overthinking all of this.”

The way her eyes stayed trained on the two while she flipped the chips in the air showcased a heightened level of skill and comfort, which in its own way, was a sort of a blessing for the two. Her profanity and laid back nature in the face of her potential killers had been indicative of a lack of self awareness, calling her bluff. Malik and Eiryene looked at each other and showed a flash of a confident smirk towards each other.

“So it would seem.” Malik nodded back, which made Medea perk up a little as she caught the chip one final time and offered it to him in the form of a handshake. Malik stared at the hand inquisitively for a moment before returning the shake. Her hand had been warm and comforting, feeling similar to a bonfire in the cold of night. Her grasp had been soft and firm, but never tense, which was indicative of a loosened guard. It was all about playing into her game and keeping her lips moving, and playing up the green thumb was key to gameplan.

“There you go, friend. It’s all about having a good time here, yeah? That’s the *real* gameplan.” Medea said with an approving nod, offering the same and a new chip to Eiryene, who held no hesitation at all in returning the shake.

“Hell yeah. We’ve been so cautious, we didn’t even introduce ourselves. This is-”

“Barachiel and Skeith. I’m well aware, thank you.”

A single sentence stabbed them both in the gut. Just like that, their game plan was immediately shattered like a stone through glass, and worse yet, they *knew* that Medea was toying with them at this point. She knew their callsigns, their history, even with explicit care being made to use their real names. They leaned back with a glare, realizing how much the cards were stacked against them. Medea was in control from the moment she found them, something she demonstrated as she pulled her hand back and began shuffling the cards deftly, letting the clicking of the cards speak for the two as she began to laugh.

“A gambler I am, but an idiot I am not. You think I don’t know about the mark against me?” Medea teased, bridge shuffling the cards and then spreading them on the table. A simple flick of her fingers under the cards flipped the line of cards, turning them upright with a simple motion. What sat in front of them, however, was not a series of numbers and faces. Rather, it had been blank cards with notes written on them. A lot of them. Notes about Malik and Eiryene both, down to their eye colors. Medea leaned forward, her smile losing all comfort and becoming monstrous.

“I’m almost flattered.”

A swift swipe of her hand from one end to the other brought the cards to a stack against her other hand. As she began to even the cards out and return the cards to the deck, Eiryene was the first to break the silence, and in a rare showing, her smile dropped from her face entirely.

“You have a lot of balls getting chummy with your killers.”

“I can say the same of you. Made quite the gamble, using the crowds like that. Smart, but I’m smarter. You spent so much time looking in one place, you didn’t see the forest for the trees. A gamble is a gamble, and it’s a shame, because you two are *shit* at gambling.”

“A big mouth, but that won’t be enough to save you from me wringing the life out of you.”

The threat brought another laugh from Medea, which put Malik on guard. She was unflappable, never missing a beat. She had been three steps ahead of them at every step of the way, but she was going to run out of sidewalk eventually. The road would come to an end, and the job would be done. Malik leaned forward with Eiryene, his icy blue eyes refusing to leave Medea’s.

“The road is nearing its end, Medea. A discovery here does not elucidate the fog of the future.”

“Of course not. The luck has to run out sometime, yeah? I know that I can’t outrun twilight itself. But fear has no hold over me. I’ve come to my terms with it. The moment this all ends, I can count on you two low lives crawling out of the shadows at every turn. So, as a final wish, I wish to only entertain. To do what people have come to love, and evidently despise me for. I want to play my favorite game of cards. A talk over some games of Monte. Free of any charge.”

Malik grit his teeth at the “low life” comment, but opted to ignore it.

“What makes you think that we will allow the request?”

Medea’s grin sharpened.

“Because you don’t have a choice, simply put. The moment you raise a finger against me, those chips in your hands detonate.”

The statement seemed preposterous, but the unflinching delivery and lack of expression change made the claim seem almost believable. Before any of them could refute, however, a fire enveloped Medea’s fingers as she leaned back in her chair. A spin of her wrist later, she extended her index and middle finger out together, the fire subsiding and forming a third, identical chip in between the two fingers. Malik and Eiryene instinctively put the chips down on the table, a move already calculated by Medea as the two found a sudden pair of bladed, flaming cards inches from their face, with Medea tracing their hands with the chip. The move had been instantaneous, almost too fast for them to have even noticed. Medea had them exactly where she wanted, even in her final moments.

