

I can't draw and I'm not British.

Hello all. It's been a while for this fic. In fact the break in chapters this time was by far the longest since I first posted this fic. Hopefully, despite that you all will enjoy the chapter. I do have to tell you I made a few changes to the last chapter. Nothing that impacts the plot, really, but the background world-building has been changed thanks to my hearing from an Egyptian native. Turns out I had made some misconceptions, equating life in the more rural areas to that of the cities. The burka is not, as I had been told, a normal thing, especially in Alexandria, and there is, actually, belly dancing. So by the time this is posted I will have gone back and changed that, and would like to thank Kuman once more for pointing this out to me.

For those who follow it, Stallion of the Line is still in Tomon's hands. Given how large a contribution he has given in the past, I am not willing to update it until he gets it back to me.

Oh, and as an aside, a few readers have mentioned about how they are getting tired of the side plots and hope to get back to the main DxD plot soon? Ermm... have you read my stories? While I keep the main plots as guidelines, I'm certainly not wedded to them, nor do I have any reluctance in changing or adding to them.

At this point it shouldn't have to be said, but: **Warning!** Massive World Building Ahead.

This has been edited by [Nad Destroyer](#) and partly by a new editor, Cybergades, the same man who has begun to go through the old chapters of this work. However, I ran out of time to go over it with Grammarly, so there will no doubt be small mistakes, and even going through the first thirty pages of what he got back to me took several hours, hence why it's a bit late.

### **FILFy24 Egypt Tours: Investigation**

The next morning, Harry woke up with Akeno curled into his side. One of his arms was around her, his hand gripping one of her breasts while sleeping. Now awake, Harry rolled towards her, letting his eyes rove over his new wife in wonder. Eyes still locked on her face, he moved his hand hefting Akeno's breast lightly, stroking a finger along the edge of her nipple

His actions weren't intended to reignite the flame from the night before. They'd spent most of the night locked in the depths of their desires, sating their need for each other before falling asleep. *And I have other things I must concentrate on than restarting our fun, alas.*

No, Harry's exploration was more in the line of astonished wonder and as he looked down at Akeno, a breathy exhalation of pleasure escaped his lips, an almost prayerful sigh while his hand continued to play. This emotion was not caused solely by Akeno's beauty of course. Everyone of Harry's lovers was a great beauty in their own right. The kind of woman told of in stories through the ages. . When he looked at them, they were all equally beautiful in his eyes.

Each of them unique, desirable and loving in their own ways, something he had learned to embrace rather than be afraid or dismissive of.

With Akeno, in particular, Harry was still getting over the fact that they had gotten together again at all. That wonder came back to him now, with Akeno sleeping peacefully next to him. The mistakes they had made early on had been large ones. They'd rushed to get together when they weren't ready, and that had nearly ruined everything. Afterwards their friendship had stabilized, before deepening over time. That time apart had changed them both, and then finally, they'd found each other again. before coming to this island, which had Blessed by Manannán Mac Lir and his wife Aine Fand. And here they had gone from merely dating to Akeno becoming his second wife, bound by magic itself.

Unbeknownst to him, Akeno had woken up under his ministrations. Although she was normally not a natural morning person, Akeno was a Devil, and Devils, like Rias had discovered, could empower themselves to a certain degree through Lust, and there was no question that last night had been a most excellent feed. Instead of opening her eyes however, Akeno let Harry play a bit more before letting loose a throaty purr, arcing her back slightly to press more of her breast into his hand. "MMrrmrm... you have precisely an eternity to stop that, Harry."

"Sorry, Akeno, did I wake you?" Harry's hand had stopped moving as he asked the question, which wasn't at all what Akeno wanted.

Yet Akeno still shivered at the amount of love Harry had been able to impart in that single sentence, in her name. *Is this how Yasaka, Kala and Rias have felt all along? I am so happy I took the plunge! My husband, my, man, yes!!!* She thought gleefully.

"It's just, you're so gorgeous! And I know the mistakes I made with you early on. The fact that we got together again at all, not to mention that we've actually taken that final leap... It's just... well it feels as if I've used up all my good luck, you know?" Harry went on, unaware of the impact his words were having.

That was, until Akeno rolled back on top of him, pressing her chest into his and kissing Harry ardently as she began to rub her core against his rising erection. When she pulled back, Akeno reared up and began to grind her slowly moistening mound against his wizard's staff, smiling down at him, as Harry's hands slipped down her naked body to her hips. "It goes both ways, my husband~~," she purred. "I have been many things before in my life. Daughter, runaway, fortune teller, Queen to my Rias. But now, all I want to be, from this moment until forever, is **yours**, Harry."

"You already are," Harry said, his grip on her hips becoming slightly painful and thus arousing Akeno further as his words came out somewhere between a possessive growl and a whimper as he attempted to pacify Akeno, showing how torn he was about current events and what he had to do right now. "But right now, I need my Lightning Babe, my mistress of lightning and pain, not my Sex Angel. We have to stop."

“Oh, do we right~ now~?” Akeno teased pulling back to let the head of Harry’s staff rest right between her lower lips. “Or perhaps we could put that off for an hour or four, husband mine~?”

Harry might not have had the self-control necessary to turn her down at that point, but he received aid in the form of Kala who stood in the doorway, leaning against one side while staring into the room. “‘Sex Angel’?” Kala snorted, interrupting the moment. “And what am I then, hmmm?”

“My Mistress of Culinary Delights?” Harry responded disingenuously, before addressing Akeno, who had stiffened in shock at the fact they had an audience. “But seriously Akeno. We have all eternity together. Today, we need to concentrate on other things.”

Harry’s words had won him an eyeroll and a mutter of “You only use me for my culinary expertise,” from Kala, but Harry hadn’t looked away from Akeno, watching as the Lust and desire he could see glowing in her purple eyes slowly faded. Eventually she nodded, although Akeno made no attempt to apologize for nearly giving into her Sin of Lust, instead moving off of him and rising to stand beside the bed, gloriously nude, and unashamed of it. Indeed, delighting in it, the verbal hiss of appreciation from Harry and the accompanying hint of something like jealousy in Kala’s voice when she said, “Damn, girl!” pleasing her almost equally.

“None of that,” Harry admonished, hopping to his feet and moving over to give the Fallen angel a hug. “You’re all beautiful. None of you should feel jealous of any woman in the physical department.”

“Women always feel in competition with one another, Harry. But don’t worry, we won’t let it get out of hand,” Kala said, winking at Akeno, who winked back, and then very deliberately leaned forward in order to pick up her bra. Staring at it with some annoyance, she put it on, bouncing a little in place as she reached around her back to do it up.

Now ignoring the other woman’s play, Kala continued to address Harry. “But you said something about needing Akeno. That implies more than needing someone to talk to this morning. Does that mean you want our help with whatever’s happening in Egypt?”

Harry nodded firmly. “I thought about it last night, before Akeno made my mind go bang. And I...”

“Bang yes, I like bang,” Akeno interrupted wickedly, licking her lips and looking at Harry as he began to dress.

Kala reached out with a finger and poked her in the side, causing Akeno to shift away quickly. “Enough of that,” the older woman ordered. “Continue, Harry.”

Harry chuckled at their byplay, then told them what he, Kiba and the others had discovered so far in Egypt. “I realize this investigation has barely begun, and I might be jumping at shadows, especially since the only seeming intelligent threat we might face is wizards, but I

want more hands and eyes on this problem. I don't want to pull Rias away from the Academy again though, as I got the distinct impression that Sona would object to that with spellfire. And you two, plus Yubelluna, are right here and working with more long-term issues than most."

Once he was done, Kala shrugged. "I can certainly tell the dwarves that I'm going to be busy. They might grumble and mutter, but you won't quite get a lot of respect from them during the Fae war, Harry."

"Do you want to bring along Hermione and Padma?" Akeno inquired, frowning as she thought about it. "I'll admit I'm not a good researcher, I'm more of a lab-type scientist although I will hold my hand up at being good with runes."

"Agreed. When it comes to books and trying to research mythology, I never really saw the point," Kala admitted. "After all, for most of my lifetime I've **been** mythology, if you see what I mean?"

The other two laughed at that, and Harry pulled Kala into a hug, understanding that underlying that joke was a small bit of seriousness. "Your age has never bothered me Kala, why would it? You look as lovely today as the day I met you, and you look as lovely today as you will be a thousand years from now. I'm still having trouble thinking in terms of that kind of longevity to be honest."

*And I'm very damn glad that I figured out a way to give Lily the same. That would've been horrifying,* Harry thought, before shaking his head and concentrating once more on the current issue. "Still, it's a good idea to bring in Hermione and Padma. I don't know if they'll be willing to come, but there's no harm in asking."

"Harry, you brought them to an entirely new magical world, have offered them jobs that could have come from their wet dreams, and you think they'll say no when you ask for help? Honestly! But speaking of, what about Luna?" Kala asked, before a bit of motion outside caught her eye. Turning towards the window, she saw Yubelluna exiting another room among the multitude spread out along the river and waved at her. The purple-haired woman nodded back and made her way up the hillside, humming a tune under her breath.

She turned back to Harry when he said. "No, I don't think so. I'd like her along, but mostly because I know she is a deceptively deadly fighter, and I'll ask, but I doubt that she'll be willing to come. For all that she has objected and pouted since she became the Queen of the fairies, she hasn't actually tried to escape it, and I know she's basically the wedge keeping several of the fairy clans from open conflict. Really, what I need most is mobility and eyes that can see deific magic so we can hunt down whatever ancient magic is failing or whatever."

"Then bring in Tiamat," Akeno and Kala said in one breath as Yubelluna reached the doorway, looking at the three of them in some confusion as she wondered what they were talking about.

Kala looked at the younger girl and Akeno nodded polite thanks, before turning on Harry, having somehow gotten dressed as Harry had been talking to Kala. "Tiamat is a resource, and one you haven't always made the best use of. I realize that she's not a normal familiar in any way shape or form, but she's still a resource. Tiamat is also an ally and has only acted in such a manner three times before. Do you think that this problem is a large one, one in which mobility and power could be a major help?"

"Yes," Harry answered instantly, then went into a bit more detail than he had before, explaining things for Yubelluna more than the other two. "The underlying issue is the monsters and undead turning up throughout Egypt. Given Egypt's history, I would say what we're looking at is some kind of containment or summoning spell that has finally begun to degrade or..."

Harry sighed. "Or something which is reacting to the underlying magic of the world being impacted as a result of Ophis's presence, or because the other gods are now being more active around the world. Hell, I don't imagine my own presence is helping matters either. Regardless of what's causing it, it has to be something huge, a Blessing or enchantment big enough to stretch from one end of Egypt to the other. Wizards may or may not be taking advantage of it. That's a separate issue but could cause trouble for us."

"Then if a fight breaks out, you'll need more firepower, perhaps literally," Akeno said smirking at her own little joke, while the other two just groaned. "Hmph, philistines."

Yubelluna laughed. "No dear, there is just a limit to how poor your puns are allowed to be before we treat them with the disdain they deserve. Still, I have to admit the idea of dark wizards making use of whatever you're investigating worries me. What you wizards lack in power you make up for in flexibility. Is it possible someone has found a Deific artifact and is using it?"

"Maybe?" Harry shrugged. "I doubt they could direct or in any way control its functions but if, say, a band of dark wizards came upon a Ritual sight that still had power to it, they might have been able to figure out how to move any wards hiding it. More likely, again considering Egypt's history, is that we're dealing with items which can somehow summon up monsters and the undead. Or, as I said, some kind of ancient defensive Blessing that is failing."

"Which means that Tiamat would be a real help to find the source. Besides which, you've given her a whole new world to fly about and explore in. Tiamat owes you," Kala added.

"I don't like to use the word 'owe' when we're talking about friends, but I suppose you have a point. Would you three be all right in recruiting Luna, Hermione and Padma, if I talk to Tiamat? I'll meet you on Tir Na Nog afterward."

All three of Harry's ladies nodded, but Yubelluna had another suggestion. "I think you need to remember Harry, we have more resources than just our clan to call upon. If the problem in Egypt is as big as the ICW made it seem when we talked to them, you should be able

to call in help, specifically from the Shinsengumi. In fact, I'm appalled the ICW isn't already flooding Egypt with Aurors."

"They don't actually have that many Aurors at any time, unless they can concentrate them," Harry explained. "And you remember they are also dealing with issues in Spain, Greece, and several other places. Egypt might be a big problem, but it's not the only one. Still, you have a point on the Shinsengumi. I can definitely ask for help there," He finished, leaning in to give Yubelluna a kiss on the cheek, then another on the neck which caused the woman to shiver before he pulled away.

After a quick breakfast the four of them were on their way, with Harry collecting the dog from outside before popping back to Alexandria. With the time difference it was barely 5AM when he arrived, and only Kiba and Tonks were awake. He quickly set about filling them in before telling them they would be on their own for breakfast. With that done, he dropped off the girls in Tir Na Nog, and then reached out, connecting to the background magi-sphere of Danan to find out where Tiamat, the largest source of foreign magic on the planet, could be found.

Using water transportation, he covered the distance to her only to pause a few miles away, eyes widening as he saw the water turn from its normal sea-temperature to boiling, shot through with thousands of tiny streams of bubbles. Not wanting to know if that would somehow interfere with his method of magical teleportation, Harry surfaced, and flew the rest of the way toward where Tiamat was.

The giant, multi-colored dragon was flying above a volcano which, to Harry's admittedly untrained eye, looked larger than the ones he had seen in pictures and from afar during their brief stop in Hawaii. Yet for all its size and intimidating appearance, the sight of the giant dragon doing cartwheels and long, acrobatic aerial maneuvers among the thermals was enough to put a smile on Harry's face.

Tiamat saw Harry coming, and twisted around, mock diving down at him, but Harry merely raised a hand in greeting, not reacting otherwise, which caused Tiamat to pull away a bit, pouting. How Harry could tell the dragon was pouting, he didn't know, but he could. **"And what brings you to see me Harry Potter?"** She sniffed the air, and her tone suddenly turned sultry as she continued to fly around him. **"And I smell that you have Ddraig's prison on you. Have you come to allow me a conjugal visit, I believe is the term?"**

***"Don't you fucking dare!"*** Ddraig's voice rang into Harry mind from where he had put the Boosted Gear in his mokeskin pouch. ***"My tail and... other things still feel like they're going to fall off from the last time."***

*"Might do you some good, my friend,"* Harry rejoined. *"And maybe if the two of you met more regularly she'd be less inclined to ride you into the ground every time she gets the chance."*

Hearing Ddraig grumble made Harry's smile grow, but he still shook his head. "I would be willing to allow that in time, but right now, I need your help. Specifically, I need your eyes and your mind to help deal with a problem back on Earth. Your powers to burn acres of territory at a time might come in handy later as well," Harry added, which caused Tiamat to look at him in even more interest.

After he had explained what they had already found, Tiamat frowned pensively, flying a lazy circle around Harry while he hovered immobile in the air. There was something about the mention of the mark of the Sun god, Ra, that sparked her memory. But the only clear memory she could remember of a time when she interacted with Egypt was of her drinking and wrestling with Kamalpatra, the Sphinx matriarch, back before the sphinx had all died out.

***Now there was a girl who liked to have fun! Pity their own biology screwed them over. Honestly, making the birthing process so long and so taxing, and ugh, I thought dragons had it bad with our 'courtship'.*** Happy families, or even packs which was actually a closer description, were not well represented among the larger varieties of magical creatures. Intense territoriality and mating did not coexist well. This was pretty much true across the board once you began talking about magical animals larger than gryphons, no matter their intelligence.

**"I haven't been to Egypt in millennia,"** she answered after a moment, and that was not hyperbole. **"And for what you are describing, I am uncertain how much help I could be."**

"You can fly, and at the moment, I'm the only one currently in Egypt who can see deific magic. Yubelluna can but that only gives me one more person who can do so. You would give me a third."

**"Yes, but if you are asking me to tell you what kind of magic it is, what the Blessing is supposed to do, I might not have much luck unless it's something obvious,"** Tiamat admitted, frowning. **"And I will warn you now, you won't have much luck in that area either. The Blessings of one pantheon will not be obvious to a deity of another unless they come from the same area of influence, so to speak, and often not even then. Still, we are allies, and it isn't as if I'm doing anything truly important right now. Just slowly making a map of this whole new world you've opened up to me."**

"Mapping, right. So, you were 'mapping' out various bits of the volcano just now?" Harry teased, causing Tiamat to look away. "Not that it matters. After the magical academy and this whole Chaos Brigade thing is finished, I'm looking forward to exploring a little myself."

**"No doubt. Very well Harry,"** Tiamat decided quickly. **"I will go with you. I do however reserve the right to heckle you most severely, if this turns out to be something simple, like you needing to drain or empower some ancient Blessing and everything goes back to normal."** Tiamat finished in a drawl, before flipping on her axis, and shifting away in the direction of Tir Na Nog.

OOOOOOO

While Harry was in Tir Na Nog gathering more allies, Gabrielle Delacour woke up in Alexandria with a purpose and a plan. *I am not going to give Harry Potter up so easily! Not even if he really is magically married, whatever that means, to that redheaded la pute (bitch)! No, a piece of that particular pie is worth sharing, so long as 'arry doesn't think I will actually do anything with her.*

With that, Gabrielle hopped out of her bed at her sister's place, took a nice long bath, and dressed herself in a casual yet still alluring manner. Tight jeans and a blouse with just a hint of cleavage, the cut of the blouse designed to subtly direct the eyes to that area, while her jeans brought out Gabrielle's long, magnificent (if she did say so herself) legs. Her hair too was done up in a bun, emphasizing the curve of her porcelain-colored neck.

A pair of tiny earrings, just enough to give the faint air of sophistication were put on last. Now fully armed to woo her man, Gabrielle headed for the kitchen. "Bill would you like some company when you go to talk to 'arry this morning?" She asked, smiling prettily. "I'm wondering if 'arry might have a job for me, as 'e said 'e would Charlie."

Looking up from where he had been playing with Victoire, Bill raised an eyebrow, shook his head and said, "Sure, but I think that ship has sailed Gabby. Best to cut your losses before you get yourself hurt."

Gabrielle scoffed, twitching her head to send her hair cascading down her shoulders. "I razer think that is my business, non?"

Yet Fleur agreed with her husband. "I believe that 'arry never saw you as a potential romantic interest, sœur (sister) despite all of your flirtations and those little picture paintings that you sent 'im over the years. You know, ze ones that you don't want Maman and Papa to know about?"

At that Gabrielle flushed, and her sister rolled her eyes. "Sending zose to a married man was a dangerous game Gabrielle. While it perhaps heightened his frustration with some of Ginny's... issues, it did nothing in your particular favor eizer."

"It kept me in his thoughts," Gabrielle retorted. "That was all I wanted at ze time. If only I had heard about 'im ending 'is marriage before 'arry could move to Japan!"

"He was still persona non grata in France at the time Gabby," Bill said steadily, trying to keep a smirk from his face. "And have you ever wondered if perhaps, you're method of getting his attention has been wrong? You're trying to appeal to him as a man alone, try to appeal to Harry the person, Harry the father, and you might get farther." *Not that I think you will, but it might go a bit better for you.*



But Gabrielle simply huffed, turning to grab some food, and Bill sighed. *Oh well, it was no skin off my nose if she wants to keep on using a dying broom.*

When they left Lighthouse Lane Gabrielle instantly closed ranks with Bill, trying to make herself inconspicuous and reining in her Allure as much as she could. She had rarely been out of the magical quarter since arriving and didn't know what to expect. Despite that, the beautiful blonde foreign girl drew a lot of eyes, but thankfully not a lot of attention. Even this early there were lots of people outside, many of them trying to sell tourists things, but the two of them wound easily through the hustle and bustle of the streets, Bill cheerfully smiling and waving people off, speaking near-perfect Egyptian without the use of any spell to do it.

Soon they were at the hotel Harry had told them he was staying at, and after being told that Harry had taken the suite, Bill led the way to the elevator. There, Gabrielle released all control on her Veela Allure, the impact of it so much that even Bill had to shake his head for a second, blinking and staring at the elevator's ceiling. "I see you're going to go the full bore, then?"

Gabrielle shrugged her shoulders, saying archly. "Sometimes men need help to know what they truly want."

*Oh this is not going to go well, Gabby. Still, more fun for me, anyway.*

A moment later the elevator stopped, and they stepped out, passing a bellhop who was pushing along a tray. The man gaped at Gabrielle, stumbling to a halt and using the cart to block his lower half as he reacted to her allure. Then they were past him and standing before the only door on this floor.

When Bill knocked, they heard a muffled voice ask, "I thought that was everything?" Before Loup opened the door.

Bill looked up at him, shaking his head. "You're a large one, aren't you?"

"And you're a redhead," Loup shot back. "Bill or Charlie?"

"Bill." Bill held out his hand, shaking the larger man's hand. "May we come in?"

Loup nodded, although even as he shook Bill's hand and then moved aside to let them pass, his eyes had strayed to Gabrielle. Thanks to his being a werewolf, Loup had something of a natural resistance against subtle mind control like a Veela's Allure, yet he still felt it.

The two men further into the suite had no such protection, despite being Devils. Indeed, given how much more open to the Sin of Lust being Devils made them, they were slightly more susceptible than most. Kiba gaped, then stood, bowing floridly towards Gabrielle. "My lady, your presence is as welcome this morning as the dawn, but I am afraid we had no idea we would have any visitors this morning, let alone someone of your beauty."

Issei was simply gaping, and quickly crossed his legs where he sat on one of the suite's sofas, his eyes going vacant and glassy as he stared at Gabrielle.

But despite smiling at Kiba's courteous words and actions, Gabrielle almost ignored all three men. Instead she looked around but did not see her quarry. "I am 'ere for 'arry Potter. Is 'e still sleeping?"

"Harry isn't here, alas. He left a message saying that he had transferred back to one of the other areas we've been recently, Kiba said, not mentioning Danan by name even under the influence of Gabrielle's Allure, which he was slowly pushing through. The memory of Tsubaki and his relationship with her helping him along. "He left a message saying we're to wait for him to get back."

"What's he up to?" Bill asked, frowning a little. "I would've thought he'd want to get to work right away today." He then paused as a loud snore roared out from one of the bedrooms, snorting. "Aha, and I see that Tonksie still snores like a dragon."

"We think he's probably bringing in more help," Loup answered, moving around Bill to sit back down in front of his breakfast. "And I know for a fact Tonks is louder than a dragon snoring."

Gabrielle huffed in annoyance, her Allure diminishing, but then Kiba went on, having shaken himself out of the reaction to her. "We need more hands for this, I think. But you're more than welcome to wait here for him."

"Will one of zem be that... er, I believe 'er name is Rias?" Gabrielle asked, changing what she was going to say on the fly. No need to show what she really thought of the harlot.

"I doubt it. Rias-sama is no doubt stuck in Kuoh at the moment. No, it will be some of our other friends."

"Ugh, I just hope that whoever it is, Potter's got the decency not to be all lovey-dovey with them," Issei grumbled, coming back to himself now that Gabrielle's Allure wasn't impacting him so powerfully. "And keep it down at night. The more I think about the amount of oppai he's taken off the market, the angrier I get!"

Luckily, or perhaps unluckily, he had muttered this so low that Gabrielle hadn't heard it as she moved around the room, looking at the suite with interest. She'd never been in a muggle hotel before, and she liked what she was seeing.

On the other hand Bill had been in a number of muggle hotels and ignored their surroundings to focus on the task at hand. He hadn't come here just to give Gabrielle the chance to crash and burn after all. Looking over at Loup, he seemed to be the most mature of the group, and whatever else, his sheer size made him somewhat intimidating. "I would've preferred to run this by Harry personally, but I have things to do this morning. So which one of

you would be most comfortable coming with me and my brother to meet some, shall we say, less than reputable contacts?"

"On the magical side, or the non-magical side?" Kiba asked instantly.

"Both. The man in question is a wizard, but he's been able to keep his abilities secret, and he runs a rather large criminal organization with no one the wiser on our side of things thanks to the goblins helping him out. He's got connections with the rest of the criminal underworld, and with Harry here, I thought to get in touch with him and see if he knows anything that could help us. He might not. I think if he did he would have come forward already, but it doesn't hurt to ask."

"Why haven't you got the magical police in touch with him?" Kiba asked.

Bill barked a laugh. "Because the man would probably kill me if I tried. Potter though, he's a bit of a gray area. He isn't an **official** official if you know what I mean, and at this point, if the problem gets any worse than it has this past week, it's going to start to impact his business anyways. Given that, I might be able to convince the guy to help with information if nothing else."

Loup grunted, then nodded his head. "I'll go with you."

"Ugh, but that will only leave me to help keep Issei under control. I'm not certain one man is enough for that job."

"OY!!" Issei barked, causing Loup and Kiba to laugh while the two magicals looked on in confusion.

OOOOOOO

When he reached Tir Na Nog, Harry found the rest of his friends and lovers waiting for him. And apparently, Hermione and Padma had already been introduced to Tiamat at some point since he had dropped them off here, since they didn't seem surprised by the giant, multi-colored dragon who landed beside him. This let Harry look around the group who was waiting in the clearing with them, seeing a half dozen dwarves there around a large chest and, oddly, a large group of leprechauns, all of whom stood around a large chest.

Harry shook his head at the sight before turning back to his friends. "Morning, ladies. So, Hermione, Padma, did Kala and the others tell you about my asking you for research type help?"

"She did indeed." Hermione nodded in greeting towards Tiamat, then gave Harry a smile, gesturing all around them. "And while the past four days have been fascinating, what with helping Luna with all her paperwork and dealing with the dwarves and the leprechauns, it hasn't been what I'd exactly call fun. My god, do the dwarves love paperwork. They are absolutely obsessed with the minutiae of deals and record-keeping. So a chance to dig into a good old fashioned archeological research project sounds wonderful."

“Although I am concerned about the idea of being so close to possible combat,” Padma admitted as she chimed in.

Harry nodded in understanding. He knew Padma had never been directly involved in the war against Riddle except peripherally. Her sister Parvati had fought occasionally, but Padma had kept her head down and avoided getting anywhere near the fighting. She also seemed more uneasy about Tiamat’s presence than Hermione, since she had kind of shrunk in on herself, moving closer to her wife.

“What exactly do you think we can bring to the table that you don’t already have access to?” Padma asked, looking over at her wife.

“Research ability obviously, and an understanding of wizarding culture. Frankly I’m just going to basically toss one or both of you at the local magical library and hope something sticks. I want to get a picture of the history on the magical side of Egypt. I want to know when the pharaohs stopped being wizards, when magic went into hiding in Egypt, what great magical works there were all that kind of stuff. Basically, think History of Magic - Egypt edition. Basically, things that we should’ve really covered in Binn’s class,” he ended teasingly, knowing that for Hermione had actually enjoyed Binn’s class since it let her get on with learning history on her own.

“Meh, Binns would never have covered that kind of thing anyway. He’s never taught anything but goblin wars, and that poorly. He was really only there so that Hogwarts could save money on paying another teacher,” Tonks opined, speaking aloud a long-held opinion of many a Hufflepuff past and present.

Hermione rolled her eyes but did not otherwise respond, simply nodding her head towards Harry indicating she was fine with his plan. Before anyone else could continue, Yubelluna spoke up, gesturing to the leprechauns all around. “These young boys and girls have all volunteered to help us out as well.”

Harry looked at them quizzically. “While I appreciate your support, and I’ve seen first hand what great fighters you are, I’m not sure what help you expect to be at the moment?”

One of the leprechauns, a young man with a short cropped and well-trimmed beard, answered. “Sure, an’ if you think our combat skills are something, you should know that not be the end of things. We can make ourselves disappear ta normal senses, transform into small animals for short amount of time, as well as you could Harry Potter, only faster, as it be a natural thing ta us, like breathin’. We can also pop from one place to another within our sight, travel via rainbows at need, and track people if they be given some of our enchanted gold.”

Harry glanced back at Yubelluna, one eyebrow rising in query for she had been correct. All of the leprechauns were young, mid-twenties at most, and looking at them, Harry couldn’t help feeling like helping him and his other allies to solve the mystery in Egypt was just a

sidenote to these guys and gals. They wanted adventure and perhaps to see the human world. Nothing more, nothing less.

Nodding back, Yubelluna indicated she understood his worries, but a slight bow of her head deferred the matter to him. And after a moment scratching at his scar, Harry decided he needed to give them some organization before setting them loose.

"I would like," he said slowly, "For you all to form into squads of five. That way, if you run into trouble, there will be enough of you to deal with it or escape. And I don't want any of you to go off on your own." There was more than a little grumbling at that, but Harry stood firm, while nearby two of the older looking leprechauns nodded their heads in firm agreement with Harry's words.

"Ya drive a hard bargain, Harry Potter."

"Maybe I do, but since I'm your ride there and back, we'll do things my way. Right?"

Many of the young leprechauns grumbled, but one of the two older leprechauns barked out, "I told ya, ya young idjits. This ain't all gold and rainbows. Ya won't be stealing clothes, ale or rabbits this time, ya'll be on serious business now ya see. Now hand out the pins, Ysiabel."

One of the leprechaun, a girl with hair nearly as red as Rias's, grumbled a bit about an "Old hoary bastard of an uncle who won't let me have any fun" but complied, pulling out a large sack. Inside were dozens of small pins – obviously designed for leprechauns. Each of the young adventurers put them on their lapels. "These here beauties are enchanted," one of them said somewhat unnecessarily, Harry thought, "to let us communicate. We'll keep a group with you, while the rest of us will go off on our own. An' if we find anything o' interest we can tell ya of it quick."

Harry nodded, then looked over at Luna, who had remained silent and watching from one side. But when he looked at her, she raised a finger, indicating he should wait. She hadn't so much as looked at him before responding, only frowning pensively, her eyes glowing all the colors of the rainbow. *And if that isn't worrisome I don't know what is.*

Instead of addressing Luna, Harry turned to the dwarves standing by the chest the two older leprechauns were perched on. "And what of you dwarves?" He asked, tapping his chest in greeting to Bail Stonebreaker.

Before the dwarf leader could speak, the heretofore silent leprechaun, the oldest of the group by far, hopped to his feet. The man was wrinkled all over, and hunched over, with an eyepatch covering one eye. He looked just like a pirate stepping off the page of anyone of a hundred books about such things... if the pirate were three feet tall that is. He also walked with a confidence Harry could respect, gesturing Harry towards the nearby bar.

"Arr now, while the dwarves don' have any young fools willing ta throw themselves into the first quest to come their way, they do be havin' a few goodies for ya."

“Stealing my thunder, Patrick?” Bail grunted, poking the old leprechaun in the side with a finger. “But he’s right, Potter. We be having a suit of armor here. It’s not got any of the things we’ve been working on with Kalawarner, but it’s light, durable, and magically protected to an extreme degree. I’d recommend giving it to someone who needs the help defending themselves against magical assault. Beyond that, we dwarves and the gryphons don’t honestly have anything to add to your quest.”

“And on top of that bit of steel, inside is something you, or rather, yer ladies would be making use of,” Patrick added.

Harry blinked at that, then grinned, looking over at Akeno. “You’ve already started to make rune-engraved clothing?”

“Nay, yer human spells still not be working in cloth. But armored cloth no be a problem for me lads and lasses. We’ve made that for ourselves for millennia, and even before Danan was caught off from Ire, we made such cloth for a human a time or two. Twas making the runes and enchantments work on your new types of clothing that was hard. We’re still not happy with it, some of your new stuff, silk, for example? That stuff be amazing and takes on spell like nothing we’ve ever seen.”

“But still we made three suits for ye. They be designed to sit under your clothing and be able to take anything up to but not including yer Killing Curse. Powerful spells would break the enchantments, ya understand? There be an emergency teleport sone into the clothing, which’ll teleport the wearer out of the way of such things, much the same way we can when needed. Short range only, I’ll warn ye, and it will need to rest between uses, so don’t go thinking ya be invincible all of a sudden. Da cool down be ‘bout two minutes we reckon, and the teleport direction’s random,” Patrick warned. “But we can maybe work on that in the future. We see some possibilities with what Akeno’s been showin’ us, we do.”

“And not just down her shirt neither,” muttered one of the younger men, only to yelp as tiny arcs of electricity came from Akeno’s finger towards him.

“Ara, Ara did someone just volunteer for some punishment play?” Akeno questioned, eyes beginning to glow a bit with devilish delight, causing all the male leprechauns to feel both aroused and terrified while their female fellows laughed at their misfortune.

Shaking his head at his new wife, Harry waited until the two leprechauns had moved, both of them popping up to his shoulders, before opening the chest. Pulling out the three pieces of clothing, he held up the first Lycra body suit, listening as Patrick, who Harry figured was something like the leprechaun equivalent of a military themed clothes designer, said, “They all be havin’ spells on ‘em to resize to fit the wearer and won’t be too cold nor too hot, a body regulation enchantment we use on our own clothin’. Ye’ve never seen us we folk sweatin’ have ye me lord?”

The 'my lord' had slipped in there, despite the leprechauns not having really paid Harry much respect before this, but Harry ignored it in favor of turning towards Padma, and Hermione, who he handed out each of the three suits of clothing. "I think the leprechaun's outfits would be best suited to you guys for now. And you, Kala. The dwarven armor can stay as backup for now, or be given to Issei or Kiba."

Padma and Hermione nodded, understanding and grateful for the consideration, and yet as Harry looked on, they seemed to glance back and forth speculatively between the clothing in their hands, and each other.

Akeno, for her part, looked over at the outfits in interest, licking her lips as she imagined what she'd look like wearing one herself, and what it would do to her new husband. Yubelluna was thankful that she wasn't going to wear it though. Skintight suits like that were nice enough in private, but even wearing something like that under her clothing would be a little too off-putting for her.

It was Kala however who spoke up with a frown on her face. "Why me?" It sounded as if Harry felt she needed help to look after herself, which in comparison to the other ladies involved with Harry was accurate, but not nice to hear.

"You're our best flyer love, and if we do find anything to fight, chances are good you'll be on overwatch. It's not exactly a safe place to be, and I'd rather you have all the protection I can give you." Harry answered.

That made enough sense for Kalawarner to put aside her annoyance and she moved forward, taking the suit from Harry as he held it behind him, looking at the armor within the chest, almost as if he was avoiding looking at the suit and Kala at the same time. Knowing why that was the case and unwilling to let this chance to tease him fall to the wayside, Kala moved past his outstretched arm and leaned against his back, licking his ear with her tongue for a moment as she whispered, "Play your cards right, Harry, and I might be willing to model it for you after this Egyptian business is done."

At that Harry froze, every part of his body going rigid as he fought to control himself. Oh how he wanted to just blow this whole thing off, and drag her back to their little island for a few days. *Curse my fetish for skintight clothing!* Yet even so, he sighed in defeat and disappointment, knowing that regardless of his desires, he couldn't do it, no matter how tempting it might be. The day was moving on, and Harry had sensed the time difference between Danan and her back to one, meant that they could not do that, as tempting as it was. Instead, Harry simply continued to hold the suit out towards her, closing his eyes to try and push the image of Kala wearing it away. "That sounds nice, love, but not now."

Kala and Akeno both laughed at that and Kala moved off to try the clothing on. That left the dwarves, who had already said their piece, and Luna. Harry looked back at Luna again, only for her to shake her head once more. "I'm not going to come with you, Harry. I can't get away

right now. We're expecting a delegation of Enbarr, Pukas, and most importantly, Banshees to arrive today. The locals are very touchy about those they see as having fled the Winter Fae, leaving their fellows to their own devices and I need to be here just in case. Besides... I can't tell anything about the future at the moment. Nothing concrete, anyways."

Luna then looked down at the dog, lolling nearby. It too had stared at the clothing for a moment, then huffed and laid out, closing his eyes for now. "What I do see is fragmented and scattered. I can see that something is going to happen to dog, but not what. I can tell that you will meet with wizard-type enemies, but nothing more than that. I'm sorry I can't help more, Harry."

"That's fine, Luna, I wasn't expecting your clairvoyance to help us, only your combat skills. But if you can't come with us, then that's fine." Harry knew that despite her constant words to the contrary, Luna had found a home here among the Fae. He honestly doubted she would ever leave Tir Na Nog again, not with both Rolf and the Fae here.

With the girls going off to try their clothing it seemed to be an appropriate time for Harry to head back to Kuoh and talk to Rias and the Shinsengumi, so Harry left them there for a time, flying back to the fal stone on the hills, overlooking the ocean. From there, the trip to Kuoh was easy, a single teleportation bringing him to the fal stone that Harry had placed in the ORC room. There he found two of Sona's peerage doing some work while waiting to greet incoming guests from Kyoto or the Underworld.

They waved him on, Reya not even bothering to look up from her work. Ruruko, on the other hand, seemed to want to say something but didn't quite get the words out before Harry was out the door. Her aborted relationship with Issei and whatever feelings or issues that had spawned from it was not something he wanted to get into, especially since Issei seemed to have moved on already.

Soon, Harry arrived at the Potter-Gremory compound, and, entering, smiled cheerfully as he spotted Asia and Gasper working on something together in the kitchen. Gasper's box was nowhere in sight, and the two of them were apparently talking quite animatedly while working on some kind of recipe. Asia smiled as she saw him, giving him a wave before Harry found his legs being tackled around the knees by Kuno, who chattered happily at him.

"Hello lovey," Harry laughed, reached down and lifted her into his arms, giving her a hug before looking over to where Lily was working with both Sona and Rias. A large stack of papers sat between the two Kings, but Rias had turned away from it to help Lily with some homework.

Lily too had bounded to her feet at the sound of his voice, and was about to race over to him, but before she could, Rias placed a hand on her head and pushed her back down. "None of that. I said you could play when your work is done. You haven't finished it yet," she teased. "You've only got three more questions, don't run away now."

"I hate math!" Lily whined, throwing her arms up. "Can't I finish it later?"



“Later always becomes much later, munchkin,” Rias laughed. “Trust me, I tried that trick a time or two. But since you’re my daughter now, you’re supposed to learn from my mistakes, not make them for yourself.”

“Right,” the young girl grumbled. “I’m just supposed to make my own.”

“Got it in one,” Rias teased with a smile, kissing her on the side of Lily’s cheek. “Now come on, finish them off, then you and Kuno can share a cookie and have the rest of the day off.”

“She’s already finished the rest of her homework then?” Harry drawled somewhat teasingly, while also showing which side of this argument he came down on.

Rias nodded. “We were able to knock most of it out the first day back. Lily and Kuno are both very bright, it’s just a matter of getting them to concentrate,” she said proudly, causing Lily to beam. “But given the issues that Lily still has with writing in kanji, we ended with that yesterday, putting off her math worksheet until today.”

With Lily once more working, Rias did her best to avoid Sona’s pointed glare as she moved over to give Harry her own hug, squishing Kuno between them, causing the young kitsune to chitter in amusement. “I rather doubt that you finished your business in Egypt so quickly, is there anything I can do to help?” she murmured.

“Besides going with you,” Sona announced from behind her. “I’m not doing all this paperwork on my own.” She then smirked a bit. “Not that Rias would want to go to Egypt anyway.”

Harry blinked at that, looking at her questioningly, but Rias was no longer meeting his gaze, instead glaring back at Sona. “Okay, I’m missing something.”

“Nothing you need to know about,” Rias said repressively blushing faintly as she shook her head. “Nothing that you or Tonks especially need to know about. Akeno teases me enough about it as it is.”

Sona smirked. “Now normally, I would be willing to perhaps keep your secret, but considering how often the two of you have teased me of late, I think this is karma coming into my hands.”

Rias dove toward Sona, but Sona quickly backed away, putting the table between them as she caroled, “Rias has an incredibly inordinate fear of camels for some reason. And when I say fear, I mean she is utterly terrified of them.”

For a moment, Harry simply stared, then he laughed, shaking his head. “Well, that might eventually be a problem, although my investigation hasn’t gone past the borders of Alexandria just yet, and I haven’t seen a single camel as yet.”

“Okay, I admit it,” Rias grumbled, shuddering as Harry spoke. “I’m terrified of those creatures! They just freak me out, with their faces, and their spitting and their smell and ughh! Call me if you end up finding something you want to hit hard, but otherwise, I don’t think I’d add anything to your group that you don’t already have in spades. Certainly nothing on the research end of things.”

“That’s actually why I came. Right now I don’t need more power, what I need are more hands, more eyes, and perhaps, a new skillset. And Yubelluna suggested reaching out to the Shinsengumi here in Japan.”

“Oh, that’s a good idea,” Rias answered, turning away although she was still pouting at her irrational fear having come to light. Why, even Lily was now snickering at Rias even as she labored through her math sheet.

Thankfully for Rias, Harry did not tease her about it, instead putting an arm around her waist in a hug, continuing to follow the new discussion. “Has Husukai moved in yet?”

That had been one of the more surprising aspects of opening the magical segment of Kuoh to the Onmyouji after the agreement between them had been reached. Husukai was easily the most senior of the local Shinsengumi and was also a respected member of the larger community.

“Yes he has, in fact he’s opened up a similar store to the one we used to get into Magical Row. It’s a pretty cool place,” Rias admitted.

“Ooh, can we go with you? I love that place, it smells so fun,” Kuno said from where Harry was still holding her in one arm.

“If Lily finishes her homework,” Rias and Harry said as one, then laughed. After a second though, Rias clicked her fingers. “But while you’re waiting for Lily, Akeno did forget something that I think you should take with you.”

With that, Rias made to go upstairs, but before she’d taken more than a few steps, Rias paused. “Oh and by the way, Sona’s afraid of spiders.”

“Being afraid of spiders is perfectly normal for a girl, regardless of my being a Devil!” Sona shot back, an automatic response that still had Harry chuckling.

Before long Rias returned, carrying the lightning whip that Akeno had been given by her aunt when they had met at the New Year’s festival. Harry took it, smiling gratefully at Rias, knowing it represented a decent power boost for Akeno should she need it.

Soon enough, with the two little girls each holding a hand, Harry was led through the streets of Kuoh and down a few back streets he hadn’t walked down before, to a small bookstore. As he opened the door, he asked, “By the way, where is Koneko?”

“She’s off training with Yasaka in Kyoto,” Lily answered. “But she’ll be back tonight.”

Harry nodded at that, and held the door for the two little ones, who raced inside.

Inside, the elderly Husukai sat at a desk near the doorway and hearing the patter of little feet was about to open his mouth to start his spiel about treating the books with respect, when seeing who it was, he paused, watching with a slight smile as the two little girls headed down one of the many, many small aisles of books that made up his old, homey, and deliberately mysterious bookstore.

Harry exchanged a Japanese-style bow of respect with the man, then said simply, “A matter has arisen, which I have been reminded might be more in your purview than mine.”

“Truly? Word from the larger Wizarding World is that you’re researching the issue in Egypt? Even as standoffish as we are, the Onmyodo government does receive some small tidbits of news from the rest of the world from time to time. This, and the fact that Ireland is no longer a sight of similar trouble, has reached my ears,” Husukai pondered.

“That’s correct. It appears as if we might be facing interference of the wizarding variety, or perhaps an attempt to control some ancient Faction-type magic. We have found evidence of deific style magic of a sort, so this might be a Chaos Brigade operation. What I need most though is another perspective and someone who can help me analyze the various crime scenes.”

Husukai frowned at that, then nodded slowly. “Ah, in that case, yes, I can most certainly be of use. European Aurors can be very good, but I understand the British Auror department lacks something when it comes to experienced people these days. And there are many who wish to fight alongside you, Harry Potter. You made an immense impression during the battle against the fallen angels, and you and Lady Rias made an even bigger one with the funeral you organized. Give me an hour to speak with my government, and I will put together a team of likely young men and women. How many do you think?”

“Ten or so? I’d like them to be familiar with non-magical means of crime scene investigation. And I would like them to... to keep my secrets. Our means of Getting to Egypt will make you privy to a secret I would like to keep until the magical academy we’re all building here is done.”

Husukai chuckled. “Of course. We will give our agreements on that score easily enough, so long as this secret cannot harm Nippon. As for your first requirement many of my people are so trained. It comes from how we have hidden ourselves without totally removing ourselves from the greater Japanese society.”

Exactly an hour later, Husukai and fourteen younger Shinsengumi appeared at the clan compound. Harry had spent that time with Sona and Rias creating a simulacrum of himself for when school started back up the next day. There was no way the issue in Egypt would be

solved in time for him to return to work. The simulacrum would be able to cover for him, changing the voice of whoever volunteered to act like him at school.

That person would probably be one of the Onmyouji who lived in the area. Rias even had one in mind: a teacher himself, who had retired recently. So long as he could get a handle on Harry's teaching style, no one would likely ever notice.

Getting the Shinsengumi to keep the secret of Danan to themselves was much easier than Harry had feared despite Husukai's words. But in the end, he simply requested an Oath from them and after assuring them all the secret was not one which would hurt Japan, they all agreed. Such was the respect he had won in the Onmyouji community. Afterward, he had to tell them that he would share the secret of Danan in the future but that was all.

Knowing that if he stayed any longer he wouldn't want to leave, Harry hugged Rias and the girls goodbye, then teleported them all through the dimensions to Danan and Tir Na Nog. Behind him, Rias frowned, exchanging a glance with Sona. Her friend shrugged, and Rias tapped a finger on her lips, thinking. "Sona-chan, do you have Momo and Reya doing anything important at present? I think I'd like to send a message to your family and mine. Just in case."

In Tir Na Nog, Harry found that Akeno and the others had removed themselves from the Fae capital to the fal stone he preferred to use to get to the Fae lands. When he and the Shinsengumi appeared, they found Hermione and Padma deep in conversation, apparently discussing the possibility of building a house at the site given their apparent love of the view. Introductions were made all around, with many explanations of shock from the Japanese at meeting leprechauns, and the other groups before they were once more ready to go.

Soon enough, Harry, and his new allies were back, teleporting into his room in the suite that he was sharing with the others.

While Bill had left, Gabrielle had stayed and she, Kiba and the others had been joined by a now-awake Tonks. They all turned, watching as Harry walked out with Akeno beside him, followed by not only the other ladies who had been in Danan, but Master Husukai, more than a dozen Shinsengumi, and twenty-plus leprechauns. Oh, and Tiamat in her human body.

"Damn, Potter-sensei, when you get help you don't do things by half," Issei whistled.

"Ha, well, not after my Lady here reminded me I could call upon resources beyond our clan," Harry said, bowing towards Yubelluna, causing her to roll her eyes. "Unless of course you four have broken the mystery?"

At that point Gabrielle opened her mouth, having had enough of being ignored and somewhat, though she would never have admitted it, intimidated by the gorgeous women who had come back from wherever he had gone with Harry and conversely filled with a need to stand out. But before she could speak, the leprechaun Ysabel spoke up first, staring at Kiba. "Cor, he's a pretty one, I call dibs!"

Kiba blinked at that, then stared as Ysabel raced over towards him, disappearing mid-step to appear on his shoulder. “Yoink! Moira, Reggie, Gale, Marcus, get yer rears over here.”