“I’ve got you marked. The moment you lift your hands from the chips, you sign your death warrant.” Medea cooed, her voice almost unnaturally smooth given the severity of the situation. Malik’s eyes flashed over to the people around them, noticing that they all seemed to be unaware of the threats Medea made, further cementing uncertainty in what to follow through next. Even Eiryene, who had been fully capable of evaporating herself, felt all the gears grind to the stop, keeping her eyes on Malik as Medea kept the cards trained on the both of them. The chip she

drug across their hands was beginning to sting, feeling as though a branding iron had been slowly walking across their skin.

“You’re remarkably sinister for an entertainer, you know?” Eiryene growled, warranting a playful wink from Medea.

“You can say I’ve seen a thing or two. Maybe I even had to dirty my hands a bit. Who knows? But I wouldn’t count on any saving grace here. Nobody’s going to come to your rescue. Not above their own futures. Not against me. There hasn’t been a single person who survived a Cleft Upper of mine. So! Allow me to reiterate: Let’s play a few games of Monte. Humor a dying broad with nothing left to lose, will ya?”

Malik and Eiryene cast each other a cautious look, nodding carefully and keeping cool even as the third chip began to scald their hands. As much as they hated to admit it, Medea was in her own element, with home field advantage, and they didn’t exactly want to find out what a “Cleft Upper” was. The fact that people passed this scene by like it was just an average event only trapped them further. The moment a finger rose to attack, they’d be finished. If not from Medea, then surely the crowds that have come to adore her.

With an irritated scowl, they picked up the chips Medea gave them and kept them in their hands, bringing a satisfied hum from Medea as she leaned back with her chips and cards. With a cheer, the chips and cards erupted into a series of firecracker-like fireworks, popping for all the crowds to see and bringing a chorus of excited cheers. A cheap parlor trick to the eyes of many, but a

symbol of the end of the game for Eiryene and Malik, who stood only moments away from that being lodged into their brains. Medea waved off to the group before pulling a second deck of cards from her suit, bringing Malik and Eiryene's attention back to the table as Medea began to look through the deck carefully.

“Rules are simple. Two jokers, one ace of hearts. Ace of hearts is the money card. No charges, as promised. However, if you win, I will pay you twice whatever the bastard paying you to kill me is.” Medea said, throwing out the cards mentioned on the table and placing the deck face down. A mocking smile returned to Eiryene's face, finding Medea's attempt at bribery pathetic.

“And there it is. The final pleas of one marked for death. A fistful of dollars, and a wish of dismissal.” Eiryene mocked, watching the cards carefully as Medea placed the cards face down and did a single swipe to move the cards on top of each other and then spread them out. The ace of hearts was the last card to be picked up, and thus, the first to go out, causing Eiryene to point to the card on Medea's right.

“To a gambler, money is just pieces of paper and paperweights.”

“Which is why your kind kills for it, yeah? You value it more than a human being.”

After her quip, Medea pulled a card on top of the deck and showed the two the card. A Jack of Spades, and flipped over the card in the center with the edge of the jack, showing one of the Joker's she placed down. It had been a simple motion, one that showcased transparency and

honesty. She flashed the jack once more at them, then flipped the card Eiryene pointed out, then shook her head with a smile.

A joker. Eiryene narrowed her eyes at Medea, who leaned back in her chair and flashed the Jack a third time, then flipped the third and final card, the card most overlooked, which revealed itself to be the money card. Just like before, Medea preyed on Eiryene's logic and reasoning, and highlighted just how much further ahead she was, even in the face of danger.

"Very interesting set of morals coming from a conman." Malik growled, watching as Medea turned the cards back over and placed the jack back into the center of the deck. A tug on her suit sleeve revealed a single card that fell out onto the table . A duplicate Ace of Hearts.

"You're right, Barachiel. But at least I'm *honest*."

"You call swindling people honest?"