Four other leprechauns chuckled among themselves and moved over perching on or near Kiba, who now stared at Harry in some confusion. “Um, what is this about?”

“Oh, don’t be worrying your pretty head ‘bout it, me fine blonde boyo. We’ll just be hitchin’ a ride. Surely a big, handsome, strapping lad like yerself won’t notice.” Ysabel’s eye narrowed dangerously, and she grabbed Kiba’s cheek in her tiny but powerful hand, pulling his head around, she glared into his eyes from barely an inch away. “Unless ye be calling me fat?”

“Erk, no, miss, of course not! I am, um, just wondering what specific skills that you and your fellows will bring to our current mission!” Kiba replied quickly.

Harry chuckled. “Nice save. These young lads and lasses have agreed to help us with this new issue. They are going to provide communication, a new pair of eyes, and some more combat ability I doubt that our enemy is going to be prepared for.”

“Wait these little whatever’s can fight?” Issei asked, confused. Leprechauns were not a part of Japanese mythology and Harry hadn’t mentioned them specifically when telling everyone about the Fae War in Tir Na Nog. The pervert then yelped as one of the other leprechauns flashed over to him and brought his tiny hammer down, rather lightly considering, causing him to hop around, grabbing at his foot in pain. “Ouch!”

“Sure an’ I be rethinking who ya call ‘little whatever’s’ ya big streak of piss,” the leprechaun cackled.

Looking around, Harry looked over at Hermione, who nodded her head and the two of them quickly cast some space expansion charms around the room, allowing everyone to spread out. This also let Gabrielle move up to him, smiling brightly. “Good morning Mon Chevalier,” she purred, letting her Allure out. Practically every male there bar Loup, Husukai and Harry was effected, with the leprechaun males staring at her in awe More then a few of them began panting like dog, who was also staring at her, roused from where he had been outside on the balcony.

Harry however, simply smiled politely, completely immune to her allure. “Hello Gabby. I didn’t expect to see you here, or did you stop by to pass on a message from Bill?”

“Non, I am here for my own reasons. Could we perhaps step out onto ze patio to talk?” Gabby said, smiling winsomely at him, tossing her hair over one shoulder.

While he had hoped that Gabrielle had given up on him, it was clear to Harry what she wanted to talk about. If she meant to try and convince Harry to give her a chance to join him and his ladies, or if she was hoping to break him and Rias up didn’t matter. She wasn’t his type and it was time to make that plain. Sighing internally, Harry prepared himself to let her down, as directly, if politely, as possible.

But before he could speak up, Akeno did so instead. While Yubelluna, who was slightly bisexual, had been rendered a blushing, stuttering mess, Kala and Akeno were both straight, and they had seen enough of this French tart. Akeno moved between Gabby and Harry, smirking somewhat as she looked the blonde up and down. "And who is this Harry, another prospective bedmate? I don't know, she doesn't seem to...measure up to me."

Gabrielle's eyes widened, then narrowed, instantly understanding the dig wasn't just about her height, but she couldn't stop herself from looking down at Akeno's chest. And like many a woman before her, Gabrielle felt despair at the sight.

"And the last I heard, Harry wasn't looking to add any more ladies to the mix, which is a good thing considering there's already five of us," Kala added, not unkindly, but firmly, moving forward to crowd Gabrielle backward.

"W, what!? Cinq femme,(five women), impossible! Wh..." Gabby stammered, her Allure flickering with her shock.

"My word, yes. In our society, harems are not at all unusual. First there was Rias, a royal in our society. Then Yasaka, the leader of the Youkai Association. After that, Kala joined our group, a war veteran and world-class chef. I came next and have my own strengths to bring to the table, and Yubelluna, there, is waiting for a few more dates before making things official. She's also a bandrui, a female druid with explosive powers," Akeno explained mock-solicitously. "So you see, it not only takes a, ahem, certain body type, to catch his attention, but you have to be something truly special to garner Harry's permanent interest."

Staring at them, then at Harry's amused face, Gabrielle drew herself up, nearly spitting as she reined in her anger. "Non! I, I might have been willing to share with that redheaded salope (slut), but I will be no man's sixth choice!"

"What did you just call my King!?" Akeno growled, lightning appearing all over her arms. "Say it again, you French tart!"

"Enough!" Harry growled, letting loose some of his own Aura, causing Gabrielle to quail and Akeno's anger to be subsumed by another emotion entirely. "Gabrielle, I thought that my telling you about Rias and I would have been enough. But if it isn't, then, yes, Rias is not my only lover, or even my only wife. Akeno and I hand-fasted one another before I came here to Egypt. Yasaka and the others all have promise jewelry. I take my relationships with each of them seriously, and I don't take kindly to people speaking about them in that way. I know you hoped that there could be something between us and I'm sorry, but I'm just not attracted to you."

He didn't comment on the rest of what Akeno had said, although the look he gave the black-haired woman showed he agreed with her. While as a man, he could see that Gabrielle was a rare beauty, it had never been just their bodies which had attracted him to any of the ladies in his life. All of them were extraordinary in their own way, calling to him each in their

own manner. Gabrielle, despite the years she had spent sending him semi-risqué photos, just didn't attract him like that.

Gabrielle had recovered some of her poise as Harry spoke, but she was still stunned, and feeling more than a little bit humiliated. So she said nothing and turned in a huff, heading towards the door, not even noticing the way Issei and many of the other men stared after her, slack-jawed. "Bah, you can 'ave 'im then!"

She slammed the door behind her, causing all the men she had entranced with her Allure to come back to themselves, looking at one another sheepishly. Shaking her head, Tonks looked at Husukai, who was looking at them all with some amusement. "Ere, why the blooming heck weren't you caught in her Allure Husukai?"

"Heh, I recall you calling me a wanker at one point Tonks, and my response to it. Is it any wonder I felt nothing when that young woman ensnared you all?" Husukai retorted, causing Tonks to blush as she, like Yubelluna, had indeed been caught by Gabrielle's Allure.

Meanwhile, Hermione shook her head, but kept silent. She didn't exactly approve of how Akeno and Kala had handled Gabby, nor did she approve of Harry's 'nontraditional relationship'. But she wouldn't bring it up again. It was his choice, and she'd had time over the past few days in Tir Na Nog to get to know Kala and the others. Gabby, as nice as she was, wasn't someone she could see Harry with. She, like Ginny before her, only saw the parts of him she liked, not the entirety.

With a sigh Harry shook his head. "Come on, you lot. Let's get you settled."

Since it would be simpler to just get them all some rooms rather than continually using spells to hide their presence, Harry transported the Shinsengumi and his three ladies down to the ground, where they could all pay for a series of rooms. At first, this proved to be an issue because the hotel preferred not to take walk-ins, but Harry stepped in, offering to pay a premium for the rooms. While this made the hotel manager somewhat bemused he was more than happy to take Harry's money even though the Shinsengumi still had to be spread out through the hotel more than Harry was happy about.

Thankfully, Akeno, Hermione and the other ladies got another suite directly below the one that Harry had already paid for.

While the other Shinsengumi retreated to their rooms more to simply rest from the sudden crowd assault outside than anything else, Master Husukai joined Harry and the others in their suite. When they were all once more in the suite, Hermione leaned forward eagerly. "Do you have a plan for today Harry, or do you just want to point Padma and I at the nearest library and shout sic 'em?"

Nodding, Harry picked up a pamphlet of historical sites in Alexandria and the surrounding region, as well as a second pamphlet which had a basic map of the city. He

expanded both of them, then pasted them against the suite's walls. "Alright everyone, it's time to get organized here. First, I think we need to start splitting up into teams. Five leprechauns will go with each group as they pursue a different style of investigation."

He nodded over to Tonks. "Tonks, myself, and a few of the Shinsengumi will meet with the local Chief Auror, a man Bill told me is named something Proudfoot. We'll then move on to examine a few of the more recent attacks here in Alexandria, see if they have anything in common."

"I have a suggestion," Tiamat said, pausing until all eyes were on her. "If anything in terms of ancient magic running amok is going on, then the Giza Pyramids should be at the center of it. This isn't just because of all the tombs there, but culturally it was the center of the world for ancient Egypt. You must remember how important those tombs and preparing their honored dead for their burial was to the locals. If we're dealing with some ancient magic coming awake due to how much magic is flooding into the world as a result of you and Ophis, Harry, thanks to Ophis and you Harry Potter, then the pyramids would be the place to start."

"With the goblin presence there, you might want to take one of us wizard types along," Tonks replied thoughtfully. "Just in case."

"I've always wanted to see the pyramids, and I've recently made a study of several Middle Eastern illusion spells. If we assume that wizards are involved in some fashion, then their hiding whatever is going on underneath such spells is a given, so one of us should go," Hermione volunteered. "Especially since we'll be showing up unannounced."

Tiamat scowled, not wanting to acknowledge that such spells might well be able to fool her if the caster was powerful enough or the illusion subtle enough. To cover up her annoyance at that, Tiamat concentrated on a different annoyance.

Harry nodded. "Then how about you two start on that. Padma, you can come with me into the magical quarter, and after we meet with the local police Commissioner, you can go off and start researching."

"I'd rather start researching right away, why do you need me to be part of this meeting?" Padma asked, "I certainly won't have anything to contribute."

"First, don't sell yourself short. You might see something the rest of us more combative types, might miss. Second, we know that some wizards are taking advantage of whatever ancient magic is acting up here, which means we need to be prepared for attacks. And while most wizard spells won't do much to most of my party, you Padma, have no such defense beyond that leprechaun outfit you're wearing. So wherever you go, I want someone to go with you."

While Hermione would have huffed and puffed at the very idea that she needed someone to guard her back, she was a veteran of the war against Riddle after all, Padma simply



nodded her head. "I still say that I won't have anything to contribute to that conversation though."

As Padma spoke, there came a tapping noise at the window of the suites patio. Turning in that direction, Harry saw an owl fluttering against the glass, eyeing the dog warily. Hermione, who was closest to the patio, opened the door and let the bird through, where it landed on her shoulder and held out its leg. She removed the scroll there, and after looking at Harry for permission, opened it, reading at the message. "Apparently, there was a major outbreak of magic in nonmagical Cairo the night before last. Chief Inspector Proudfoot knows that Harry's looking into all of this, so he's decided to reach out."

"Now? Not yesterday when we arrived!?" Harry growled.

"I would wager that they thought it was an unrelated incident?" Padma offered, but Tonks shook her head with a scowl.

"I'd wager that's a strike one for this Proudfoot bloke. If this incident was worthy of being called a 'major outbreak' then he should have told us about it right away, just in case. This late after the fact, there might not be much we can do."

"That sounds fascinating. It will be interesting to see how So too does seeing how you European wizards go about covering up such moments," Master Husukai opined. "I think I would like to be involved in this investigation."

"It says here it was a magical battle of some kind. The Aurors are still checking in with the small community of magicals in Cairo to see if anyone is missing, but they aren't having much luck so far," Harry mused, frowning thoughtfully. "Yubelluna, you can go with Master Husukai. You've got both the best trained magical senses and can see deific magic. With luck, there'll still be something there for you to find. I need to meet with Proudfoot, unfortunately. Kiba, you and Issei go with them, and bring the dog with you," he added as an afterthought. "Most wizards and witches don't think in terms of covering their scent."

The dog peered up at him from the side where he had been munching on a bone someone had conjured for him. He looked at Harry interrogatively, and Harry shrugged. "Don't look at me like that, you're the one with the nose. You tell me what you find."

The dog huffed in some amusement, and Hermione looked at Harry thoughtfully, wondering if the two of them were forming a familiar bond, but deciding against it after a moment. The dog was after all extremely intelligent, and this wasn't the first time she had seen it reply to something spoken in such a manner.

Harry wrote out a return message, asking Proudfoot to send over a few men with some extra brooms, and explaining that he would send some of his own people out to Cairo to investigate. He finished by telling Proudfoot to be ready to meet with Harry within an hour.

While he was doing that, Husukai called up a few of his Shinsengumi, choosing a young man named Shen to speak for them while he was away.

Loup raised his hand. "Bill stopped by earlier with Gabrielle. While Issei was making googly eyes at Gabby, Bill invited me to come with him to meet a few of his local non-magical contacts. Those are apparently a must-have for curse breakers."

"Part of their job for the goblins is to act as go-betweens occasionally with the seedier side of the Egyptian society so that the goblins don't have to." Tonks agreed. "Outside their dwellings, goblin magic is somewhat limited, and mostly involves physical enhancement type magic along with small scale attack magic designed to mess with the eyes and ears of their enemies. So meeting people who might get violent isn't something they want to do without wizard backup."

"How do you know that? That stuff about goblin's magic, I mean," Hermione asked quizzically and somewhat affronted. "I never learned that in Binn's class!"

"Ehh, you wouldn't. Most info on the goblins and how they really fight is kept secret. Mostly by the goblins. But Moody knew, and told me to watch out for it. Crazy bastard he might have been, but he knew more about fighting dark wizards and the like than most wizards will ever know." Tonks reminisced.

"We are wasting time." Tiamat stood up moving to the patio, where her form slowly shifted to her dragon form, albeit far smaller. "Come curly-haired one, let us be doing." Tiamat still disliked being in her human form for any real length of time, it being far too much like being a size sixty shrunk into a size six shoe.

"Wait, what? Can't we just, um, take a bus or..." Hermione trailed off as the now fully formed dragon turned to glare at her. "Erm... can I use a sticking charm at least?"

Tiamat allowed that, and a second later, Hermione and two leprechauns moved forward, the leprechauns looking on with interest, while Hermione looked scared. Still, she gamely got onto Tiamat's back, then cast her sticking charm on herself and the two leprechauns, both of whom had just pulled out aviator glasses from somewhere. "Er, please take it Eassssyyy!!!!"

That was as far as she got before Tiamat sprang into the air, the group of them quickly covered by the draconic equivalent of a Notice-Me-Not. This did not, however, stop Hermione's scream of "SSTTTOOOOP!!" from reaching the ears of those left behind.

Blinking at the speed Tiamat had rushed off, Harry could only shake his head, staring up at the rapidly ascending dragon. "And here I thought Hermione had gotten over her fear of flying."

“Fear of nonmagical flying. She actually enjoys it now. But I have a feeling that after this Hermione’s fear of magical flying is going to grow to balance things out,” Padma mumbled. “That, um, Tiamat... where exactly is she on the whole power scale of the so-called ‘Three Factions’?” Her nose scrunched up. “Although that name is so much of a misnomer I don’t think I’m going to use it any longer. It speaks as much of ignorance and insularity as the ‘Wizarding World’. Ugh. Labels.”

Laughing, Harry shook his head. “She’s pretty damn high up. Hence why Tiamat and I have such an... odd relationship, and why I didn’t try to stop her right now. So long as she is helping us, somehow, I’m more than willing to let her do her own thing. Still, I think Tiamt’s been opening up more lately, and I know she’s loved flying around in Danan.”

“I can understand that. It’s a magical place, and I don’t mean that merely in the literal sense.”

Laughing, Harry turned back to the others and began to organize them further. He asked Akeno and Kala to choose between them who would stay at the hotel and start building an idea of what the nonmagicals knew about the events occurring. This meant reading through a lot of tabloids and online forums, but whoever was staying would also be the center of the communication grid Harry wanted to use the leprechauns to create. Most of the Shinsengumi would be broken off once they talked to Proudfoot, to follow up on the columns that Kiba and the others had found an example of the previous day. But Harry wanted to make certain they would be able to use their magic without the Aurors showing up and trying to arrest them. Which, if the Aurors were overworked, tense, and fearful, was very much a concern.

By that point the two ladies had, judging from the pout on Akeno’s face, decided between them who would be coming with Harry. The leprechauns too, had settled who would be staying here. There were two leprechauns for every Shinsengumi going with Harry, and three staying back with Akeno.

“So, Akeno lost the rock-paper-scissors game, which means I’m going with you. I also wouldn’t mind getting a chance to look over the local culinary options around here. I know Tonks talked about the food being bad here, but I would prefer to look around myself,” Kala said as she got up.. “I was in Alexandria right after Hippolyta was burned by those religious zealots, and a lot of their food was actually quite tasty. There must be a reason it’s reputation has gone downhill so much these days.”

“The way you just causally say the name of the last librarian of the Great Library of Alexandria disturbs me,” Padma admitted, shivering. “I can’t imagine living that long. On the one hand, all that history would be amazing to know about firsthand... it’s enough to take my breath away. On the other hand, I don’t know if I would be able to handle seeing empires rise and fall, like waves in an ocean. It would be heartbreaking.”

Kala chuckled at that, and Harry turned back from hugging Akeno goodbye. "I would have thought you'd ask if she had saved any of the books from the library Padma."

"We didn't. The burning of the famed Library of Alexandria was sparked by a Fallen after all. Regardless of what you think of me, or even and even how Azrael is trying to lead us away from that kind of thing, you have to remember that for most of our existence, we Fallen were not good people," The statuesque blue-haired woman answered, smiling sadly. "The best I can say is that I wasn't directly involved in the act."

"Regardless, let's set this aside and get on with our day ladies. In the words of Tiamat, we're wasting time," Harry declared firmly, taking Kala's arm in his own, and leading the way to the suite's door, Hermione and Tonks falling in behind them. "We'll see you later, Akeno."

"Stay safe, everyone," Akeno responded, smiling as she watched them go before pulling out the laptop Rias had given Harry when he had stopped by in Kuoh, pulling it up and accessing the local internet by plugging into the wall. She wasn't very optimistic about finding anything interesting, but she wanted to see what the various news agencies were saying. *Harry says the cover up is complete, but that the magicals have issues with coming up with realistic excuses. So similar stories may be the way to start...*

OOOOOOO

Ophis raised a hand to her face, kneading her forehead as the feeling of whatever minor deity it was that was popping in and out from his personal pocket dimension to Earth finally stopped reverberating through her senses for enough time to make her believe he was done doing so for the day. Every time whoever this person was did so, the background ambient magic of the world spiked, and she could feel it. She could feel him popping in and out, causing waves in that background magic as he went and, came and went. It was getting incredibly annoying, and she couldn't figure out a way to filter it out.

At the moment however, Ophis had other things to concentrate on. Specifically a discussion about "What do you mean there is no sign of Kuroka? She is easily one of our best espionage agents. How could she be caught?"

"We don't know," Vali answered, shaking his head slightly.

Since Kuroka was part of his faction within the Chaos Brigade, he had been the one to try to follow up that morning when the Nekoshu hadn't called in when she should have. But not only had he been unable to raise her on her cell phone, Vali couldn't contact Kuroka through the enchanted items that Ophis had created for them. He had then reached out to the rest of the team that Kuroka had led into Egypt. Not a one of them had checked in.

"I'd wager there could be some evidence of what is going on if I was allowed to take a few of our few technology experts with us. I understand that checking into hotels, security cameras and such like can occasionally catch even someone like Kuroka. But beyond that, I

don't see us being able to pick up the trail of whatever happened to her, not after more than a day."

That was worrisome for Vali in particular. His faction in the Chaos Brigade had taken a lot of hits lately. While Cao-Cao was still dealing with the loss of face from his attempted kidnapping of Yasaka being beaten off, and the loss of Jean of Arc and nearly every Youkai agent they had, the loss of Bikou, and Vali's own position among the Fallen was even worse than Cao-Cao's loss. In the past few days he had been in catch-up mode, trying to make up lost ground in Ophis's eyes, which was partly why he had agreed to send Kuroka in with forces ostensibly loyal to Cao-Cao, while Vali himself followed up on the other matters, particularly the ancient statues that Ophis had become interested in months ago. The ones that may or may not link directly to the extradimensional prisons of evil Dragon Gods.

Luckily, the return of the two Pendragon siblings meant that he had still had information to share. "However, we do have a lot more information to go on in terms of what's going on in Egypt now thanks to Le Fay."

Ophis looked over at the young woman, who smiled back at her sheepishly, her hands worrying at her hat for a moment before falling into her lap. One of them was then claimed by Arthur under the table, his squeezing of it giving her some courage to speak up. "As you might know, the Wizarding World is also present in Egypt, but not as its own nation. Unlike the nonmagicals, Egypt never broke off from Wizarding Britain. It's still administered by the same government. And this is relevant because while I was in Britain on family business, I was able to check in on the wizard side of things, and a lot of the news was about what is going on in Egypt."

"And Ireland," Vali led her on, urging Le Fay to continue.

"Yes. And I know that Harry Potter was somehow involved in solving the Ireland problem. But I was able to learn enough from the portion of that affair that we observed that, that well if you give me a few weeks, I might be able to figure out well..." Le Fay stuttered to a halt, pulling her hand away from her brother and poking her fingers together looking away and blushing. "Maybe, I don't know, I mean I'm still young, so maybe I'm wrong, or maybe it just wouldn't be usable for anyone who isn't connected to the Irish pantheon."

"Stop," Ophis ordered. Le Fay looked back at her, and the Dragon disguised as a Goth Loli held up a finger. "You have already told me some of what happened in Ireland. I know what you speak of, and I am willing to wait for your calculations and research to be finished. I will admit to being somewhat...enthused at the implications, but I am not going to... What is the human phrase, jog your elbow? I'm not going to jog your elbow overmuch on that score. Simply tell me of Egypt for now."

Nodding Le Fay breezed in, then continued. "The Egyptian Titi, understated things. The magicals have been trying to keep a lid on things for a long while, so maybe she didn't realize. But um, the, the British and ICW are very concerned that the Statute of Secrecy is in danger

thanks to what's happening in Egypt. I have to think given how long it's been going on, they've tried to solve it with their Unspeakables and Aurors and failed. I um... I can tell you about their Unspeakables, the spells they have access to and everything else, but um, I don't know their numbers or what they were actually doing. No one beyond the Unspeakables would be aware of that, I'm afraid."

"And that cover-up is holding?" Cao-Cao asked, frowning in thought. He, much like Vali, was deeply concerned about the agents they had sent into Egypt's disappearing like this. While Cao-Cao disdained Kuroka as a nonhuman, Cao-Cao could not deny that she was an incredibly good agent. He had also chosen of the other agents to be sent in with her carefully, choosing the wizards and magicians to give Kuroka both a wide array of talent as well as magical skill.

Indeed, Cao-Cao had almost sent Hercules in with her but had decided against it. This mission was mostly scouting out what was going on, rather than direct assault. And outside direct assault, Hercules had very little going for him.

"...It's holding for now," Le Fay answered, frowning pensively as she spoke after several seconds of thought. "Of course, from Britain I couldn't tell how well, but I did a brief search on the Internet before we left, and again before my brother and I checked in here, and I couldn't find any stories about magic or anything else like that associated with modern-day Egypt." The Internet by itself wasn't a good source just yet, but it had been all Le Fay had access to so far removed from Egypt itself.

"There's the usual tabloid nonsense, but there always is." Le Fay giggled. "No one with half a brain will believe any of that junk. But um, where there's so much worry, there's got to be a reason."

Both Vali and Cao-Cao breathed size of relief, and the reincarnated Chinese general went on to murmur, "For once, I don't feel any resentment at the ability of the Wizarding World to hide itself."

Vali could only nod in complete agreement. They might not like one another, but they knew that magic coming out in the open would not be good for anyone at this point.

"Why?" Ophis asked, genuinely curious. "Is not bringing magic out into the open one of our primary goals?"

It was indeed something that the Chaos Brigade had been shooting for for a while, as part of the various faction's desires rather than her own. Ophis didn't care about it one way or the other, so long as the Chaos Brigade as a whole continued to work towards bridging the dimensional gap, and becoming strong enough to help her fight against the Great Red whatever else they did was fine by her. "Surely what is going on in Egypt will further that goal and thus be good for us."

“No,” Vali and Cao-Cao spoke as one before glaring at one another. The Cold War between their factions was still going on, and neither of them enjoyed agreeing with one another. Eventually though, Vali nodded his head for the other young man to speak.

“It is, but not in an uncontrolled manner. While that might seem a bit of a misnomer given the Chaos Brigade’s title, it is true,” Cao-Cao answered.

Vali nodding in agreement once more. “Whatever is going on in Egypt, it’s obvious someone else is playing a long game. The last thing we want to see is the creation of another strong enemy one who will no doubt refuse to work with us just like the strong members of the Fallen and the Devils already have,” he added on as an afterthought, knowing what would interest Ophis. Although that certainly wasn’t why he and his counterpart agreed on this point.

For Vali Lucifer, aiming to bring magic out into the open was just a means to an end. He knew that being involved in such an activity would bring the strongest enemies he could wish to him, and that was all he cared about.

Cao-Cao on the other hand, most decidedly wanted magic to come out into the open for his own sake. It was one of the major steps in cleansing earth of all nonhumans. Once the governments of the world became aware that there were communities of vampires, Devils, Fallen and so forth out there, and that they had been preying on their people for years, appropriate steps would be taken. The humans of the world would stop being such complete and utter pushovers for the other powers out there. Werewolf, vampire, monster, fallen or devil, it didn’t matter to him. Earth was for humans, that was all.

And as the most powerful human, which he would be by then thanks to his other plans, Cao-Cao would become the leader of humanity in that war to come. Not the Church, who had been lying to the world for so long. Not anyone connected to any real religion. No, it would be Sacred Gear users like Cao-Cao who the nonmagical governments of the world would trust.

Ophis didn’t care about that, although she could understand Vali’s points. She didn’t really care about magic being out in the open one way or the other unless in so doing, science and magic could be merged to figure out a way into the dimensional gap, she thought of science as entirely useless. Outside helping the humans create new types of food, of course.

Now though, she turned her attention to something else that had been bothering her. “How likely is it that the team we sent to Egypt would turn on us? Would be involved with this power we assume is active there? The Witch, Titi. Looking back on it, I am...uncertain how she was placed in such a position of authority.”

The two young men once more glanced at one another, although this one was more of a speaking glance rather than one of disgust and hate.

This time, it was Vali who spoke up first, shaking his head. “Say what you will about her work ethic, her laziness, and all of her other character faults, but Kuroka won’t turn on the

Chaos Brigade.” *If for no other reason that she’s frightened of what Ophis would do to her and her younger sister if she did*, he mentally added.

“But, I have to admit that perhaps the wizards could be playing their own game. All of the wizards who joined us have their own ax to grind against the Wizarding World, and looking back on it, I too am a little concerned about how much we relied on Titi for our information on what is going on in Egypt. She could have decided to play us, but I don’t think that she could have then dealt with Kuroka in turn. Not without help.”

“If that is the case, could the other wizards be in on it? They have almost as much of a herd mentality as magicians for all that they do not form into guilds,” Arthur interjected, while Le Fay was pouting, looking down at the table in front of them. She liked Kuroka and hoped that nothing bad had happened to her.

Again, an uneasy glance was shared between Vali and Cao-Cao. “That... is a distinct possibility. We sent thirty of our wizards into Egypt with Kuroka and the force of magicians with her. If all of them were part of this possible betrayal, then it stands to reason that the ones left are equally suspect. We’ve been too certain in our own power, in the fact that wizards as combatants are pretty much one-trick ponies when it comes to dealing with anyone from the Three Factions, and forgot the fact that the bastards can be damned slippery.”

“I also have to admit that one of the wizards might well be attempting to, to influence me verbally. Not with magic, but with giving and withholding information,” Cao-Cao added. “His name is Simon Maagh, and now I am wondering if he is playing his own game against me. Nondescript European features, brown hair, deepset brown eyes, heavy tan.”

Le Fay gulped suddenly as a thought occurred to her, linking the idea of a wizard advising Cao-Cao to the disaster with Bikou and what he had told Vali. All of them turned to her. “Um, Vali, do, do you remember what Bikou told you? That you were the one to send him on that mission that wound up running into Harry Potter and his clan?”

“We’ve talked about that while you were gone, girl, don’t bring up the past unless you have something new to add,” Cao-Cao huffed.

“If you would but listen, I believe my sister would help solve your ignorance.” Arthur intoned, softly yet coldly, glaring at Cao-Cao.

“Yes. Be quiet and let Le Fay speak.” Ophis intoned, looking at the girl, letting a faint smile appear on her face. “She almost always has something interesting to say, and your own irritation is clouding your judgment.”

Taking courage in her brother’s words and his hand squeezing her own, Le Fay took a deep breath and began. “There is a, an **extremely** rare talent among wizards that um, that can let someone change their body to take on the image of someone else or even a made-up identity. Entirely. Down to the magical level. A, as in some of them can change their very



magical signature. Er, if that's the case, this Simon person could be the same person who convinced Bikou he, he was Vali. Er, playing you both against one another, and, and undermining the Chaos Brigade."

For a moment everyone was silent, and then Cao-Cao stood up, bowing from the waist to Le Fay in token of apology for his earlier anger. "Forgive me my words, Le Fay. But for now, if you would all excuse me, I have a traitor to annihilate."

"No. Not just him. With Le Fay back among us, and her access to the Wizarding World and the werewolves and vampires who have joined us, we have more than enough access to wizard type spells."

The werewolves were currently away with a few demons, finally winning the war that they had been involved with against a few other local werewolf and vampire clans. They, and the Wizarding World Vampires who had joined them, would then provide Ophis some shock troops when she personally went to start recruiting among the true vampire clans of Romania. Their civil war had recently become more violent, and there was an interesting Sacred Gear in use there she wished to see allied to the Chaos Brigade.

"We have no more need of the wizards. And they have proven themselves untrustworthy. Terminate all the remaining human wizards within this fortress and elsewhere," Ophis ordered, and a cold, uncaring tone, speaking with as little care as a gardener would care about swapping bugs in her garden.

Vali's eyes widened, but after a second, he just nodded his head, while Arthur looked unfazed, just looking on as if it was expected. After all, human leaders had overreacted like that in the past, and brought down far more horror on their followers. But Le Fay was appalled. There were at least two-hundred wizards still, even if you discounted the werewolf pack from the Wizarding World. It had been a very long while since Le Fay had been forced to acknowledge that Ophis was not human despite her chosen appearance. But now Ophis's over the top response and callousness brought it back to her.

Cao-Cao too was horrified. Not because he felt any particular affection towards most of the wizards. Even the traitor, now that it was becoming clear this Simon fellow, if that was his name, had been playing his own game. By this point, Cao-Cao had access to four of the five keys he would need to enter the underground prison, he simply lacked the final key, the key to the cell in Cocytus that contained Samael, the Dragon Eater. But hundreds of magicians and a few Sacred Gear users who looked to him for leadership were on that problem, so he didn't need Simon's advice anymore.

No, most of his anger at Ophis's suggestion came from the simple fact that Ophis was not human, and she was her ordering the murder of humans. *This, this **thing** should not hold our lives in her hands!*

Ophis caught the look of anger on his face, and cocked an eyebrow at him, her eyes drilling into his with all the un-carrying but deadly force of a battleships to her it's slowly locking on. "What do you have a problem, Cao-Cao?"

"...No, Ophis-sama. I am merely still incensed at this betrayal," Cao-Cao replied, while mentally going through what he would need to start enacting his plan before the Faction's peace summit, rather than after. It was time to remove Ophis and Vali both. "I only ask that if any surrender, we take them prisoner. We need to ask questions, after all."

"Acceptable. Do it," Ophis ordered.

Moments later, Cao-Cao brought in Hercules, and with Arthur agreed to help Vali they began to gather two groups of Devils and Fallen. The two teams would then sweep inward from the outer areas of the fortress.

The wizards, like the other groups which had joined the Chaos Brigade, had mostly been broken up and spread around the fortress. This cut down on the various groups forming their own interior sections and to force them to interact with one another. This had led to small brawls and fights breaking out occasionally, but for the most part had kept each group from being too concentrated to cause trouble.

Meanwhile, Ophis threw up a ward around the area that would stop anyone from teleporting in her with the emergency teleportation enchantments that Ophis regularly handed out to their agents. Wards were already in place to block the teleportation skills of the Factions, the teleportation tunnels of the Gremorys and the Apparition of the wizards. Even a portkey would be blocked by the myriad number of wards in the fortress.

With that done, groups of Devils and the two leaders of their disparate factions moved through the base. And whenever they came upon the wizard, they would demand their surrender. Most obeyed. They were then dragged before Ophis. Her questioning mostly left them with their minds broken, and it was almost a courtesy at that point to kill them, but after the three out of the first five wizards professed to being more loyal to their own agendas than to Ophis and her desires, they stopped bothering, and just began killing.

**OOOOOOO**

Simon Maagh felt the wards around the fortress shifting, changing, and then trapping everyone within. *By Bastet's holy nipples, I did not think that Ophis and her advisors would be this quick to act! Whatever they are planning cannot be good for me.*

Looking around his room, Simon bit his lip, thinking hard. Fighting wasn't even a possibility in his mind. Even with the killing curse he could probably take out only a few low-powered Devils and Fallen before he was killed. And if the one coming after him was Vali, Cao-Cao, or the other, more powerful members of the brigade, then he wouldn't be able to do even that. Simon was powerful for a wizard and had more spells under his belt than any other man

living, and hadn't, like the young Nicolas Flamel, spent most of his lifetimes in researching potions alone. But against someone like Ophis, Vali or the rest, he would be next to powerless. *Arthur and Le Fay I might be able to deal with, Hercules for certain, but not that blasted True Longinus or Ophis, not yet.*

With that in mind, escape was the only option. Swiftly, he concentrated, and Simon's features, indeed, his entire body, began to change, shifting from one form to another. The body he shifted into was that of a Devil who he had overheard mention yesterday that he had a job coming up in the Underworld. *This should hopefully get me out of the fortress.*

The shift done, Simon transfigured his clothing to match that of the devil, exiting his room soon after, covered with a Disillusion charm. He moved to join a group of Devils milling about a corridor several turnings away from his room. He stayed with them for a time, watching as Hercules and another group of troops past them.

He hid there for several hours while the purge continued, and then Ophis's voice was heard from all around them. Bereft of even the attempt to sound human in order for the whole fortress to hear, the Infinite Dragon God's voice reverberated in both stone and bone as she intoned, **"The wizards betrayed our cause. They have now been eliminated. Missions will resume soon, but the new wards in place will remain in place in most of the fortress. Only the dimensional portal to the Underworld will be unsealed. That is all."**

Breathing a sigh of relief, Simon stood up from the sitting area he had been sitting in for a bit, joining several more Devils as they left the room. Regardless of whatever was going on, all the Devils in the Chaos Brigade knew that it wouldn't stop them from being punished if they were slow to start their missions now that they could leave.

Unfortunately for Simon's escape attempt, his pursuers knew now about his greatest trick, the Metamorph ability. And Cao-Cao was waiting for him by the dimensional portal along with Le Fay, who seemed to be casting some kind of spell.

Seeing that, Simon internally winced, then shifted away, pushing his way back through several other devils who were scheduled to head to the Underworld. *No way am I going to tempt whatever Le Fay is crafting there. I must wait, and perhaps change forms once more.*

For the rest of the morning and into the afternoon, Simon played a game of cat and mouse with the leaders of the Chaos Brigade. It became clear quickly that despite resuming missions, the upper echelons of the Brigade were still keeping a wary eye on everyone within the fortress. Soon after that, Simon chanced to see Arthur guarding Le Fay as she put up still more enchantments.

Simon was confident of fooling any kind of identification spell that Le Fay could bring to bear from the Devil, wizard and magician school of magic. But combining them with something Ophis had taught her? Or even if Ophis had just loaned out some of her power to the young

Briton through her Blessed tattoos? That was not something he was going to chance. Not unless he could then get away if things didn't work out.

He fell back once more, shifting this way and that through the fortress, until he came upon a small, almost abandoned sitting room. There he moved to the far area away from the four Magicians occupying it, sat down and began to write. *Time for a desperate measure.* Hastily, he wrote out ancient, long-forgotten names made into runes. These were the names of long dead gods. Indeed, many of them had died out before the coming of Yahweh, their worship supplanted by more energetic, fervent believers and their gods.

But they were still Gods, and their true names still had a modicum of power within their former spheres of influence. Power that Simon, schooled in the magic of the ancient wizards of Egypt, could command after a fashion, regardless of their original pantheon.

So long as they were already dead, that is. Simon couldn't call upon Ganesha, say, although that single god, as the remover of obstacles, could have perhaps helped blast his way out from the wards if they had been set up by any lesser being than Ophis or another major deity.

The names he could call upon were so weak now that using any one name would not be able to overcome the brute power that Ophis could use, but combined with his own power and into a single runic working, they might work. *I have come too far to fail now! I will not die here, trapped like a rat in a cage!*

The name of Aker, god of the Horizon, was written out, connected to Qebui, god of the North Wind. Hasamelis, Mesopotamian god of travelers, and Meili, minor Norse deity of the same portfolio underlined these last two names, giving him protection and forming the basis of the teleportation array. It was that last name that gave him hope this would work beyond his own skill with Egyptian-style magic. In the Wizarding world 'Meili' was a single Norse rune, used to defend against or allow Apparition travel in a given area. These were followed by Khonsu, the Traveler, not a god of travel himself, but one who traveled personally.

The names of five dead gods, whose names were now runes themselves, powered by the ancient, ghostly reality of those gods remaining in the world's underlying magical structure coupled to Simon's own magical power, which he was pouring like water into them. And with the name of Hasemelis, he hoped to bypass the wards all around him, to use a different style of teleportation than those already blocked, which would whisk him through the very earth, like so many molecules of sand moving in the greater whole. It was the only way he could escape the trap he found himself in.

*By these names I call upon your shadows, your forms for one last task beyond the grave,* Simon wrote quickly in a mix of runic styles, mostly Aztec and Egyptian surrounding them, with the Egyptian giving the rest form and function. Nearby, he heard voices and people running towards this room. Even the Magicians, most of their magical senses blinded by their

connections to their chosen Devils, were now looking around in confusion as the power of his spell started to form, before being hidden under the etched out name of Hasamelis.

Just as he finished and was about to slam his hand down on the finished rune Cao-Cao appeared in the doorway. The Spear, True Longinus, appeared, rising to point Simon's assumed form. "Die, traitor!"

From the tip of the spear a wide, blast of barely formed magic surged forth. The blast was so wide that it annihilated the far side of the room beyond where Simon had been sitting.

to Cao-Cao, Simon appeared to have been immolated, the blast leaving nothing behind, but where she was standing in the center of her meeting room, Ophis frowned. The wards hadn't fallen, but they had... shimmered. Like a building might if the ground underneath it shifted for some reason. She stood up abruptly, and flew through the tunnels of the brigade's home base to where she felt Cao-Cao had used the True Longinus, something he should never have felt the need for against a mere wizard. *Overkill, or speed, perhaps?*

Staring at the room Cao-Cao had annihilated, she shook her head. "He might have escaped. I do not like this. You will put together a team of investigators and combatants, Cao-Cao. This is your problem. Deal with it."

"I will do my best, Lady Ophis." Cao-Cao growled out, staring at where the man who had been manipulating him so subtly had stood. "If that bastard yet lives, I will hunt him down, I swear it."

**OOOOOOO**

In a certain place in Egypt, there lay a city of ruins, named Amarna. Unlike the more important sites, this place had been left to die, its remnants after the previous inhabitants had deserted the place swept over by wind and sand simply because few knew of it, and fewer still could become interested in it. *I wonder, with all my husband has done to remove all knowledge of his symbol and real abilities from history, how many are there who even know about Amarna now, let alone its creator.*

Yet that was only on the surface. Underneath the earth, there was something else entirely, and it was there where the woman Nefertiti who had just had that odd thought, stood. Indeed, though no one but the man who designed the city and his wife knew it, Amarna had been built to cover the building of this place.

For, built into the very Earth by a legion of Mummies and mortals, was an inverted pyramid to match the Great Pyramid of Giza. It's topmost floor, the largest, started four stories deep into the ground, and every outer stone had been worked to slide into place like the Great Pyramid it so resembled, then further marked by dozens of monstrous runic arrays.

Some were easy enough to understand. Even the most powerful of magics could not discover this place thanks to several of those arrays. Others were protection, and one, a runic array that crossed the line between a Blessing and a wizard-style Enchantment, tied this place into the magical matrix of Egypt.

The interior of the pyramid was separated into levels. On the first floor down from the surface, there were storage areas, a few prison cells, and meeting rooms. On the second, living quarters and the Apparition room, the only room in the whole pyramid where even Nefertiti and her husband could teleport in and out of.

But just because this place was underground did not mean it was lacking in amenities. The level was lit from one end to another in light so that it always seemed to be midday here, there was electricity, running water, baths, wide corridors, rich tapestries lined the walls, and the floor was covered by thick carpet. Mummies waited here and there throughout the area, ready to wait on the master and mistress of the pyramid as they willed. There was even, a recent addition admittedly, a small movie theater. Truly, this level was so sumptuous that it would not have been out of place in a palace.

Below the living quarters were several floors devoted to nothing more than the various monstrous enchantments which all were tied to this one place. The power of several Gods were bound into those massive works, literally. Those enchantments then led down to the tip of the pyramid, where a single, vaulted room dominated the last ten stories of the pyramid, which again was lit like Ra himself had blessed it.

He hadn't, of course. Ra had died out over time, finally slain and supplanted by Yahweh, the god of the Abrahamic religions. Of course, that wasn't until after Nefertiti and her husband had, in various guises, discovered many of his secrets, along with those of the other dead gods of Egypt.

Nefertiti pondered on that and the creation of the city above her as she worked on sending out orders to her and her husband's wizard tools, but a sudden claxon rang pulling her from her thoughts as someone teleported into their secret palace unannounced. Only someone blood bound into the hundreds of wards could do such a thing, and she leaped to her feet, racing out of the communications room to the room they had devised to handle their coming and going. Magic was, after all, the only way you could enter this underground pyramid.

In the receiving room a single rune that was so large it took up half the floor glowed, and on it was the body of her husband, if it could still be called that, and Nefertiti gasped, calling her husband's name in horror. "Akhenaten!"

Akhenaten hadn't been struck directly by the blast of unrelenting energy Cao-Cao's Sacred Gear had released, but the bow wave of it, the heat that the blast had caused had still struck him. His entire body was covered with steam burns, and the front of his body had, for a

large portion of it, been seared to the bone, leaving him more of a skeleton from the front than an actual human.

Akhenaten was still alive, however. Ancient rituals of power and magic had given him a healing rate somewhere below that of a werewolf. Akhenaten also had a few runes etched into his body that kept his heart beating and mind going even when he should have died simply from the pain overloading his system. But that didn't deaden the pain. No ritual could do that without harming the body in other, subtler ways, and against the damage he had just taken, all his healing ability could do was keep him alive. Alive, and in torment.

Her husband's screaming ringing in her ears, Nefertiti cast an immobilizing charm on him, then quickly cast a spell to take away the pain, halting his screaming, before going to work. A spell flashed out to enhance his unnatural healing, and then her hand thrust out to the side, commanding. "Come!"

Two Mummy servants instantly obeyed, moving from the nearby bathhouse to her position.

These were not the simple, cloth-wrapped mummies that most would think. Their bodies, both men, were entirely covered by wrapping, to be sure, but that wrapping was a vari-colored rainbow, covered with different runic arrays and they wore clothing over that. That clothing was of ancient Egypt, and they wore jewelry of that era too. "Get me potions," she ordered as they came close. "I will need several of them, listen well and fetch them quickly."

Mummies were not like Infreri, and they could be given complex orders like this. Both instantly moved to obey, and the first one was back quickly. That potion Nefertiti dumped down his throat, hoping it would aid to replenish Akhenaten's magical core. The next Nefertiti poured over his back, turning him onto his still ruined front with a wince at the pain this would cause Akhenaten. Finally, an ancient potion which would help regrow skin and flesh as the more modern Skele-gro worked on bones was poured out on small towels, then placed here and there on Akhenaten's body.

Eventually, Nefertiti leaned back, certain he would be able to survive given time. His core was badly eroded, but time and rest would do for that. The rest of him was already on the mend, and she breathed a sigh of relief, both for their plan's sake and for the love that, even now, a little over three thousand years since they had first met, she still felt for the man who she had achieved immortality with.

"Stay with him," she ordered the two Mummies. Do not let him stand up. Bring in blankets and a pillow for his head. Make him comfortable. When he awakes, he may still be in pain." *Phantom pain, but it will be real enough to him.* "One of you will give him this potion for it, only two spoons worth." After Nefertiti had pointed at one of the Mummies it turned, moving rapidly off to find a spoon and the other items she had ordered. Once it returned, she continued, staring at its companion. "You will come and get me immediately. Do not enter the

room I will be in at that time but get my attention by knocking on the doorway as loud as you can. Nod to indicate your understanding.”

The two mummies both nodded, one of them then moving to make Akhenaten more comfortable, and Nefertiti sighed, leaning back on her haunches, staring at her husband. “Get well, my husband. We have not come so far, after so many millennia to fail now to enemy action, regardless of who that enemy might be.”

Nefertiti, once Queen of all Egypt beside her husband Akhenaten of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt, the true father of monotheism, took a few deep steadying breaths before she surged to her feet. She still had work to do if their ascension was to be completed.

**OOOOOOO**

Steven Proudfoot was the Chief Auror for Alexandria, which amounted to a hundred policeman. Alexandria was the center of the magical culture in Egypt, and the only one of their population zones which was placed in a non-magical city. Putting the majority of their Aurors near where they would be most needed just made sense.

The man in question explained this, pointing to some of the other cities, telling about how each of them had at one point been home to smaller groups of magicals many who had migrated into Egypt. They were all gone now, moved into Alexandria under the auspices of the British Wizarding Government, or further into Africa.

“And of course, Africa is dominated by tribes, Witch Doctors and Voodoo Priests,” Proudfoot opined, his British accent reminding Harry of Neville Longbottom for a moment, a stark difference from that with which his men spoke outside as they had bowed Harry into the office and begun the business of reading the Shinsengumi in as fellow law officers. His looks too were definitely British. Indeed, he almost reminded Harry of Vernon, but thinner, and his mustache was much better cared for.

Yet for all of that, speaking to the locals as they passed through the Magical Quarter again, Harry couldn’t detect any resentment among the locals. There just weren't enough magicals in Egypt to stand on their own, much like Ireland, although there were more magicals here than in Ireland. “We have around four thousand magicals. Three thousand of them are right here in Alexandria, although a portion of that is because of the recent troubles. I have been reinforced by another fifty British Aurors and two hundred and fifty Aurors from America. They aren’t very powerful, and are a bit too hidebound, but that’s bolstered my ability to respond to these attacks.”

He pulled out a map, which, much like the one Bill had used the day before showed Egypt, both the magical and non-magical areas. But he had more information than Bill did which he was almost too quick to share with Harry and his friends. *I was expecting some resistance but I think my reputation and that little speech I gave to the Wizen Old Folks back*



*in Britain is working for me here. That, and Proudfoot realizes he is getting overwhelmed here even with his recent additions..*

Proudfoot pointed to a few of what Bill had called the small hidden magical communities. Three of the ones Bill had mentioned before were crossed out with large X's. "These three communities migrated into Alexandria in the past two weeks, and we had to set them up in small shanty towns at different points in the city. They were all nearly overrun in before my people could arrive four days back."