"Of course not. But what is honest work to by-the-check killers?"

Medea took off her jacket and set it on the back of her chair, showing her unbutton and disheveled white collared shirt and a bow tie she didn't even bother tying properly, instead choosing to hang loosely around her neck. She placed the five cards back into the deck and slid it off to the side, revealing a third deck of cards from her pockets. The amount of cards Medea was capable of pulling out was rather unnerving, showing just how methodically planned this

encounter was. Eiryene was getting increasingly annoyed by the exchange, especially by Medea's increasingly taunting quips.

"I know what you're trying to do, and it ain't gonna work. If you did your research, you'd know of the people we've hunted. People who prey on the misfortune of others. We did what we had to survive. To save the lives of others. You're just a conniving bitch in a suit. Don't act like you're anywhere near better than us."

"I don't have to act," Medea retorted plainly, bridge shuffling the deck and then dexterously splitting the deck with a single hand, spinning the cards around with her fingers and replacing them. "Because I do what I do for money. I like doing what I do. No other reason for it. I don't try to paint a big, self proclaimed "noble" picture of charity like you do."

"Excuse me? Being an honest asshole is not an honest living."

"An honest asshole is not privy to justification. The greatest lies the world ever told were the justifications they made themselves believe in. Told to the victims to convince them to lay down and take it. A death here in the name of charity there."

Medea threw out the same cards as before, two jokers and an ace of hearts. She gave herself a tug on all sleeves showing no loose cards, no hidden trickery.

"No tricks, no cheats. No flimsy justifications."

She flipped the three cards over and placed them in her hand. Malik kept his eyes trained on her at all times, choosing to stay quiet and not let Medea's words take hold. She wasn't called the Silvertongued Panther for nothing. Her words were sharp and decisive, and she held the two in her hands. The only dominion she held over them existed in the glitz and glamor in the house of avarice she resided in, which would soon come to pass, as long as Malik and Eiryene merely bided their time. As Malik stirred in his thoughts, Eiryene checked the surroundings to make sure of her so-called "legitimacy." Defeating her at her own game would be the sweetest victory of all, a chance to shut Medea up for good; something that Eiryene craved more than anything else.

Catching their wandering eyes, Medea rolled her eyes and gave another flash of the hand revealed that the cards had been unchanged. With a yawn, she placed down the cards very sloppily, accidentally bending the center card, the Ace of Hearts. As she placed them faced down, the money card stood out above the rest, being difficult to move around as smoothly with a corner bent, making it an easy win.

"As always, you win, you get double what you're getting paid for. And you even get to snuff my life out too. What a jolly good thing for you two."

Malik and Eiryene gave each other an inquisitive look, making a silent acknowledgement about Medea's fatigue. Perhaps the meandering philosophical debate had its merits. As long as they kept playing it straight, they were going to win the war of attrition. Medea didn't seem to notice the bend on the corner as she slid the cards around, making a rather remarkable shuffle, but still

failing to notice the flaw to her plan. Malik shook his head slowly, keeping an eye on the bend. It seemed far too easy, but perhaps Medea had been at the end of her ropes. A poker face crumbles before long, and Medea was no different. She rubbed her eyes with another yawn, a drop in her previous demeanor. Malik smirked. It was time for the reversal.

“Center card.” Malik stated confidently, pointing to the bent card. Medea raised an eyebrow in surprise and seemed reluctant to turn it over. The game was up.

“Oh? Well I’ll be damned.” Medea sighed, scratching her head weakly. She flipped the card over.

Joker.

It hadn’t been possible. The ace of hearts had been bent. They saw her bend it herself. Malik and Eiryene checked under the table, finding no evidence of tampering or cheating before it began. How was she able to do it? The looks on their faces brought a laugh out of Medea.

“Did you two bumbling idiots think I wasn’t going to notice? You think I haven’t been cheated before? So much for your *honesty*. You’re one “noble” justification from being the same bastards you slaughter.”

“You silvertongued bitch! What are you playing at?!” Eiryene shouted, standing up from her seat. Several eyes flashed over to her, prompting Malik to tug on her arm and sit her down as Medea once again laughed and waved at the crowd.