"Why different communities? Why not here in the Magical Quarter?" Tonks questioned. "That's kind of confusing."

"We're trying to keep trouble to a minimum. Most of the tribesmen are insanely insular," Proudfoot replied, not seeing the irony in that statement. "That, and two of them have blood feuds going on with the families who already live there. Most of the city-folk are civilized enough to leave that kind of thing in the past, but I can't put it past a few of the desert wizards to push things. We helped them throw up temporary wards, and told them the rules of interacting with the nonmagicals, but then my folk were told to bugger off. They are angry, annoyed and frightened, and in that kind of mentality, I am not willing to take chances."

Harry nodded. "Agreed, and well done. But what are your people facing exactly? Bill tells me that you're facing undead, and perhaps some conjured creatures? And Bill said some wizards seemed to be taking advantage of whatever is going on to cause trouble?"

"Conjured creatures wouldn't be the way I'd describe it." Proudfoot shook his head as if bemoaning an amateur's terminology. "But undead, yes. Mummies of course rather than normal Infreri, although that's only the start."

"How cliché," Padma drawled, but she was frowning down at the map, her head cocked to one side as if she was trying to remember something. Which she was. *Something about where those X's are on the map, and the total map of Egypt. Urgh, that's going to bother me for a bit. Some old map I once saw somewhere? Or something missing?*

"But for a reason," the man replied, chuckling wanly. "The ancient Egyptian wizards were true masters of constructing Mummies, tougher, stronger, faster than Infreri, and smarter too. Able to take complex commands rather than act like simple attack dogs. Still, they aren't a threat unless they can close. What else we're facing is worse. The action to save those communities I told you about? When that was going on, sandstorms, came up out of nowhere to obscure everything. Swarms of scarab beetles, undead animals, lions, tigers, cats of all things, and crocodiles. Lots of crocodiles. I lost eighteen men in those attacks."

His chuckle now gone, Proudfoot pulled out a long handkerchief and wiped at his sweating face before pointing to one area, near where the goblin's territory on the Giza Plateau began. "This was another magical community, but there were no survivors there. It was a small,

extended family affair, fifty people maximum, or thereabouts. We don't exactly have a complete census of course. We heard a report about some kind of magic being exchanged there. But by the time I people arrived, the entire area was just gone. It looked as if the desert had just swallowed the entire oasis."

"I take it you are keeping your losses from the public? We had heard it was bad when I met with the head of the ICW, but not that bad," Harry commiserated.

"We are. We're letting out that there have been a growing number of incidents, and that we've taken losses. But the last thing I can deal with right now is panic among the magical populace."

"Can you tell me what kind of magical residue was there?" Harry asked frowning. Harry estimated that he could probably do something like that, create a giant wind spell maybe, or perhaps a spell to create an earth elemental? The first could be done via European spell work, the second via Japanese, and Harry had power in plenty for that kind of thing.

"That is the other aspect that is bothering us all. The undead, they are clearly a wizard spell, and we can detect the magic on them, see it within their undead bodies after we deal with them. Even the animals, although creating animal undead seemed a bit of a waste at first, before I saw the effects. And Mummies, when all is said and done, are human-sized targets to European style combat, our attack spells are too fast and they are susceptible to fire. But the fog is something else entirely."

Proudfoot puffed himself up a little even as he once more wiped at his sweaty face. "My force is extremely dedicated. We have a good solid mix of Hit Wizards and Aurors. We have our own pureblood movement, our own racist and fascist stuff here in Egypt. That we could deal with." Then he sighed. "But even with our reinforcements we are still being overwhelmed slowly. I've lost people, Lord Potter, and we have barely been able to keep the non-magicals unaware of the existence of magic up to this point." He looked so desperate for good news that Harry was about to tell him his own thoughts on that fog, but Tonks spoke before he could, and she wasn't as interested in helping the man feel better. "Do you have any idea where this began? Generally speaking that's always a good place to start."

The Chief Auror's back stiffened in anger and some humiliation showed on his face as he glared at her. "Do you think if we had any idea where all this is coming from that we wouldn't have already done something about it! I hate tell you this, **miss**, but not everyone waits around for Lord Potter to save them."

Despite the annoyance in the man's tone and the way he gave the word 'miss' a particular twist that implied some suppositions on Harry's and Tonks' relationship that Harry didn't like, the title came through again, as it had earlier. And Harry's glare made the man mumble an apology before going on.

"No, we don't have any idea where it began. We know where the first incidents occurred but that is not the same thing. Because there were nine near-consecutive attacks that night, and ten the next. Four were right here in Alexandria. We were on them all almost immediately, killed the various undead humans and monsters down, altered the locals memories, everything. We thought it was some stupid Blood Purists acting out again."

He sighed. "Two days later, there was a much larger attack in Cairo, and another larger attack in Giza, barely an hour apart. Then several smaller incidents in the Faiyum. Several more incidents out in Port Said, another, larger one the next day in Mansoura. Then a second period of quiet, followed by a few more, and still more. The Valley of the Kings became the first place we lost people. It has kept escalating until there are at least ten medium sized incidents throughout Egypt per day..." Proudfoot shook his head still glaring at Tonks. "Today is the first day where there's only been a single incident reported in months!"

Harry held up a hand, holding the man's diatribe. "Tonks didn't mean any offense. But you should know that we weren't in the information loop on this for very long, and what information the ICW was able to pass on wasn't much beyond the number of incidents and the fact you were indeed being overwhelmed. It was hoped that American aid would help. But you're saying it isn't?"

"We're able to shut the attacks down faster and there have only been a few magical deaths since they arrived barring the evacuation of the oasis communities. But each incident has been bigger since." Proudfoot scowled. "That made me think someone was playing with us, but I recently placed a... a Patil-Granger spell..." he trailed off looking at Padma.

Padma smirked slightly. "You're talking about the Anti-Imperio spell? It's a spell that can be used to check someone for any manner of mental control or spell damage, like from an Obliviate. My wife and I created it a few months back."

"Er, yes," Proudfoot looked uncomfortable, perhaps due to Padma's mention of her relationship with another woman, or perhaps due to not making the connection. "At, any rate, we routinely started using that spell on one another, and everyone in the department must submit to a body exam, to make certain no one is being controlled or, um..."

"Has joined a new Death Eater-esque group. Smart." Harry frowned pensively. "Are these maps auto-updating?"

Proudfoot nodded, indicating they were. "These maps are tied into the same kind of wards that detect magic, and here in Egypt our ancestors also went to the effort of setting up Detect Undead wards across the country."

That somewhat amused Harry, since if the British Ministry had done the same thing in the UK Riddle's attempts to loose Infreri among the nonmagicals would have died before getting off the ground. "Good. In that case, we will need a copy of those maps and the alarm

connected to them, and the stones attuned to them. I don't think I want to spread out the troops I brought with me beyond Alexandria for the moment though, myself, Tonks and a few others can act outside the city limits first."

The map was only a part of how Aurors could discover magic being used where it shouldn't. If they had to respond to such an occurrence, the Aurors could use stones enchanted to connect to the maps in order to home in on the illegal magic. Put in place during the second war with Riddle and combined with brooms and set points throughout the nation for Apparition, it allowed the Aurors to have a very good reaction time. Unfortunately, most ICW nations hadn't yet put that enchantment in place.

Tonks nodded, gesturing to Shen and the office around them indicating she was speaking mostly for the more normal wizards. "I would prefer we stick close to Alexandria until we deal with an attack or two and create an operating procedure."

"Regardless, we will want to be notified instantly of any new attack regardless of where. I don't want to be informed of magic being used in nonmagical portions of the nation nearly a full day after the event again," Harry quipped, his tone sardonic.

Proudfoot flushed at that, but nodded agreement, writing those points down, although he looked a little confused by some of the terminology. That was fair though, Harry reflected. Hit Wizards were the equivalent of SWAT and Aurors were police, plain and simple. Shinsengumi, on the other hand, were both military and police force in one.

"A question, if I may," Shen asked, speaking up now, having been examining the map of Egypt thoughtfully.

"Yes, er, may I know who you are Sir?" Proudfoot asked, politely, but still confused about the group of wizards and witches who had come with Harry to be signed in as Aurors. He had been told to expect Harry and Tonks and the two of them were a somewhat terrifying duo in Auror circles. This young, intense looking gentleman of Oriental origin was not.

"Shen of the Shinsengumi, be known to Mr. Proudfoot. Shen is an equivalent of a Senior Auror in Japan and represents a Chief Inspector I brought along," Harry introduced. "I hope that he and his people can bring a few tricks that might surprise whoever is behind all this, and they are also all trained in forensics."

Proudfoot grunted at that, nodding acknowledgment. He knew of Forensics, but hadn't studied it himself, somewhat disdainful as many magicals were of the nonmagical world. But he was desperate at this point. "Very well, ask your question please."

"Have you reached out or do you have agents among the non-magical police forces? Indeed, how would you rate the police force here in Egypt? In Japan it is customary to have many of what you call squibs in the government and police forces."

“That is the way we do it in Britain, aye. But here in Egypt no. We don’t have any contacts among the police directly. We have ‘informants’ who we can use to pass on information both ways, but obviously they don’t know about us being magical. They think we, my Aurors, are a private security firm protecting a few foreign nationals living incognito here in Alexandria. And as for how I’d rate them, poorly,” Proudfoot finished dryly.

“Expand on ‘poorly’, please.”

“The police are just not very good,” Proudfoot explained. “The best of the lot are the Tourism and Antiquities police, they are relatively honest and hard working, if not very well-trained or led. The municipal police are, well they aren’t quite thugs in uniform, but they are very quick to try to crack down on any civilian unrest quickly. Some might be good at their job, but others most definitely are not. And every police force is more interested in keeping the peace than in solving crimes, especially mysteries.”

He shrugged. “That makes our job a lot easier in many ways, but if you’re asking if they could be a help, the answer is no. The best thing about them is how mobile they are out in the less populated areas. They make use of those ‘cars’ of the nonmagicals very well.”

While Shen nodded thoughtfully at that, Harry spoke up. “Beyond the maps, I think we need to set start setting up some lines of communication. Can all of your people use cell phones? Or has there been evidence that whatever is going on disrupts kind of thing?” Disrupting electricity and other technology was ridiculously easy for magic to do if the devices in question didn’t have proper grounding, even if that wasn’t the goal.

“Yes, it does disrupt muggle communications, which has actually been a help for us in order to keep a lid on things. If the muggles could use that new inter-web thing to send out pictures from those phones of theirs we would never have been able to keep a lid on it as the Unspeakables did in Ireland. We also make extensive use of brooms and can provide you some if needed.”

“That brings to mind another question actually,” Tonks her eyes widening as a thought occurred to her. “The Unspeakables were involved in the Irish issue and tried to exclude everyone else from discovering anything. Why aren’t the hooded cocks not trying that here?”

“We had a team of Unspeakables looking into it at first,” Proudfoot answered, looking pained. “Fifty men strong actually, a large portion of the British ministries entire command, reinforced from by the ICW at Minister Shacklebolt’s request with another seventy pulled from several other nations. They disappeared within a day of their arrival. That was a month ago.”

“What!?” Tonks exclaimed, while Harry also looked appalled.

That had not been in the report he'd had when he talked to the Chief Mugwump, Lyle, in Austria. *Perhaps even Lyle didn't realize how many Unspeakables they had lost? That's disturbing. But also, not my current problem.*

Proudfoot scowled, wiping sweaty hands on his pants one at a time. Talking about this ongoing issue really bothered him. "It was much the same as the incident at the oasis that was wiped out, although I should say that was like the Unspeakables since they were lost first. Anyway, the local Unspeakable leader, a man codenamed Fez..."

"Really?!" Tonks couldn't stop herself from shouting out. "Bloody really? If I was giving out points for imagination, that boy would be in the negatives right now."

"I rather think wherever he is, he wouldn't care about your opinion about his imagination. He waited until the reinforcements from the ICW arrived, letting us deal with some of the issues here in Alexandria and the other cities while he and his concentrated around Giza and the Valley of Kings. Then he led them out to combat a sighting near Giza. None of them ever returned, nor did a follow up team of another thirty, lost near Suez. Since then, the Unspeakables seemed to have either stopped communicating with us at all, or just, just wrote Egypt off."

Harry scowled. *They had just disappeared? Say what you would about them, but the Unspeakables were very good fighters in terms of normal wizards. Any group that could just make them disappear, and keep doing it long enough to somehow force the Unspeakables, with their overpowering Magical Oaths, to stop reinforcing Egypt, would be a definite problem. Chaos Brigade then. That makes me very glad I brought in so many helping hands and have so many more waiting to be called in at need. Still, I would have thought the Unspeakables would have been forced to keep coming until there were none left. Did someone call them off?*

While he thought about that, Tonks began to question to the local Commissioner on this point. Yet once more, they didn't have much to go on. Whatever other magic was involved in this, and Harry was now certain that the Khaos Brigade were involved in this, completely flummoxed the wizards ability to track it after the fact. Although Harry was deeply impressed by the abilities that the locals had of getting on site quickly. Without the use of cell phones and brooms, that would've been impossible. It was another sign that despite itself, the Wizarding World was slowly changing, and Harry was pleased to see it. The fact they still dismissed the nonmagicals though, that was something different entirely.

Shaking that thought off for now, Harry asked if they could be shown the most recent attack site in Alexandria, "I also want to know if you can tell me anything about these columns?" Harry gestured to one side, and an illusion of the column that Kiba and the others had discovered, the one with the sun god Ra's image, appeared there. "A few of my people found them, and we think there's something unusual about them." Harry wasn't willing to share the whole concept of deific magic yet.

Proudfoot started at the casual use of wandless magic, but got over it quickly, staring at the column. "I'm afraid not. I don't know anything about archeology or anything like that."

"You haven't seen one of these around the sites where undead and monsters have appeared? And do you have someone on your payroll who does know about archeology?"

"No." Proudfoot shook his head quickly. "I would have remembered if something like that was seen at any of the attack sites. As for your question, we've got a few dabblers, nothing big. Why would we? Nothing of the ancient Pharaoh wizards survives outside of their tombs. The goblins might know more, but good luck getting anything out of those buggers."

Wincing at Proudfoot's narrow-minded nature, Harry stoop up. "Let us agree to disagree on that point. Now, let's get going. I want to examine at least five, maybe more of these sites today, and then move out of the city tomorrow and examine the site of the wiped out village. Before that though, can we stop at the local bookstore, or magical library? Padma here is a research expert as well as a spell maker and I think that whatever is going on here, at least a portion of it has its roots in the past rather than the present. We need to research into the ancient Pharaohs and specifically any of them who were wizards and might have dabbled more in conjuration rather than tomb-making and curses."

Proudfoot snorted, seeming to dismiss Harry's words, although he was also willing to humor him. "Good luck. The Pharaohs don't seem to have left a lot of records behind outside of their various works. We've all thought it was something like that, but our best historians haven't found anything. We can tell you what each of the ancient Pharaohs did magically and in terms of their tombs, but if you're looking for more than that, you might be out of luck."

"Yes, but have those ancient historians worked in conjunction with the nonmagicals?" Padma asked. Proudfoot's silent stare of incredulity, as if the very idea was silly, was enough of an answer, and she sighed. "I didn't think so. Besides, my partner and I have developed several spells to let us see if anything is hidden under blood or other magical protections. So there might even be more in the official histories than you know."

Curse-breakers, after all, were more interested in breaking curses on the tombs that were still being discovered by the goblins. Any official records might well have been overlooked. Soon Padma entering a local bookstore that constituted the local library too, with Kala, two of the Shinsengumi, and a group of five leprechauns led by the one who had taken offense to Issei's words back in the hotel. How much help the leprechauns would be Harry didn't know, but he hoped at least they would be able to keep Padma safe if trouble came calling.

With Proudfoot in the lead the rest took brooms to one of the places the undead and monsters had been seen. It was a perfectly normal looking residency Street in Alexandria. But Proudfoot had done better than Harry and expected. He had contacted the first man on the scene, a young Auror who had been doing some shopping among the nonmagicals. "I wasn't here the moment it started Sirs, but I was on the scene pretty darn quick after."

“What kind of monsters or whatever were you dealing with here?”

The young man, who was as native-looking as Proudfoot looked British, grimaced. His accent was very slight and even now two days after this particular attack, he was still searching the shadows for enemies. “Undead for certain sir, Mummies of course, but most of them looked like Roman legionnaires sir. I’ve seen pictures of them.”

“Alexandria was conquered by Rome, much like the rest of Egypt so it makes sense there would be dead legionnaires to call up. Unless there was anything unusual about them?” Harry asked.

“They were smarter than undead are supposed to be, even Mummies. They used their shields to try to protect from my spells, and attacked in groups, and worked along with these flying snakes, a lot of them. Both undead and monsters didn’t leave bodies behind when they died, so I thought it might have been some kind of mass conjuration, but couldn’t detect any hint of that spell.”

Harry hummed, and Shen, glancing around, requested, “Walk me through the fight from the beginning to the end if you can. I’ve never fought in a city like this, and I’m having trouble picturing this as anything but, well, a mob rush, really.”

“Ehh, that’s, well, Shen, that’s about what it was. Er, every time.” When Tonks and Shen both looked at him in confusion, the young Auror exchanged a look with Proudfoot, and then said hesitantly. “Er, it’s how many people there are. At night it isn’t bad, but during the day well...” he gestured down at the streets and the dozens of people. “That’s pretty normal for this time of day. I’d read reports and heard stories about fighting in cities before, but they never cover just how many damn people there are here in Alexandria, let alone the other cities.”

“And here in Alexandria we’re a reasonably modern city by muggle standards,” Proudfoot opined. “Wider streets, not as many alley warrens, not as many people crowded in as in Cairo or Giza. Whatever else, the first thing we need to do when we arrive on the scene is to knock the locals out to get them out of the way of spellfire.”

The leprechaun perched on Harry’s shoe shook his head. “Which means the locals be defenseless against the gabeens, ya bastards.” The leprechauns with them had stayed silent during the earlier meeting by the simple move of not being part of it, staying outside and waiting for them to exit the Auror office. Their inclusion here had gained some odd looks, but Harry’s reputation seemed to have kept anyone from commenting.

Letting Shen and Tonks talk to the man, Harry looked around, frowning thoughtfully. There was a tiny residue of deific magic here, not a lot, but a little. There was also, Harry was annoyed to note, no sign of the odd carving of a sun with rays coming out that Harry had hoped to find. *There goes the simplest solution, drat it.*



As the questioning continued, Harry moved around the area, then down to the ground, forcing the others to follow him into the late morning crowd. Moving on the ground floor he still couldn't see anything with his special sight and decided to give this one up as a bad start, turning to Proudfoot and asking how long ago this particular attack had been. "Around three weeks, it was one of the faster ones admittedly, the undead didn't stay around, and the flying snakes were easily dealt with."

"Take me to the worst one in Alexandria," Harry ordered. "And let's walk there if we can. I want to get a better feel for the city as a whole."

Proudfoot nodded, indicating that it wasn't all that far away. Indeed, it was only ten blocks away, down another few streets, past one of the few streets which were made more for vehicles than for foot traffic, and off onto the other side, to what was called the Manshia district. But by the time they reached there, Harry knew the Aurors were right. Harry had fought in London and in a few other cities across the UK and in France before. He had never seen a city before where you would have so much trouble with the people as much as the rest of the environment.

Once at the new scene Harry's frown deepened, because unfortunately there was no sign of deific magic here. "This attack was when, exactly?"

"You said to take you to the worst one. This is the worst because there were actual several deaths among Aurors. Oh, and the nonmagicals. But it happened two months ago at this point."

While Harry was trying to keep himself from tearing Proudfoot a new asshole, Shen coughed, tapping Harry's shoulder. When Harry and Tonks were looking at him, the young Shinsengumi gestured down and to the side of the building they were all standing on at the moment. "Look down there."

Harry did so, and scowled, seeing small picture portraits that had been set out, along with votive candles and other memorabilia marking the passing of family members. "How many nonmagicals died here?"

Proudfoot shrugged, although at least this time, he looked uncomfortable for not being able to answer that question properly. Harry wanted to make him very uncomfortable indeed for not being able to do so, but waited for now, and let Tonks ask the obvious question. "Fine, a simpler question then. What actually happened here?"

"Crocodile men," Proudfoot muttered, shaking his head and a few of the other Aurors he'd brought along also looked grim.

"I was part of the reaction force for this one, but we were late to the scene, there were more than two dozen dead muggles already and we found crocodile men eating their remains. Whatever happens to the monster's bodies after they are dead, they certainly act real while

they are here and killing. On the bright side there was evidence enough for us to be able to use the old exploding gas main cover story.”

“You did make certain that none of the body parts that had been gnawed on could be identified correct?” Shen, keeping his voice level with difficulty. Staring at those little murals and hearing how these people had died was disturbing in the extreme.

The man nodded, and Harry scowled shaking his head. He couldn’t detect any residue of deity magic here, it just been too long ago, but, he was getting an idea at least of number of beasts and types of spells that were best to deal with them. “Take us to the most recent one in Alexandria please.”

This attack was a bare few hours before Harry had initially arrived, and looking around, Harry saw the deity-based magic was much stronger. He was finally able to get at least a bit more information. The spell was definitely some kind of teleportation spell, which began at one end of the street and spread out.

Shen also discovered something here. Using some of his prepared ofuda (talismans), he was able to discover a trace of other magic on a tiny, almost hidden warded zone that the Aurors had missed. “I note, too, that not only was this place hidden, but someone could watch the entire attack from here.”

Staring at the spot, Proudfoot looked appalled. “COCK! This wasn’t the direction we were attacked from.”

“You were attacked here?” Tonks asked, while watching a few of the leprechauns exploring the area. They hadn’t split off from the group nearly as much as the leprechauns had hoped to, the noise of the city and the crowded conditions taking some getting used to.

Proudfoot nodded grimly, gestured to his men. “Young Timothy and I here were attacked from behind upon arrival, and then still more attackers took us from that side over there. We were in a full battle against six attackers. But despite the attacking undead and monsters, we were able to hold them off and call in reinforcements. The new American Aurors took them from behind. Cost us three dead and another two crippled, we had to send them back to the UK at St. Mungos, and we didn’t take a single prisoner, more’s the pity.”

Harry, Tonks and Shen were soon on top the rooftop where the attackers had been, looking around them thoughtfully. Where something became obvious to every experienced fighter there. “They kept their attacks away from the observation area,” Shen murmured. “They, presumably a high ranked officer or whatever, wanted to observe the Aurors in action.”

“Agreed,” Harry growled in annoyance. *Bloody hell, this is getting more serious every time I turn around.* “What spells were you using? And did you have any trouble with the monsters here? They were a mix, correct?”

“Yes. As to the spells we used, we, we used everything we could think of!” Proudfoot grumbled.

“Which means someone was able to sit back in comfort and watch you fight their followers, take a gage of your strengths, your response time, see which monsters worked best, and everything else.” Harry scowled. “On the one hand, that speaks of an intelligent enemy, one who wanted to know why you all could do before committing to more. You have seen more attacks since this one?”

“Since you’ve arrived, only a few smaller but more numerous, and all across Egypt. But we haven’t been attacked since,” Proudfoot answered.

“Maybe they only have so many wizard followers?” Tonks murmured.

“Or maybe they learned about our arrival, and are waiting to attack us directly. Or, try to anyway,” Harry added, though he was starting to get a bit more worried about who could be on the other side of this issue.

*Attacking us would make this far too easy, wouldn't it. I'm painting a picture of the minds behind these attacks, but the goal eludes me. Except for the seemingly normal Chaos Brigade mission of bringing magic out into the open. But it seems... more professional and more of a long term plan than I would have thought they would come up with. Although I am making an assumption there based off of my meeting with Ophis, Cao-Cao's assault on Yasaka, and Vali's personality. Who's to say the Brigade doesn't have a more cerebral leader than a draconic child, a born again humano-racist egotist, and a combat junky?*

“What I have never understood is why we can’t find any trace of the magic used to conjure up the monsters or summon up the undead!” Proudfoot exclaimed, looking incensed that he and his Aurors had been observed like that.

“Hmm... well, there are types of magics that can hide other spells from being discovered. We’re probably dealing with that,” Harry answered, then added, “Riddle had discovered something similar near the end of the war but only a few of his followers could use it, since it’s basically dual enchanting, not just casting but holding one spell in place while you use another one.”

That seemed to mollify Proudfoot and the surrounding Aurors, and Tonks asked, “And what spells did the attackers use?”

“A few of them used Sectumsempra, two used the Killing Curse almost exclusively, and bowel exploding curses. Nearly all of their attacks were curses in fact.”

*Great, dark wizards again,* Harry grumbled, knowing that the killing curse would be a deadly threat to even Kala, Yubelluna and Akeno. Though they were powerful enough to resist most wizard’s spells, attacks on the soul were something different entirely.

Yet Harry had to concede that just examining the places where these attacks occurred wasn't giving him enough information to figure out what kind of Blessed item was being used. At this point he was almost certain that the Chaos Brigade had found an artifact Blessed by the ancient Egyptian gods, possibly their god of death, Osiris, or his predecessor/judge, Anubis.

But there were two problems with that. One, how had they activated it? It could be blood-based, maybe, something given to an ancient family, but that seems awfully convenient. Both for something like that to exist, and to fall into the hands of someone who would use it at this time.

And two, how were they powering the damn thing? *Wizards would be drained by even one deific-type spell.* Further, there was still the sheer number of attacks to consider. Multiple Blessed items that could do the same thing stretched the realm of coincidence even further. *But if they have Ophis backing them directly, but someone else coming up with the plan...*

That was the most worrisome thought, as was the fact that Harry couldn't detect any link between the various attacks. They were completely random, and there was no magic connection between the various sites he could detect. The terrorists showed up, used the magic whatever, then retreated. That meant he couldn't track them. And without a target, there was little he could do. *Unless...*

"Wait here." He ordered peremptorily. "I want to get a bird's eye view of the whole city for a second." Without waiting for a reply or taking out his broom, Harry flew up off of the rooftop and into the air, covering himself with an illusion. He soared ever higher until he was able to take in the whole city, and then he breathed in a sigh of relief as he spotted the River Nile. Which was glowing with the light of a powerful Blessing to his eyes. Far stronger than the Blessing he had seen on the column the other day or the remnants of deific magic he had detected at the various attack sites.

*Ah, a real clue, at last. At least I hope so.*

Returning to the ground, Harry looked at them all. "I want us to head to the Nile now."

Soon enough, through the use of brooms, the Disillusioned group of magicals arrived at a point where the Nile wound its way through the city.

There, Harry asked Proudfoot if there was a place where he could stick his hands into the Nile. There was a major limit to how much he could tell about any kind of deity-based magic that he couldn't interact with, but with the river, Harry was confident. Most of his own powers came from Manannán Mac Lir, the primary ocean and water god of the Tuatha De Denan. If there was a spell on the river, Harry felt that he had a very good chance of disrupting or shattering it if he had to. *Figuring out what it is might be much harder.*

"May I ask why?" Proudfoot questioned.

"I can see there is magic within the Nile River itself." Harry ignored the hisses from the locals, all of them looking appalled at that idea. "I can tell it's ancient, but that's about all. So I want to use a Japanese-style spell to trace magic through an element that I learned. If it works, I'll warn you it might not, I can then use my mind to flow along the magic to its source."

None of them ever heard of such a thing, but it wasn't entirely outside the realm of possibility since Aurors could do something similar with magical signatures so they all nodded and Proudfoot quickly led them down a small flight of stairs to an area right along the river, where small tour boats were moored. There, Harry knelt down while the Aurors covered the group with anti-muggle spells much like they had been in the air, as Harry touched the water. He then closed his eyes, concentrating, pushing out his awareness into the water itself.

Instantly, and it was **instant**, the spell within the river exploded outwards, hurling his mind back into his body, and Harry's body backward. "Yeowtch!"

He barreled into two of the Shinsengumi behind him, taking them off their feet, and Tonks shook her head, torn between laughing at them and worry. "What happened Harry?"

"Er... let's just say that the spell within the water isn't friendly to intrusion."

Shaking his head, Harry gestured Shen over to him. "Shen, split up the leprechauns and your troops. Spread out through the city and see if you all can find some more of those columns I showed Proudfoot earlier. We still have no idea what those are, and I don't like surprises."

Shen nodded, and then detailed two of the leprechauns to stay with Harry. At this point Proudfoot's confusion finally got the better of him, and he couldn't stop himself from asking, "Begging your pardon Lord Potter, but what is going on with the leprechauns?"

"Magical communications. The leprechauns developed an enchantment they can use to communicate with one another. Much better than Floo, not visible like a Patronus, and can't be intercepted like phone calls can."

"Feh, trust the muggles to come up with something that can be caught out of the air," Proudfoot grunted, looking a little bemused at that idea and the idea of leprechauns having developed something like that when wizards hadn't. "I'll assign some of my Aurors to go with your people too if you send them back to the precinct."

Harry nodded at that, then, as Proudfoot turned around and began to issue his own orders, Harry leaned in to whisper in Tonks' ear. "This feels like what we dealt with in Ireland, deific magic gone amok, so I don't know if it's connected to the whole undead rising thing. But if it is, then my meddling in the magic in the river might be recognized by the Chaos Brigade or whoever is behind this. There was some kind of alarm spell there which reacted to me. While I undo that, we might be attacked here, so be ready."

Tonks nodded at that and turned to issue orders to the Aurors, reveling just a bit in the authority being with Harry gave her second hand. "Let's set up a protection detail here people. Harry's going to be vulnerable while he does this."

Proudfoot and his Aurors obeyed with alacrity, although Proudfoot looked a little miffed at being ordered around by a woman so much younger than him. Nonetheless, the Aurors moved around the area, spreading out and keeping their eyes pointed outward while putting down more anti-muggle enchantments. Two even rose into the air, hovering there on their brooms to give the group a bird's eye view. Tonks though simply crouched in place next to Harry as he went to his knees by the Nile once more, looking everywhere at once.

With everyone there ready for trouble, Harry pushed his mind back into the river, and now, ready for the reaction, Harry was able to avoid having his consciousness being thrust back out immediately, trying to delve deeper. But this was not the same thing as feeling out the magic in the Irish Fal stones. There he had both a way in and an innate understanding of what was going on. With Manannán being involved their creation, it gave Harry a certain home field advantage.

Here, while Harry had an in as a water whatever-he-was (even after a conversations with Tiamat on his new power level, Harry refused to think of himself as a god, it just sounded way too egotistical) that was all. The magic within the river actively fought his presence.

Thus, the magic within the Nile was a bit like reading Brail which was trying to prick your fingers. Harry could tell there were sentences and structure, but he couldn't understand what exactly was being said and it was extremely painful. *I also think it was made or cast by someone different than the spells in the stones Kiba and the others found. Regardless this is a good place to start.*

OOOOOO

"Mistress..." a soft, almost pain-filled voice suddenly intruded on Nefertiti's work, causing her to look up from where she had been putting the finishing touches on a new, somewhat more limited runic array.

Her eyes narrowed at the apparition hovering in front of her, a shadow in the light of Nefertiti's research room that was shaped like a man from the waist up, and a hippo from the waist down. But as odd as that might be, what was odder was that the shadow wasn't an actual shadow, or even an image, it was more like a mirage, one that had little color but still, oddly, gave the impression of substance. "Yes, what is it?"

"Mistress, there is a foreign deity of some kind trying to interfere with my control of the Nile. What should I do?"

Nefertiti grit her teeth. *Potter, it has to be. We already knew he had some connection to water. Still, calls him a deity? That is... unusual and worrisome.* “Fight him as best you may without giving your identity away for now. Do you think there is any way he will find the Curse within the Nile?”

At the word curse the shadow-being seemed to flinch, but it answered readily enough. “I do not believe so. Seeing a Curse is impossible. You can deduce its existence from the Curse’s impact, but to detect it when it is inactive is impossible.”

“Good. Deny him all knowledge of more than the surface Blessing that you can. That will do for now,” Nefertiti ordered, turning back to her work, leaving the shade of the ancient god Neter-Hau, former god of the Nile, to fade away, new orders grabbing ahold in his mind.

OOOOOOO

Twenty minutes of flying by broom, Kiba decided as he followed four of the local Aurors down onto an abandoned roof, was more than enough. *Good grief, how do wizards deal with the pain of sitting on a broom for hours on end?*

Issei and Master Husukai, he was annoyed to note, didn’t look at all in pain, nor did Yubelluna. After handing the broom off to one of the Aurors, he sidled up to Issei and whispered, “How are you not in pain? That was just shy of agony.”

“Heh, um... I don’t know if I should say,” Issei answered, looking anywhere but at his sempai.

Kiba stared at him in suddenly narrow-eyed suspicion, but Husukai spoke up before he could demand an answer from Issei. “You must understand, young Kiba, that any police force will act much like a sports team or other kind of organization.”

“I don’t understand,” Kiba began frowning.

“Begorrah he’s saying you were pranked you tall drink of water,” Ysabel answered from Kiba’s shoulder. “Ya jus’ took the first broom offered ya did. Pretty though you be, ya got no clue about the honor of the prank.”

Rolling his eyes at that, Kiba surreptitiously touched his sore rear before looking around them.

“And you say this was the spot where magic was first detected?” Husukai asked politely.

“Yes sir,” the Auror in question almost snapped to attention as he answered. Something about Husukai demanded respect. “Bubblehead charms were used by a small crowd of people and several repair charms to remove the damage caused by the battle. We were able to figure

out the spell by questioning one of the locals, who we already Obliviated. The group in question were fighting a single individual, black-haired, and a woman judging from her screams.”

“Where was your witness, and was he missed or ignored for a reason?” Yubelluna asked, frowning as she looked around the square that in turn spread out around the central, catlike

“He was over here, ma’am,” Another Auror replied, trying hard not to stare at Yubelluna. He, like many of the other Aurors, had yet to get used to the sheer beauty of the women who had shown up at their offices earlier that day with The Man Who Conquered. Even Yubelluna, dressed in her normal conservative skirt and blouse, was extremely attractive.

The here in question turned out to be a open sewer drain in one corner of the square, where the building there had seemingly been enlarged or built over an old open sewer, but not entirely covering it. “He was a drug addict and was laying out here under a pile of ratty clothing. Even we needed to do a Homenum Revelio to find him.”

Husukai had moved to the center of the area, staring at one of the walls where he placed one of his ofuda. The paper instantly glowed red, and he looked around, frowning. “Fire spells were used here as well.” He placed another one near to the statue, but that one glowed white. “Hmm, and another one was used here, not fire this time, but something air-based. Hmm...”

Issei didn’t know why he was here. He didn’t really have much to contribute and couldn’t use the sheer number of detection spells the others had access to. But one thing that Issei did have was an ability to look at things from a slightly different angle than others. “Hey, if something was air based, could it have been some kind of poison cloud?”

“Good observation young man. Did the drunk have anything else to add?”

“He was drug-addled at the time of the battle, so not really. He thought it was a dream, and called the people wearing the bubbles aliens, and the other the goddess Bastet doing battle with them until ‘the goddess was betrayed by her priestess,’ another Auror opined, chuckling. “Honestly, only muggles would think of making a poor witch who had a potion problem into a goddess.”

Ignoring that, Issei looked down at the dog. “Well, get to sniffing or whatever. Let’s see what your nose can tell us.”

As he did so however, Kiba moved to one side, following Yubelluna who had also begun to move to one side of the square, staring at something Kiba couldn’t sense. “What are you seeing?”



“The remains of a bounded field,” Yubelluna answered, scowling. “Kiba, do you know how long does that magical signal remain visible normally? You have more experience with that kind of thing than I do.”

As Riser’s queen, she had only left Hell to go to bars or clubs with him as arm candy, and only rarely had she done anything that would need a bounded field to cover it up. And most of the time bounded fields disappeared like bubbles popping, leaving nothing behind. When they did leave something behind, when the field was extra powerful, a faint shimmer in the air of black and red energy could be seen by those sensitive enough to do it.

“That would depend on the size and power of the field.” Kiba answered instantly. Though he didn’t have as much of a magical sense as the former Queen, he had been inside many bounded fields in his time, some even in the Underworld as he and his master, Souji Okita, fought in the Gremory gardens so they wouldn’t do any permanent damage to them. He looked over at one of the Aurors, the same one, annoyingly who had handed him the broom he’d used to get here. “Excuse me, but do we have a timeframe for when this incident was reported?”

“Near to midnight the night before last.”

“...more than forty-eight hours and you can still sense something, Yubelluna?” Kiba shook his head in some dismay, as well as more than a bit of excitement, one hand twitching as if he was holding a sword hilt. “That is on the level of the bounded field Buchou and the others put up before the battle of Kuoh.”

That caused Husukai and one of his accompanying Shinsengumi to hiss in surprise. That field, after all, had held in a magical battle the size of which Earth had not seen since the days of the Great War of Heaven and Hell.

“Let’s see how wide it is. That at least will tell us how powerful the opposition is,” Yubelluna ordered, taking charge instantly. “Dog, Issei, stay with Husukai whatever you find.” She then whispered, “Faidrin you come with us. The rest of you leprechauns will stay here with Issei.”

Pouting, Ysabel removed herself from Kiba’s shoulder, giving him a kiss on the ear before hopping down to the ground, unseen by the wizards, even Husukai, as they had been since they had left the hotel back in Alexandria. “You be careful, beauty.”

“That’s my line,” Kiba whispered back with a chuckle, wondering how his girlfriend would deal with his pint-sized admirer before following Yubelluna up onto a nearby rooftop. “So, are we now assuming this is Chaos Brigade related?”

“Since no wizard could create a bounded field, we’re dealing either with someone from the damned Brigade, or perhaps rogue devils, working in conjunction with wizards. Whoever this is obviously has their feet in both worlds, or else Lucifer-sama or someone else would know

more about what is going on and we wouldn't need to be here." Yubelluna's answer was tart as she bit her lip staring over the rooftops to the edge of where she could see the red and black wavering line of power. "Let's go."

Husukai had, meanwhile, moved around, placing paper talismans on various areas of the square. They all began to glow dully, and the Aurors all around them stared. "A somewhat new trick my people developed to see if something had been previously enchanted or had runes placed upon it."

One of the Aurors nodded while another one looked around with a grim look on his face. "An ambush, then. Someone prepared this area, then waited for their quarry, this black-haired woman, to move into the area before launching the attack. She fought back but couldn't overcome her attackers."

"I'm a thinkin' it be the end of a chase, the hare chased into a blind, more than an ambush, or am I reading the battle wrong?" Sean muttered.

Nearby, Ysabel found something else, a bit of clothing that had been torn away by nail sticking out from one of the walls. She brought it over to Issei, climbing up to perch on the young man's shoulder. "Look at what I found, ya big streak of perversion Silk, but the design don't be one I would think would be ."

"Silk's expensive, I wouldn't have thought..." Issei's voice trailed off as he looked at the design of a Sakura leaf on a black background. "This, I've seen a design like this on kimonos a lot back home. But what the heck was it doing here?"

Husukai, Issei and their companions continued to look around for a while, until Yubelluna and Kiba returned. By that point, Husukai had explained what a bounded field was, putting it down as a massive group-based enchantment. Going into the whole Factions thing and where the wizards actually placed on the mystical community's power scale wasn't something he wanted to get into. Or indeed, any of them, really.

"So, we know that whatever happened, began in the bounded field. We found the center of it, and thankfully the field wasn't as wide as we had feared," Yubelluna told the others, while Kiba, who Husukai had been informed of his little lie, was talking to the Aurors. "Still, it's obvious one group was attacking another, or maybe even this black-haired woman on her own. Regardless, she was able to escape the bounded field, before she was brought down here."

Issei nodded, looking around thoughtfully as the wizards and Husukai finished taking down their various covering spells and ofuda. "This was... I don't know why, but it feels like this was a vicious fight. I don't know why I want to say that, but I do."

"Yes, whoever was involved was extremely skilled on the one side, and very determined and numerous on the other, if we can judge by the area covered by the bounded field."

"There were definitely undead involved as well," said one of the locals looking up from his homework on a nearby alleyway, where he had been casting the equivalent of forensic spells. "At least two Infreri from what we can tell were over here at one point."

"There are probably a lot more than that within the bounded field then," Yubelluna muttered to Issei who nodded his head. "Still, I think that were done here. Let's head back to Harry and tell him what we found. Hopefully he will have had a better day than we discovered some kind of actionable intelligence. Because from my perspective, nothing here points to what was actually going on, only adding more mystery. "

"There is another player in the game you mean?" Husukai guessed. "One group, perhaps the Chaos Brigade, connected to what else all else is happening here in Egypt, and the woman representing someone else."

"Exactly. And since we still don't know exactly what the scope or the goals of the Chaos Brigade could be here, having another player in the game is making everything even more confusing."

"Yeah, whatever, can we get out of here? I be thinking this whole city is going to fall apart around us," One of the leprechauns, Sean, said, looking around warily, something Kiba and the dog could only nod agreement with as they joined the others. The dog had remained silent for most of the investigation, but more because he didn't know how to report what he was smelling than that he had nothing to contribute. Indeed, while the others were groping in the dark, the dog's nose had been able to tell him almost everything that had happened here.

Ysabel though noticed the dog was looking pensive, it's lips curved into a confused grimace. "What about you, ya big beastie? You got anything more to add to this brock (irish slang for bad) issue?"

The dog barked once, then pawed his nose, and looked superior for a moment. "Yer nose be tellin' you more than our eyes be helping us?" Again the dog barked once, and the others, now turned to him in interest.

"Well, that's um, nice, but none of us can speak dog," Husukai grumbled. The old man was somewhat annoyed that all his and the other wizard's abilities might have been outperformed by a dog's nose, no matter how unique the dog in question was.

"Well then, let's go find a picture book or something," Issei suggested.

Everyone stared at him for a second, then Kiba chuckled, shaking his head. "From the mouths of perverts... Issei is right, let's go find a book store or something. Because whatever happened here last night, I think it was extremely important."

Having told the Aurors they wanted to look around Cairo for a bit, Kiba led his group away from the scene of the battle, after which finding a bookstore was simply a matter of asking enough passerby directions, and of course, handing over backsheesh as they did. The group bought a series of picture books, one on Egyptian history and one on animals and soon, the group had found a rooftop where they could put up a small bounded field, disappearing from the world around them for a time.

“All right, let’s start with the basics,” Kiba said pulling out the book laying out a picture from the history book of a woman in ancient Egyptian clothing. “Was that drug addict’s testimony accurate? Was a single woman the target of the battle last night? As usual, one bark for yes, two for no.”

The dog barked once answer yes, then nosed the picture of the woman on the page.

“Okay.” Kiba was about to go on, when the dog barked again, then peremptorily nosed the image of the cat statue next to the woman on the page. Then the woman again, staring up at them firmly.

“She was a catgirl like Koneko?” Issei asked, getting it faster than the others. “Huh, do they have catgirls in Egypt?”

Dog barked once, then nosed the animal book. Yubelluna slowly flipped the pages until she came to the picture of a crocodile, where the dog barked, then nosed the picture, then moved to the other book, nudging the picture of the woman once more.

“So a crocodile woman?” Kiba guessed.

Now the dog barked twice, then nudged the book again until Kiba flipped the pages a few times until he came upon one showing a man, whereupon the dog barked a single time.

“A crocodile man then. Although how even a dog can tell a crocodile person’s gender is beyond me,” Yubelluna muttered.

Her surprise didn’t end there. Because as she finished speaking, the dog quickly pushed the picture book away, and then came back, nudging the picture of the man several times. Then, to the group’s amusement, it rolled on its back closed its eyes and went limp.

“HAhahahah!” Issei guffawed, “Oh dude! If we were playing charades, this dog would win, hands down! So, we got one crocodile guy, a dozen living humans, men mostly or all. And then undead too. All capturing a catgirl.”

The dog barked twice, then pointed at the picture of the woman again. “A woman was also on the other side of the fight?”

The dog barked once more, his tail wagging. It was evident that he was taking a good deal of enjoyment from all of this, and Kiba had to give it to him. The dog’s nose had already

given them a lot more information on what was going on. "I don't suppose you could tell us about the amount of magical power that was being thrown around, or if the woman on the attacking side was human, Devil or Fallen?"

The dog somehow contrived to look at him pityingly, as if to say, 'how the heck am I supposed to know that?' and Kiba sighed. "Right, I didn't think so." There was also something about the information they had gathered. It was sparking a memory of something, but he couldn't quite bring it to the forefront.

"Let us stick to what we know is possible," Yubelluna jibed, chuckling quietly. "If we find out where to go if we go around the outer edge of the bounded field, we might be able to find some kind of scent that you could track, correct?"

Dog shrugged, barked once, waited, then barked twice again.

"I think that's his way of saying maybe yes, maybe no," Issei said with a laugh.

"Yes, thank you Issei, I understood. We'll go slowly, asking the locals questions at the same time."

Unfortunately, their attempt to find a trail had failed miserably. The woman seemed to have covered her scent prior to the battle. And despite using upwards of three hundred pounds worth in baksheesh, their attempts to ask questions from the locals proved useless. The locals were somewhat surlier than in Alexandria, but they were willing to answer questions. But no one had seen a foreign, black-haired woman moving around at night.

Several even admitted to Kiba that such a woman being in their neighborhood at night would have been a bad idea. In the words of one man, "During the day it is fine, calm, good. At night, no, no, no. I would not let my own wife out."

On top of that, only a few locals even knew what a kimono was, and none would have recognized it, although many thought the Sakura on black pattern was pretty. That pattern continued to niggle at Kiba's mind for some reason, but he still couldn't bring it to the forefront of his mind.

It was evident that either the druggie's testimony was not up to snuff, or the woman had been travelling under a disguise which had fallen away during the battle within the bounded field. Indeed, the only black thing that anyone had seen last night had been a black cat. A young boy had spotted it and thought about catching it for dinner.

That, while disgusting, was no lead at all, although Kiba's mind didn't let it go for a few minutes, as if it was much more important than it seemed to be on the surface. However, as they began to move further out to the outskirts of Cairo in order to find a place to cover themselves with illusions and then take to the air, Kiba paused, kneeling down as if he was tying his shoes. This caused Issei to nearly run into him, with Yubelluna and Husukai looking at Kiba in

confusion while the dog wound its way around them all, staring around, its lips peeling back from its teeth.

“Don’t look around, but we seem to have picked up a tail.” he whispered.

Frowning, Husukai nodded as if Kiba had just said something serious, his eyes narrowing as his hands shifted into the pockets of his robe. Issei just looked bewildered, while Yubelluna turned her head up to the distant sun, taking in the warren of houses and alleys all around them. “Don’t tell me it’s some local gang? That would be so cliché, and so annoying to deal with without piling up the bodies accidentally.”