“Eiryene. Settle down. You’re drawing too much attention.”

“This is *bullshit*, Malik. Why are we still standing around here?”

“Because you two are social parasites. Sucking in everything you can, just to find that one justification you need. Just to find that one missing piece in the armor.”

The statement made Malik and Eiryene snap their gaze back at Medea, whose arrogant smile had faded into a subtle frown. The pressure changed almost immediately as she pulled a coin from her shirt pocket and began to flip it absentmindedly, keeping her hazel eyes trained on her assassins.

“Waiting. Stalking. Letting fatigue be the killer. Whatever it takes to survive, right? The game of life. The hunter and the agile prey.” Medea taunted, her voice dropping deeper as she flipped the coin repeatedly. Malik balled his hands into fists at her words.

“What would you know about surviving? These garish walls pads and protects from any drop of suffering out there. You’re living in a utopia, built upon avarice. In a throne of greed.”

“Utopia? Throne? Look around you. The only people benefiting here are the fops that breeze through here and roll out the cash. This is the product of what suffering creates. Their pleasure. You think any of these assholes earned millions by working hard? No. Not even close.”

Malik looked at the partygoers around him, noticing a recurring theme amongst them: laid back attitudes, drunk either by the ambience or the liquor they slaked their thirsts with. Gold chain watches and silk handkerchiefs, striped suits and expensive gowns, gelled back hair and gaudy jewelry. All symbols of status that separated the paupers from the silver spoons, all right in front of his face. In fact, Medea had been the only staff member here that seemingly wore a suit at all: everyone else wore noticeably used and timeworn collared shirts, some even with wine stains and the like, no doubt from the rowdy customers that divided the class. No wonder Medea found them standing out: they were the only people here who *weren't* in suits. That's why they were ignored. Eiryene seemed to catch onto this too, causing her temper to flare up again with a snarl.

“So what are you then, if not a toy for the wills of your enslavers? If all you have to do is lay down and be a good little girl, then why con and lie? Just be like all the rest; and watch as the world suffers while you directly benefit from it.”

The statement brought Medea's coin flipping to an end.

“Heads or tails.”

“Back to this bullshit again, huh? Ha. Fine. Tails. Since you want to wedge yours so firmly between your legs.”

“So be it. Tell me when to stop.”

Malik crossed his arms as Medea showed both sides of the coin to the group, showing both sides of a coin to the group in a show of legitimacy. Finally, a game of chance. Quite an easy one too, given Medea's conditions. Malik watched the coin as Medea flipped it several times, counting the amount of spins the coin did as it went through the air. Eiryene was no fool to this strategy, as she kept a mocking smirk towards Medea as she stared deep into her eyes.

“All of this, and for what? Your money won't stop us. Nothing will. So why continue this game? Why drag it out?”

“I've already told you. I enjoy what I do. And you want to know why?” Medea asked, picking up the three Monte cards from earlier and placing them face down on the table, her coin flipping surprisingly being uninterrupted. “Because I *hate them. Every single customer that goes through that door.* None of these pricks have worked an honest day in their life, or wiped the sweat off of their brow. Every single one of them rose by means of taking. Not by fighting, not by work. But by simply knowing who to deceive and who to steal from.”

“And so, the cycle continues, and you steal from them?”

“It's about as close to justice as one gets. Who do you think put the mark out against me anyways, huh? Stealing people's money and ruining their life? ***Bullshit.*** Lives were ruined just by the existence of these high rollers in suits. The workers here can only simply live with the will of the rich and powerful. I did what I could to survive. And I got good at it. You know why?”

“Stop.”

Medea caught the coin and showed it to the group. Heads. Malik shook his head, then watched as Medea then slammed the coin against the table, lifting her hand to reveal the other side.

Heads. Medea learned towards the both of them, anger flaring wildly in her eyes and her soft voice dripping like venom between her bared fangs.

“Because you motherfuckers are all the same breed.”

Medea picked the coin up and showed it to the group. Two sides, both were heads. Another flick of her hand revealed the coin originally bet on, deftly hidden between her fingers.