“I don’t think it’s a local group, They are on the rooftops too. Most humans don’t like to be gallivantin’ up that high, do they?” Ysabel retorted. “I just saw two of them duck out of sight.”

Suddenly, a man moved around the corner ahead of them, and paused several yards away from them, precisely too far for Kiba to close the distance swiftly and it was with a start that Kiba realized that he was the only person in sight. There was no one else around, which in Cairo should have been an impossibility. *Crud, when was the last time we saw someone? I know we were looking for a deserted area to start using magic, but I didn’t expect this.* it wasn’t a bounded field either. It was just a very carefully well-organized ambush in an area where they had been led into.

The man in front of them wore black clothing lined with gold here and there and wielded a dagger in one hand. Kiba recognized it as a jambiya, a traditional Arabic dagger, its short, curved blade and heavy, thick hilt and wide pommel was distinctive. At his side he wore a holstered pistol, and on the hilt of it was a tiny carved symbol of some kind.

This, Kiba realized instantly, was a Aza’imi. They were the Muslim equivalent of exorcists. Originally, Islam didn’t have any groups dedicated to physically fighting Devils or Fallen, instead they had healers who specialized in ridding people of the influence of Jinns, the Arabic term for devils. But they had developed the Aza’imi sometime during the Muslim expansion. They were known to be extremely numerous, but not as well-trained individually as Exorcists, and they rarely had any Sacred Gear users.

Of the Abrahamic religions, the followers of Muhammad had still not reconciled the powers Sacred Gear users gave those they were born bound to. They didn’t do anything with them, but very much preferred to send such to the Church, where the individuals invariably converted.

When the Aza’imi spoke, his voice was harsh, matching the glare coming from under his hood. “What are Devils and their allies doing here in Egypt? Are you behind the rising of the dishonored dead? If so we, the warriors of Allah will cut you down where you stand!”

Kiba frowned, holding up his hands. "We're not here to fight, sir. Indeed, we might be here for the same reason you are."

"**NO!** this is our land! This problem comes from you and yours, even if I take you at your word like a fool and you yourself are not directly involved. No, you will leave Egypt now, or die where you stand, my brethren have suffered too many losses to take chances." the man ordered. As he spoke, his dagger began to glow with Holy magic, and a faint glow began in the tip of the pistol as he laid his hand on it. "Unless you truly think you can deal with all of us!"

While Husukai raised an eyebrow at the hubris of this statement, other men began to appear on the rooftops around them, and two more men appeared behind their group. *Hmm, a well-prepared ambush, but rather contradictory. They want us to leave, but they are not letting us walk away. They wished to kill us already, something I rather don't like. They didn't even bother to make certain all of us were devils after all.*

Kiba and Yubelluna stayed silent however, watching as the leprechauns, who had hopped off their shoulders or shoes at the first sign of trouble, appeared now, hiding under the illusion of dead birds on a few windowsills above them. Husukai saw them too, and smiled. *A hidden dagger always strikes the deepest.*

Not having noticed that their allies were prepared for a fight, Issei held up his hands, moving forward around Kiba, who partly blocked the alleyway. "Now wait a minute, Kiba's right, we're not here to fight, or er, make contracts or even stick around. Surely the whole dishonored dead rising thing is too important for you to waste time on us?"

"Enough talk!" a Light bullet whizzed by Issei's head, striking the wall behind him.

Issei reacted promptly by ducking and thrusting his hands out in front of him, a spell flashing towards the man as the others scattered, with Husukai disappearing somehow leaving an Oni in his place which instantly roared and advanced towards the two Aza'imi behind them. Kiba and Yubelluna erected Protego shields, which worked just as well against Light-based spells as any other magical assault short of the Killing Curse, while above them the leprechauns moved into action. There being too many of the attackers to deal with one on one, they started to suture their shoes to the rooftops, their magical needles treating the concrete of the buildings as if it too was made of cloth for just a moment.

At the same time, Issei's spell flashed forward in a wave, too wide for the man ahead of them to dodge despite a roll to the side that should have put him behind cover. Thankfully for everyone involved, it was one of his own, personal spell, the Aza'imi, which destroyed the man's clothing. It also shattered the man's weapons, leaving him gaping, naked and completely defenseless in the face of the charging dog.

"I say again, we didn't come to fight," Kiba shouted, now holding one of his many demonic blades as his shield shimmered from the few shots still coming their way. "But we will defend ourselves."

From behind the now nearly naked man, another group of exorcists charged around the corner and the battle would have escalated at that point if not for the fact that one of them was a very familiar young brown-haired girl. "Issei!? What are you doing here!?"

Irina put her blade away, Excalibur Mimic clicking into place as an armband around her upper arm. Then she raced forward, ignoring the whispered questions from the local exorcists and the dog who had halted his charge, moving around it to pull Issei into a hug. Issei returned it, trying desperately to stop himself from rubbing his head into her breasts, as Irina began to speak. "Oh this is fantastic, it's almost like Our Lord brought us together here!"

Xenovia rounded the other corner, staring at the Oni who was still attacking the two exorcists at the back of the ambush, then around it at the familiar faces of the Devils she and Irina had met in Kuoh. "Er, I don't suppose you can call him off, can you?"

"Easily."

One of the exorcists with her let out a shriek of shock as the air shimmered above them and Husukai appeared from behind a small illusion spell on a fire escape, although how he got up there was still a minor mystery. A ofuda flew down, impacting the Oni's forehead, and he instantly disappeared, the bit of paper then returning to the old man's hand.

"Hello Master Husukai," Xenovia said, bowing to him as the exorcists, those who could still move, began to relax slightly. Xenovia had met him during the battle against Kokabiel's legion, and although he was a magic user and therefore anathema to God, she had come to respect his abilities. And that was the least of the ways her world view had broadened since that battle. "I am sorry to come off as rude, but can I ask why you are here?"

"That is indeed an important question," said a voice from on high. A second later a young blonde man with a kindly face and wearing the robes of the church's exorcists with a bit of additional markings denoting his rank appeared there. "As quick on the draw as our fellows are, this is indeed a country dedicated to God, regardless of the religion in question. So seeing a group of devils and a magician of some kind here is a bit strange."

Kiba turned in that direction and was about to speak but paused as he heard Yubelluna hiss beside him, while she backed up fearfully. Before this, she had looked on the exorcists disdainful annoyance at first, then amusement when the two Excalibur users showed up. but now she looked truly worried, maybe even frightened. "What's the matter?" Kiba whispered.

"Aye, you look like you saw a ghost. Mayhap your own," Ysabel said, perched on his shoulder once more, having crossed the intervening distance from the roof to his position in a few eyeblinks. The rest of her squad was still among them, glowering at the trapped exorcists.

"Don't tell me you don't recognize him?" the former queen of Riser Phenex gasped, while the dog moved to her side, not taking his eyes off the newcomer.

"Should I?"



“That is Dulio Gesualdo, the owner of the second most powerful Sacred Gear to exist, Tempest Zenith! He is one of the strongest three exorcists in the world. Lord Phenex told us about them all at one point, and warned Riser and his other children to stay away from them.”

“I am indeed, although, caring about all that jazz is a little too much like work,” Dulio grumbled, hopping down from the rooftop to land beside them all smiling politely. “Hmm, so we have two devils, a elderly Japanese man who is probably a Onmyouji, a dog, and a... heretic? Your pardon, Miss, but I’m not certain what you are,” he added, looking at Yubelluna. “And of course you have a few abhorrent creatures too. Although they are much cuter in person than they are in the holy Bible.”

“Why are we not slaughtering them!?” shouted the naked exorcist.

This of course caused the others to look in his direction, and many of the exorcists who still had clothing began to snicker while Xenovia huffed and looked away. “By all that is holy, cover your shame, man!”

Still standing next to Issei, Irina simply giggled, looking away with a blush. Although Irina also looked shyly at her childhood friend, as if perhaps wishing that Issei too had been stripped, before shaking her head and making the figure of the cross, muttering something under her breath.

“Oy, who are you calling a creature, ey!? I’m a thinking, feeling intelligent bein’ not some kind of animal or monster,” Ysabel huffed. “I’d put my hand up for being a heathen, maybe, at least when it comes ta your blinkered, stupid, hypocritical faith, but that’s it.”

Many of the Aza’imi stiffened angrily, but Dulio simply laughed, shaking his head. “Well, that’s true enough, and I beg your pardon, tiny miss.”

“Feh, I’ll give it ta you ‘cause you’re pretty. That cannae be said o’ your fellows though.”

Dulio laughed again, and Yubelluna allowed herself a brief moment of relief. *It looks as if the reports on Gesualdo’s being friendly and lazy is right on target.*

‘Well, I won’t be drawn on that score. But if your could please answer my question? What exactly are you all doing here?’

“We’re looking into the issues here in Egypt. Given Harry Potter’s unique abilities and presence in the Wizarding World, it was thought that we could bridge the gap between the factions the non-magical world and the wizards,” Kiba answered.

Dulio nodded at that. “Harry Potter, the one who led the battle against the Fallen legion led by Kokabiel the Crazy?”

That won some looks of surprise, and many of the locals who still held weapons lowered them, staring at the Devils in interest and grudging respect. Evidently, they had heard about the battle, and were impressed at least.

“That is correct, although I believe that Buchou and Kaichou would both take umbrage at the idea that Harry alone led that battle. But he did kill Kokabiel in single combat, so I suppose that is fair enough,” Kiba answered judiciously.

“We’re here investigating the same thing I think. We only became aware of it recently, when the wizards were too slow to respond to a group of undead attacking in Nasr City. But do you have any idea yet what’s going on?” Irina asked. “We’ve been here for weeks and we aren’t any closer to finding a solution.”

“If you did, would you tell us,” Yubelluna rejoined.

But Irina simply nodded her head firmly. “Yes. I believe I would. While many of you are still Devils, and thus supposed to be unredeemable in the eyes of our Lord, I believe that you are good people, and will eventually be able to turn away from your base Sins if allowed the time to pursue the right path.”

Kiba looked at them both thoughtfully, one eyebrow rising. Irina caught it, and shrugged her shoulders as if to acknowledge his unasked question.

Since they had left Kuoh, she and Xenovia had returned the Church, and had even renewed their faith in God, despite knowing that God was dead. As Asia had said, just because God was gone for now, did not mean that his message was any less powerful. Their lives in the Church, had changed since they returned, of course. No longer were they as welcome among their fellows as they were, and the Church’s College of Cardinals preferred to have the two of them in the field away from the holy city and anyone they might have told about the truth of God having been dead since the end of the Great War.

But both exorcists persevered, unwilling to bend on the truth, and unwilling to leave their faith behind. Instead, they led by example, and in the months since the battle against Kokabiel had become two of the most effective, well-known exorcists in the Church.

“Okay, so should we work together then?” Issei asked putting an arm around Irina’s shoulders. *That way I’ll be able to spend more time with Irina’s oppai in view. Heck, even Xenovia has a heck of a body.*

The locals all stiffened, as did Xenovia, although Dulio looked as if he was actually considering it, while Irina nodded her head rapidly, eager to work alongside Issei. “Yes! That must be why we were all brought together today!”

However, even though he was the leader of this combined group of troubleshooters – the Egyptian Mullahs had called in aid from the Church - that didn’t mean that he had unilateral control, especially given the Aza’imi had lost nearly their entire Egyptian branch in the past two

days fighting a band of Magicians. If he decided to do something and the locals disagreed, then any attempts to work together would possibly become impossible. To Dulio's mind, keeping the peace among the followers of the one true God was the best idea.

"I don't think so. Perhaps eventually, if we get desperate enough, we might wish to get in touch with you. But for now, I don't think the gain would offset the risk. Unless you wish to share what you have discovered here?"

"Well, it was worth a try. And I will be willing to tell you what we found out here in Cairo so far, so long as you all agree not to fight us, either?"

"Ah, well, why we can't help you with, but I can tell you what happened at least. Indeed, maybe you might know more about the why than we do."

Alas, it turned out that the Aza'imi and their allied exorcists didn't have any idea. What they did have was access to the local computer network, which Kiba and the others did not. By the end of the day they knew that not one, but sixty men and women had disappeared from hotels in Cairo that night. Alas, that told the exorcists nothing more than they had disappeared. Because none of those people had identities before showing up here in Cairo. This left them none the wiser, although they were on guard for more incidents in the following days.

But for the devils, the whole trip was, while not completely pointless, inconclusive. This didn't stop Issei from grinning almost obnoxiously as they all took to the air once more, with Husukai flying on an enlarged book of some kind rather than a broom.

"Alright why are you grinning? This trip hasn't been all that useful," Yubelluna growled out. "Hell' I'd say it's been more irritating than anything else. We're left with more questions, not less."

"Heh, I, er, told Irina I broke up with Ruruko. She hugged me and um, mentioned how maybe she wasn't the one for me, then kissed me on the cheek! While hugging me! Her oppai man, they were amazing to feel pressed against my chest!"

"Ah, yes, because that is the most important thing," Kiba drawled, shaking his head.

"To me it is!" Issei retorted, before almost falling out of the air as he followed the others back to Alexandria.

**OOOOOO**

Back in Alexandria in the sole bookstore in the magical quarter, Padma frowned, tapping her pencil against a page of one of the books that she had discovered. One of only two books that talked about the pharaohs, and which didn't concentrate entirely on the tombs or the fact the Pharaohs were such amazing necromancers. "The problem," she mused aloud, "is we seem to be dealing with several... maybe call them social fluxes here."

Kala looked up from where she had been reading the other book they had found, frowning as she wrote down some notes. From where she was sitting, Padma could see that it said something about runes inside Hieroglyphs. The note finished by noting 'Solid for non-magical, outline for magic?' It was a good find, Padma thought as the other woman spoke, but not in terms of finding their enemies. "What do you mean?"

"Egypt's been occupied by foreign powers several times. When Britain conquered Egypt, magical Britain took over magical Egypt, and that was the case when the Roman legions conquered Egypt before that. Britain's takeover of the country wasn't nearly as violent as the Roman's, but both times, according to the histories here, there seems to have been a kind of social whitewashing, getting rid of the old ways of magic, enforced by the new overseers, Roman or British."

"Conquerors. You're Indian, girl, call them what they were," Kala taunted lightly, shaking her head at the younger girl.

"I don't know if conquer is the right word actually, at least not for the British Magicals here in Egypt. And while nonmagical Britain might have conquered India, the same cannot be said for the magical side. Heck, we never even came to blows," Padma huffed. "Like I said, it wasn't a violent overthrow or take over. There just weren't enough magicals in Egypt at the time to make that really viable, but the same ousting of the local magic occurred, if not to the extent as before."

"At the time?" Kalawarner repeated.

"Yes. The history I'm seeing makes it clear that Egypt was actually one of the greatest centers of magical achievement, but it started to die off in intervals. First during the Bronze Age Collapse, and then later when it was conquered by the Achaemenid Empire and then Alexander, and then Rome. Each time, more of the original understanding of the local magic would be lost, and the total number of magicals shrank." Padma scowled. "So the further back I look, the sketchier our history becomes. That's made worse by an area of time where there is literally **nothing** written about the history of the Magical side of Egypt."

Understanding it's significance, Kala asked, "When did that happen? I might know more."

Padma looked at her quizzically, and Kala snorted. "I was part of the Fallen for centuries Padma, and there were more than one of us interested in the world around us and the normal humans that populated it. The first time I was in Egypt was about a hundred years after my Fall, I think, and at least your nonmagical counterparts were still dealing with the whole monotheism vs pantheon concept. I don't remember running into any magicals though. When did you lot pull back behind those monster wards of yours?"

"The Wizarding World officially came into being in 1962. But that is really the official end of that process, which began during what the muggles call the Thirty Years War. By the end of 1962, nearly all of the magical beasts, settlements, animals, and witches and wizards were

hidden behind what Wizarding World wards,” Padma answered by rote, then shook her head. “That’s the official history. The ICW likes to downplay things, but it actually took a **lot** longer than that, and in places like Egypt, it took even longer to make a solid break.” The Indian woman snorted. “Nor, obviously, did it catch all the ‘magical species’, as evinced by your own Faction as well as the others.”

Padma stared down at her book, then her notes before going on. “But anyway, the time I am talking about is a bit before that, in the 1500s. There is a gap of eighty years where there is nothing here about the history of Egypt.”

Kala frowned at that. “That coincides with the Ottoman takeover, right? But the Ottomans never really could fully control Egypt thanks to the power of the Mamluks in their society, even if their military power had been beaten. That’s about all I know. I think I may have been in Castille at the time, working to foment issues between the Muslims and the Christians who had reclaimed the peninsula from their conquerors. Looking back on it I’m not proud of what we were doing, but you could say that was one of the Fallen’s finest disunity campaigns, as it were.”

“While fascinating, and I mean that earnestly, it would be interesting to put together a real, and complete history of the world, that doesn’t help me right now. Still...” Padma shrugged. “Whatever happened in that time is not what we are looking for, so we can set that mystery aside. I am almost certain that what we are looking for is way older, dealing with the Pharaohs. Are you getting anywhere?”

“A bit. There is more known about what the Pharaohs were supposed to be able to do more than anything else, so I’m starting from there. But I’m not getting anywhere fast, unfortunately. And, well, I don’t know much about your Aurors, but if they are as professional as the Shinsengumi, researching here is not going to let us come up with any major revelations.”

So saying, Kala gestured around them to the two men who Harry had assigned to them, trying to ignore the fact that several of the leprechauns were currently hidden under their conjured table, reading from a nonmagical magazine they had gotten their hands while Harry had led through group to the magical quarter. It was a fashion magazine, the kind of thing that Lavender and Parvati enjoyed, but both men and women among the leprechauns seemed very interested and had actually cut out some of the images within the magazine, holding them up to one another and talking in quiet but excited voices.

The two Japanese men were not helpful as neither of them had experience with research on this level, although Padma was appreciative of having two life-size gofers, especially when they could glare the owner of the bookshelf into submission. If they hadn’t she’d have possibly been forced to buy the books she was currently reading. Which would have been a waste of money, she grumbled to herself. “Why do wizards suck so badly when it comes to accurate historical information?” Padma said aloud.

“I don’t know, but that is what I’m talking about. We’ve got a good idea of the possible abilities attributed to the Pharaohs, what we need now is more details, possible legends and other information about them. Something that could be directly or indirectly connected to the creation of monsters, undead and so forth, not just the creation or protection from them. For that, we might have better luck looking into the legends that the nonmagicals have been able to discover.”

Twenty minutes later, the two researchers agreed that they had discovered as much as they would on the nonmagical side of things. They had, though, come up with a few nuggets of information. The most important of which was that the Pharaohs seem to have gone through a period of time where they lost control of their undead fellows throughout Egypt. Indeed, though the entire episode was spoken of in extremely vague terms, those terms still gave the impression of a Mummy apocalypse to Kala. How this problem was solved was not mentioned directly, but this had led to a halt on tomb creation until the problem was solved and a culling of the previously honored dead in the tombs. Kala had also discovered several instances of Egyptian runes, which might prove important later on.

At the same time, Padma had discovered several instances discussing enchanted items that the Pharaohs were supposed to have used. Royal regalia with real powers to them. But since those items were supposed to have been blessed by the gods, Ra and Osiris in particular, wizard historians since the first fall of the Pharaohs had downplayed their abilities so much that Padma couldn’t discover any information on them.

With that in hand, the two checked in with Akeno and Harry via the Leprechaun’s enchanted buttons, telling him they were going to move on to the Alexandrian library. Harry didn’t answer, but Akeno did. “Whatever you find there, plan to meet us for a drink at a local caravanserai.” The girl whose curves made Padma envious answered, “Tonks called in a moment ago, and Harry is checking out the Nile River at present.”

Padma nodded, then asked if Akeno had heard back from Hermione yet.

“We have, Hermione contacted us to say she and Tiamat have found something, but they don’t think it’s related to the current issues. After terrifying the goblins there, Tiamat discovered what she thinks is a deific-based spell of protection on the Great Pyramid and the rest of the complex around it. It’s not perfect, but it protects largely against weather and natural things. Hermione, on the other hand, does seem to have found some historical account, basically written in graffiti and hidden under a ward. The ward might mean it’s something important, but translating it is going to take some time,” Akeno answered.

Reflecting that regardless of what she had found Hermione was going to be incredibly jealous when she heard that Padma had been the first to explore the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Padma signed off, and got the others moving. As they left, the two Shinsengumi began to act as if they were a protection detail, one going ahead of the rest of the group, the others following

her. All four of them had Leprechauns perched on their shoulder of each with Padma having an additional one on hers.

Moments later, after purchasing one of the books they had been reading and ignoring the glares of the store owner, the lead Shinsengumi opened the door, and headed out into the street. But he only got a single pace from the doorway before his eyes widened and his hands moved, one hand thrusting backward into Padma's chest, hurling her back as the other grabbed at his waist. "Back!"

An instant later he tossed an ofuda into the air, while grabbing out two more. The talisman in the air shimmered, creating a shield of foot-wide water encompassing him and the doorway from all sides. Rings on his hands began to glow with magical energy, as a cutting spell crashed into the shield, dissipating harmlessly.

But as Padma recovered from the blow to her chest and got out of the way of Kala and the other Shinsengumi, more spells crashed down on the shield from the other side of the street and the sides. Soon the water of the shield completely dissipated into steam, forcing the Shinsengumi to use his first spell to defend himself once more. A Protego he had learned from Tonks sprang up all around him, protecting the man even as he grimaced in anger.

The spellfire was keeping him in place, blocking the group in the doorway so they couldn't get out. And there weren't any windows to the bookstore, giving the attackers a tremendous advantage. Or it would have, if not for their pint-sized companions.

"Give us some cover!" One of the leprechauns growled out. "We'll get in among the bastards toot sweet once we get past your boyo's shield!" A Protego wasn't the best at stopping physical impacts, but it would certainly stop someone from just walking through it. And thanks to the number of fire spells crashing into it, creating a halo of bright light the leprechauns couldn't see past it at the moment.

Her hand thrusting out with another Protego to guard the Shinsengumi and the front of the shop, Kala nodded and looked over at Padma. "Conjure some small animals or something, we need to..."

She paused, seeing Padma's wide eyes and stunned face. The Indian woman was even hyperventilating a little, staring out at the amount of spellfire coming down on the Shinsengumi still stuck out in the open, and then at the shield in front of them that Kala had just thrown up, which was flickering dangerously. "I, I"

"Allow me," the other Shinsengumi said hurling two of his own talisman into the air. He then moved his hands through the air for a few seconds, the paper glowed and a second later, two large Oni appeared outside to either side of the doorway.

A second later, Kala's shield went down, and the Shinsengumi outside was ready, covering himself with another, earth-based defense, a wall appearing in front of him. He still

blocked the doorway a bit, but the Oni were outside on either side of him already, and began to more, charging towards the attackers, two of whom were on the ground. Four others were situated on a rooftop across the street from the bookstore.

Oni had nearly the same magical resistance of full-grown giants, which the attackers now learned as the two on the ground turned their attention on the giant, red-skinned creatures. Several dozen spells lashed into them, causing only minor wounds. The attackers on the rooftops also turned their attention on the two Oni, Killing Curses flashing out.

But even as the Oni fell lifeless, the defender's wall came down and Kala was out of the doorway, her wings flaring out, shouting orders to the Shinsengumi still within the bookstore with Padma. "Hiro, stay with Padma!"

By the time she was flapping into the air, the leprechauns were already gone. They had raced out even faster than Kala, using their unique teleportation to cross the intervening distance, looking for all the world like rabbits for the few seconds they were visible between teleports.