“I know how to win, because I learned to survive by it. You and the suits? ***What in the fuck does a life mean to people who put a price tag on it?*** You two are merely a different justification away from being identical. Ariel? Man Eater Eiryene? Your so called “justice” and “charity?” Mercenary work, so called “proprietors” and “corporate ladders.” It’s six of one, half a dozen of another. All ignorant of what strife *really* is.”

Malik and Eiryene flinched at the words, falling silent as Medea took the Ace of Hearts and ripped a corner off it, taking off one of the A’s on it before setting it down. She shuffled the cards swiftly, turning them over and then doing so again. She scratched her nose briefly upon

presenting the cards, keeping her glare on the two in front of her. The money card was in plain sight, unmistakably the torn card.

“In a world of authoritarianism and capitalism, normal people aren’t born like you and I. Money is all they have, and being a “toy for their wills” as you put it is all they can do. You ridicule those “born with silver spoons” so much that you forget your own ability to become just like the assholes you fight against. The ability to take what you want, without consequence. Born with a sword in your hands. Live by the sword, die by the sword. That’s why I do this. Because not only do I enjoy winning through my own merits, not only do I enjoy the money, but because more than anything, *you motherfuckers make me sick. That’s what keeps me going.*”

Medea flipped the torn and slid it off to the side, She shuffled the cards once again, with the torn money card still being for all to see on the table. Defeat was inevitable...or so Medea would have wanted you to believe. A flip of the card revealed that the torn card had instead been a Joker. A flip of the torn card piece revealed that it had been the same missing piece from the Joker. Malik and Eiryene could only look bewildered as the Medea then slapped the cards off the table, this time picking the double sided coin and beginning to flip it again.

“It’s why I don’t lose. Why I *can’t* lose. Because in this shithole that legalized murderers like you and the suits create, this den of inequity... I’ve found my sanctuary. I have no time for smoke and mirrors with my convictions. I’m in power here, and no matter what you do, you will lose. I will prove that time and time again. And again.”

Medea spat out a white wad from her mouth onto the table. A quick spreading of it revealed it to be the torn Ace of Hearts from earlier.

“And again.”

A flick behind her eyes revealed the torn corner from earlier, falling onto the table lightly.

“And again, because I know, without a shadow of a fucking doubt, this coin will land on tails.”

One last flip as her voice raised, all smoothness dropping from her voice and becoming nothing but bitter resentment. The coin crashed and bounced onto the table. And just Medea said, so did the tails side come up.

“Because I am honest. To a fault. You can tear out my vocal cords and do whatever you want. I know that I won in the end. Because I can die with honesty and dignity.”

A flash of the empty hand revealed the double head coin that she flipped earlier, a sleight of hand out of their sight.

“CAN YOU SAY THE SAME?!”

Medea’s shouting brought an eerie silence to the casino. Malik and Eiryene could do nothing but stare at the cards and coins with a wordless daze. Medea’s words crashed against them like a

tidal wave, and as soon a crowd began to gather, Malik realized it was time to retreat. Medea had won, as she always had. There wasn't a single chance of them winning.

“The house always wins, fuckwads. *Now get the fuck out of my casino.*”

Medea's sudden return to the smooth voice was all Malik needed to hear to stand up and begin his departure.

“Come, Eiryene. Our business is done here.”

Eiryene gave Malik a hesitant glance as she rose, watching him waste no time as he began to leave the establishment. It seemed that the sea of people parted whenever her gaze turned, causing her to turn her glare back towards Medea, who didn't even give her the time of day to look at her. Eiryene scoffed and then followed Malik in quick pursuit, causing the chatter to return to the room as concerned whispers flooded the area. For once, Medea made the effort to tie her tie after putting the suit back on, attempting to make herself look half way presentable for the lashing she was no doubt about to receive from her boss.

“What was that about, Medea?”

The question made her sigh as she turned her glance back at Malik and Eiryene, who had hardly been visible in the ripples of people that followed in their wake. She scoffed and shook her head, pushing her chair back into the table, ignoring the question in favor of her thoughts.

“Omogatoki. Rendezvous of the Evil Spirits.” Medea mocked, her throat clamoring for a shot of whiskey.

“That’s about the only honest thing about them.”