But the attackers had now completely switched to using Avada Kedavra. The Shinsengumi defender was once more forced to hide behind a stone and earth shield, while his fellow tried to fire over his head at the ones on the roof and Kala desperately dodged through the green darts coming at her. Even as strong as she was now, Kala knew that her magical resistance might not be up to stopping a spell that attacked her very soul, the same spell that was the greatest danger wizards could pose to those of the Three Factions.

However, the attackers had taken too much time. Even as the local wizards and witches had retreated into their houses at the first sign of the attack, the call had gone out. Now Aurors began to appear, and all the Aurors had already been told about Harry and his companions. Now they quickly began to attack the terrorists, lashing out with Stupefy spells and forcing the attackers to concentrate on both attack and defense. This cost the lives of two of the Aurors thanks to the terrorists using the Killing Curse, and the others retreated.

But the damage had been done. Kalawarner was a veteran of dozens of battlefields, and instantly took advantage of this distraction. She came back down out of the air, a massive Light Spear in her hand, and hurled it at the rooftop. No Protego a normal wizard could contrive was going to stop that, and after blasting through a magical shield without even slowing down, the Light Spear sliced all four of the attackers on the rooftop in twain.

Down below, the two terrorists had been able to drive back the Aurors, but then the leprechauns swarmed them. The two attackers found themselves bound from their feet up to their necks falling on their backs. The next instant, a leprechaun was standing on one of their faces, tapping a hammer meaningfully against the man's forehead. "Our hammers have felled giants me lad, now what do you think they'd be doin' to your little pasty faces?"



The speaker, whose name was Robbet, was shocked however, when the wizard glared at him, and shouted out, "For our Dark Lord!" before biting down on something in his mouth. A second later he started to convulse, his eyes rolling back in his skull as green froth dribbled from his mouth.

Instantly realizing what was happening, Robbet turned and shouted, "Knock him out! These asses've got some kind of poison pill!"

But they weren't fast enough. The other one had already taken it by the time Robbet was shouting, and now the five leprechauns stared down at the corpses, before hopping off and shaking their heads as they moved into the shadow of a building, where Kala joined them. "Fanatics! Never a good sign, that is."

"Maybe not," Kala replied, before looking at her wings in some bemused confusion. Her wings were no longer the black they had once been these days, but that wasn't something Kala could look into right now, "Or maybe it means we're on to something if they tried to attack us so brazenly. Especially since they didn't use any undead. That speaks of haste to my mind, which in turn might mean we are on the right track."

"L, let's head to the library then," Padma said, shivering a little as she came out of the bookstore with the bookstore owner beside her, looking like he was going to be sick. He had been hiding behind his desk during the fight.

Padma stared at the bodies, then around at the damage to the street which was quite extreme in places, as other wizards and witches began to come out from there, and the Aurors raced towards them, holding her gorge in with some difficulty. *And Hermione saw things like this following Potter around, and still is friends with him!?* "Because the sooner world done this, the sooner I can go back to Danan, far away from any more fighting."

**OOOOOO**

Harry couldn't figure out a way to grapple with the magic in the river other than forcing it. Simply pushing the spell out of the water, not understanding it, but making certain the spell no longer affected this small area of its vast bulk, was easier. Yet every time he tried to follow the thread of the Blessing, Harry found himself stymied, akin to someone slamming his body against a wall. Nor was this a contest Ddraig or Fragarach could help him with. It was purely mental.

Yet over time, Harry's grapple with that wall started to change. If there was one thing Harry had a lot of, it was willpower, and that wall started to, if not give, then at least start to lose some of its undefined features. What this meant was that Harry started to slowly be able to figure out the characteristics of the magic he was grappling with. First, on the surface, so to speak, was a Blessing. It's power scintillated on what Harry thought of as the surface of the magic within the river, it's colors like that of a rainbow seen through an agate lens.

It was also insanely ancient. Harry could literally feel how ancient this Blessing was somehow as his mental probe interacted with the Nile, possibly the most ancient piece of magic that still existed. It was fraying, but nowhere near as much as the areas around the areas that made up the Undertaking in Ireland. The power put into it was also mostly still there, keeping it going even now, thousands of years later.

It was also one of the most banal and helpful enchantments he had ever felt. The feeling of it was not as purely personal or as overwhelming as Harry and the others found on their island, but there was no doubt in Harry's mind that it was a very positive bit of magic, meant to keep river flowing and able to sustain life. There was nothing about controlling it's course or anything, just keeping the water relatively clean, and keeping it going. That was it. *I wonder what came first, this spell, or the importance of the Nile In Egyptian life? Regardless, I'm not going to mess with that. It would be beyond cruel and useless.*

Yet as Harry felt out the purpose of that blessing, he knew there was more. That was merely the surface of the magic within the river, there was far more in the depths. But as Harry delved deeper, it became harder to figure things out. Whatever was there, some of the spells on the river were set up to stop someone like Harry from figuring out they were there at all, let alone what the rest of the magic tied into the river did.

But that very tie in gave Harry the next clue he could discern from the river. Harry was, as yet, unused to think in terms of an overarching, underlying magical structure to the entire world. He knew it existed, and that Ophis, and himself were, sort of, overpowering it at the moment, along with all the other gods who had slowly returned since Yahweh's demise. But thinking in that term wasn't automatic here on Earth just yet, and he didn't have as direct and fundamental a connection to that structure as he did in Danan.

But the sheer amount of magic in the Nile forced him to remember it, and once he did, a whole new avenue of advance opened up to him. Because the Nile lay like a bright vibrant line of magic across the whole nation, the center of the portion of the underlying magi-sphere that resided in Egypt. From the Nile smaller portions of that magical structure wound out, tiny streams leading out of the larger river.

And whatever spells were hidden under the Blessing here in the river, also spread out too. Harry still couldn't figure out what they were, indeed, he could barely reach from the river out to the rest of that background magic, but he could tell there was **something** there. But as he tried to figure out more, the pressure against his mental probe increased, the spells resisting his efforts.

*So, can I somehow separate the rest of those spells from the Blessing? Whatever they are I can't tell, so, will getting rid of them impact what's going on here?* Girding his mental loins, Harry doubled down, trying to grab at the magic within the river, trying to separate the Blessing from the rest, regardless of what the rest was.

This exploration took so much of Harry's concentration that he forgot about his physical body for a time. None of his physical senses registered to his mind as he delved into the magical matrix within the river. Luckily, he'd warned Tonks of this, so she had conjured up a chair for him. And a permanent marker to have fun with.

However, that had only taken her attention for about thirty minutes. By the time an hour had gone by, she had become bored and Proudfoot had left, and the two leprechauns she had retained had disappeared somewhere. By the third hour she wondered if maybe just maybe she should find a book to read. When, after a fourth hour had come and gone and Proudfoot had sent another team of Aurors to take over for the ones that he been with them, she asked one of the guys leaving to grab her a book somewhere. "Fantasy'd be nice, maybe find a store that has Pratchett somewhere? I've heard good things about the Science of Discworld."

Ten minutes after she had begun to read said book, however, her downtime was cut short as someone did indeed seem to react to Harry's intrusion. And when they attacked, they did so in force.

Tonks looked up from her book when she heard a scream to one side. There, a group of what looked like Mamluk Cavalry had appeared at the far of a walking path that followed the side of the Nile. Even from here, she could see the signs of mortal wounds, arrows, and missing chunks of flesh on man and horse alike. *Undead cavalry, that's new*, She thought with the part of her brain that wasn't enraged at the sight of those undead troops running or lancing down anyone who got between them and their real quarry.

She watched as the Aurors around her began to react, but then barked out, "Stop! They're undead, easy to deal with. Teams of two, one group go high, the other use Protego to protect the civilians! The rest of you keep an eye out for..."

That was as far as she got before the other half of the assault began. From the nearby rooftops and from an alleyway on their right flank came the flash of spellfire. Most were black and flowed like oil through the air, Dark curses for sure. Others were the green darts of Arvada Kedavra. Two of the Aurors went down, one slumping lifeless, his soul extinguished, while the other screamed in agony as his bowels exploded.

But then, Tonks was already moving. A quick spell on the ground around them created a bulwark between Harry and the attackers, backed by a Protego to handle any spells beyond the AK that got through the first defense. Then she was moving forward. A Conjured shield of metal flew up, catching an AK meant for her, and she rolled under it as it blew apart, her hand thrusting forward, casting a Reducto.

Her target barely got up a Protego, and then was down as a conjured needle took her in the back of the head, having been conjured and then directed into her from behind. The man

next to her had defended against a similar attack, aided by the wizards up top attacking them at the same time. All of them concentrated on Tonks AKs and Dark curses lashing out towards her.

But Tonks was a whirling dervish, never standing still, conjuring defenses as need as she tried to close, moving faster than any of the attackers had ever seen someone do. Her spell chains shifted from defense to offense in an instant, and one of the attackers on the roof fell, nearly sliced in two.

An overpowered Avis spell created a veritable wall of fake birds for a second, and then Tonks was roaring out orders, tiny, conjured needles flashing through the swarm, forcing more than one of the attackers to defend themselves. This let the Aurors concentrate on the Mamluks, who, having charged down the local civilians began to fall to fire spells, their charge halted by transfigured walls.

With two of their fellows down and the Aurors getting their act together, the attackers should have retreated, and three of them did. But the others didn't yet, lashing out now entirely with Killing Curses, cutting down another Auror and nearly catching Tonks, who had just rolled into cover, as she popped up to take a shot, shrapnel from the trash can she'd hid behind cutting her face and shoulder. Her speed in ducking back saved her, and her return spell removed the attacker's head.

That did it, and the last two disappeared just as twenty more Aurors arrived on the scene, flying down on brooms from on high. With the wizard-threat gone, the newcomers split into two uneven groups. The larger group turned their attention on stopping the locals from running off and carrying tales.

Yet one of the last two attackers to retreat didn't go far. Instead, he apparated to a place to one side of the rest of the battle, pointing directly at the dome of earth and magic protecting Harry as he still battled the spirit in the river. "Fiendfyre!" that worthy shrieked, the spell flashing out, a red and black fireball.

The spell instantly grew, turning on the man who had caused it, his will proving far less than it should have been to control the spell. Then it grew. Fiendfyre was a sentient flame which sought to consume anything it could and Tonks cursed as she stared at the onrushing flame, its edges lined with screaming faces, horses, demons and damned. Then she was racing forward, her magic thrusting out into the spell in front of her, while many of the Aurors turned their attention from controlling the crowd to trying to douse the flames.

"I got this, keep on doing your own jobs!" With that shout, Tonks' will crashed into the Fiendfyre spell pushing it back, pushing it down, smothering the fire's will as other spells dealt with depriving it of oxygen. But while Fiendfyre was deadly, Tonks had become a Devil, a Bishop to Rias, since the last time she'd had to deal with the spell. She had more power now than ever before, and like Harry, Tonks had never lacked for willpower. What would have taken

a team of wizards to do took her barely ten minutes, and eventually the last of the spell was snuffed out.

Shaking her head, Tonks stared at the blackened, bubbled road revealed underneath where the near-sentient spell had been a moment before. “Well, fuck me, I bloody hope that the rest of these wankers won’t think of doing that again. Bloody annoying that is.”

Turning she became aware of the looks of awe and shock in the surrounding Auror’s faces, Egyptian, British and American alike. “What? Ain’t you lot ever heard about how you need to stop Fiendfyre?”

“Yes, we’ve read about it, know the procedure. We’ve just never seen a single person dealing with the spell on her own,” muttered one man, American by the accent.

Tonks was about to reply then shook her head and waved at the bodies of the undead, which were quickly disappearing, then the damage done to the surrounding area and the bodies of the Aurors and attackers. “Let’s just get this stuff cleaned up and start on containment.”

This process would take a while, since there had been a lot of people here, but the Egyptian Aurors were old hands at wide angle Confusion and Obliviate spells. But Tonks could only shake her head, staring at the number of dead civilians. She counted ten where she was standing, most run down by the Mamluks, two others dead from spellfire. *We need to start working on spells to get the locals out of the danger zone, She thought grimly. Or any battle that occurs during the day is going to turn into a fucking bloodbath.*

OOOOOO

Akhenaten awoke, and immediately began to whimper from remembered pain, his nerves still jangling from his near death experience. A second later, a gentle but powerful hand thrust down on his chest, keeping him still. Soon Nefertiti’s voice reached him, and he felt a potion being poured down his still-ravaged throat. “Easy, my husband. Don’t try to move just yet. You were nearly killed despite all the Rituals we’ve gone through. I would estimate you are at least another hour away from being able to speak, and more for your eyeballs to finish regenerating.”

That caused Akhenaten to grimace, biting at the top of the nozzle forcing the potion down his throat. “I know, my Pharaoh. But don’t worry, you are safe. And I have no doubt that whoever assaulted you believes you’re dead. That is enough for now. I am keeping the plan going, ramping up the attacks slowly, and using our wizard tools to attack Potter, trying to keep him off-balance. He’s brought more help in already, but I’ve started on the enchantment necessary to cut him off from that strange teleportation skill of his. He is... proving to be more dangerous than I expected, but we can deal with that once you are awake once more.”

The most ancient human to ever live would have nodded had he the energy. While he had always felt his wife's passions and jealousies were dangerous, he had never questioned her mind or ability to organize. But he didn't have the strength. He simply moved one hand vaguely, then slowly drifted off to to sleep.

Staring at Akhenaten, Nefertiti breathed a sigh of relief, then left him there, straightening her shoulders. There was something else she could do right now, and it was best to get it out of the way.

About an hour later, Nefertiti had several of their Mummy servants drag Kuroka from her cell. When they arrived in the ritual chamber she had prepared for this moment, there were two less Mummies than the number she'd sent and Nefertiti laughed. "Hahaha, there is still some fight in you I see, even without your magic or Senjutsu skills?"

Kuroka shrugged nonchalance, cursing the manacles that bound her. Somehow, she had no idea how, they had cut her off from the world around them, blocking her ability to use Senjutsu. She was pretty certain the chain around her neck was doing the same thing for her internal magical reserves. Combined they basically made her as weak as a normal Nekoshu.

But even then, Kuroka had a lot of combat experience, and Mummies, especially when given orders not to kill their opponent, were somewhat easy to fight. If, that was, there hadn't been ten of the damned things, with more waiting outside her cell. "Meh, you can't blame me for trying, can you? And can I say, seeing your naked, tattooed body is not what I would like to be doing right now, nya?"

"Hehehe, you still have such fire my dear. I wonder if you will retain it after I have taken your powers from you," Nefertiti said casually, turning away.

In a way, what Kuroka had said was spot on. Currently, Nefertiti was naked, showing her toned, firm body, it's B-cup breasts riding proudly over a toned, flat stomach. Her black Hair was up in a bun at present, letting more of her tanned frame be seen in the light of the dozen glowing crystals around them.

But what most stood out were the tattoos. Some of them looked permanent, some above her crotch, her hands and feet for some reason, along with one right above her heart. Others though were obviously new, inked onto her skin in whorls and shapes. Some were simple images, bird images or images of Nekomata in places, surrounded by more intricate etches which Kuroka knew were runes of some kind.

And all around them, the room was covered with similarly intricate runic arrays. Arrays that created a figure eight, enclosing two circles. One Nefertiti already stood in, her hands resting on a pedestal crafted to look like an ankh with a giant ruby set into the circle and with what looked like a strange-thronelike carving on top. The other had several hooks, which Kuroka's chains were bound through. "Chain her in place within the circle."

This forced the Mummies to unlock the chin binding her manacles together and Kuroka instantly a punch lashing out to catch a Mummy in the face with bone-crunching force. Even without her Senjutsu powers, Kuroka was a Nekoshou, and they were routinely stronger than they looked. This was followed by a wrench as she tried to escape her other captor, and a mule kick which cost another Mummy its un-life.

But there were too many Mummies still, and soon she found herself chained down, bound spread eagle against the ground despite her best chances.

Nefertiti moved from where she had been standing, carefully moving among the runes on the floor until she stood above Kuroka. "Strip her."

"Nya, I didn't think you swung that way," Kuroka drawled, snorting in derision as she tried not to shiver in the cold as her clothes were stripped off her. She felt her breasts bouncing free and smirked up at the other woman. "Although I suppose looking at all this, who could blame nya?"

"That was a horrible pun, although you have a point. Looking at you, who could blame me?" Nefertiti answered, though her tone implied that she wasn't about Kuroka's joke.

Biting her lip and feeling more vulnerable than she ever had, Kuroka tried to keep her voice level as she asked, "I think we're talking about two different things now, nya. What, what is all this about?"

Nefertiti sighed, and then knelt down next to her, brushing Kuroka's hair out of her face with a surprisingly tender touch. A second later, Kuroka's bruises from fighting the Mummies faded, but Kuroka didn't speak, simply staring back at this strange woman with the horrifyingly ancient eyes and the cool control.

But to her astonishment, Nefertiti actually replied. "You might never have heard of this, but in the creation myth associated with that religion, the original Satan, Lucifer, fell, because Yahweh told his creations that he favored humanity, who he had created in his image, over the angels, who were his tools." She chuckled shaking her head. "Of course, humanity has been here far longer than Yahweh or those religions which still worship him despite his death. I'm living proof of that."

Kuroka shivered again at that bald admission, trying hard not to believe it. But this place and Nefertiti's eyes hinted that perhaps the other woman's words were nothing but the bald truth. *I knew she and her husband were ancient, but this is just...*

Amused by Kuroka's expression, Nefertiti still went on. "But perhaps it could be said the exact opposite is true: that Yahweh, of all gods had taken on the abilities of humans. What he did in his conquests was take power from others and mold it to his own, and we humans can do the exact same thing to a degree and ability well beyond anything you nonhumans can say.

But what you have is raw power and, to most, age to make up for that lack of natural talent. But my husband and my first foray into this particular subject allowed us to become immortal. And we have only gotten stronger since.”

She stood up, holding a handout and a small, glowing inkwell with what looked like some kind of bone stuck into it was placed in her hand by one of the Mummies, a short, female Mummy that had not been among those that Kuroka had been fighting. Seeing the look on Kuroka’s face, Nefertiti explained. “Enchanted ink, you don’t want to know how, and a Chimera’s fingerbone. We’ve experimented and discovered it helps the magic of the array sink in.”

She began to write on Kuroka’s skin, but the Nekoshuu twitched in her manacles, causing Nefertiti to tsk under her breath and use a body binding spell to immobilize her. “I won’t be able to use that spell when we begin, the magic of it would interfere, but if you’re not going to cooperate it will do for now.”

Kuroka’s mouth had been frozen half open, which allowed her to get out the words. “Wha are ou ‘oing!?”

Thankfully, or perhaps not for Kuroka’s presence of mind, Nefertiti understood and answered her question. “I would have thought it obvious my dear. “I am putting into practice what I was just talking about.”

Horror and shock filled Kuroka as she looked at the woman who was now smiling at her from directly above her, writing out a series of runes on Kuroka’s neck and bare chest. “Wh...ou are mad...”

“Oh no, the procedure will work. As I said, my husband and I have experimented with this over the centuries. And when you get down to it, transferring power from one to another is one of the most basic of Egyptian-style magic, although most of the time it was supposed to be humans calling on gods, not taking from one another. No Kuroka, when this ritual is done, I will have absorbed your powers and abilities, and indeed, your very being, into my own. I’ve always wanted to be a Nekomata, for far, far longer than you’ve been alive. That aspect at least, you will retain. Your magic and everything else, you will not.”

Kuroka couldn’t move, but she could still scream, and did so until Nefertiti used a Silencio on her. “Oh hush. We haven’t even started the ritual yet. I can’t say it’s going to be a painless process for either of us, so you may wish to save your screaming for then.”

Some time later, Nefertiti rose to her feet once more, holding out a hand to one side. A Mummy instantly helped her to her feet, helping the woman over the runic arrays on the floor, and out of sight of the chained Nekoshuu. As she moved, the two spells holding Kuroka still and silent faded, and she instantly began to thrash in place trying desperately to break free. “Nefertiti, wait, this can’t, can’t possibly work! My Senjutsu skills its...”



“It is a learned ability which Nekoshuu have a natural affinity with due to your nature as near mystical beings. But that too, can be... transferred. Shared. Taken. Whichever you prefer. I realize I will have to practice with it to get as good as you are, but I am confident I can master it in time.” Nefertiti moved back to her own place in the room, resting her hand on the symbol of the Cobra. Then she began to whisper an incantation invoking the name of the dead god Upt-Heka in ancient Egyptian. “\*With the power taken from the blood of Upt-Heka, let the Sheut be shared, let the Ba be taken, so say I, Nefertiti, Queen of upper and Lower Egypt!\*”

In Egyptian mythology and magic, a person’s soul was split into five parts.

Ib was the heart, was the center of emotions, thoughts and was directly impacted by one’s deeds. It was this part of the soul – which meant a **LOT** more in Egyptian mythology than the more ephemeral concept it did in European wizardry, or even Oriental magic – that Anubis, judge of the dead, would weigh before letting you into the realm he oversaw for Osiris.

At the moment, Nefertiti had no interest in Kuroka’s Ib. The same went for Ren, the name of the soul. Names had power, which would reverberate as long as those names were known, but Nefertiti had no interest in Kuroka’s name or its influence.

No, it was the last three of the five parts that Nefertiti was going to take.

Sheut, the shadow of the person, an individual’s essence. In this case, Kuroka’s physical Nekoshuu traits. Being the physical side of things, Nefertiti was certain that at least a portion of Kuroka’s Nekoshuu traits would remain.

The same could not be said for her Ka or Ba. Ba was the spirit and any spiritual abilities: Kuroka’s propensity for magical power, the essence of the devil which resided in her, which Nefertiti would now steal, without becoming a Devil herself. Her new Nekoshuu traits would override them, something that had taken several centuries worth of careful experimentation to discover.

And finally, there was her Ka, of life force. The ability to use Senjutsu, to connect to the life energy around you, was wrapped up in this aspect of the soul. And whatever Nefertiti’s vanity might have made most believe, it was this aspect that she was most interested in.

As she finished the enchantment the magic in the ritual began to rouse itself, coming to life gradually, the process slowed by Nefertiti’s will imposed on the magic moving through the ritual. This was no experiment, this was something Nefertiti was doing to herself, and thus everything had to be perfect.

Kuroka kept on trying to get her attention, but Nefertiti ignored her, concentrating on watching the power of the ritual coalesce form ,writhing up from the runic array to slowly cover them both in ribbons of magical power, varicolored. Kuroka finally fell silent then, working on

getting free, but there was no way to release herself, and finally Nefertiti's examination of the ritual ended. "And so, it begins..."

And when the enchantment began, Kuroka learned that Nefertiti had understated the pain. It was like a part of her was being slowly torn out at the smallest level she could even think of something from her mind and body was being drained taken from her, and it was just as painful as it sounded. Her screams, and that of Nefertiti intertwined in the ritual room and continued for a good, long while, until finally the pain was too much for Kuroka, and she fell unconscious.

As the recipient, Nefertiti had no such recourse. She simply clung to the bound physical representations of Isis, the ancient, dead goddess of magic, as she screamed. And as she screamed, her body began to change...

When next Kuroka woke up, she was being slowly unchained from the floor. Several Mummies were being very careful in moving her around. Looking down at herself, Kuroka was, through the haze of the slowly disappearing pain, surprised to see she was mostly unchanged. *But then again, with these damn manacles on me, I wouldn't be able to tell would I? The bitch did say that I wouldn't change physically overmuch.* Indeed, all she could tell right now was her breasts were smaller, her eyesight not as clear, and she could tell her muscles weren't as strong or toned. She experimentally moved her tail and was stunned to find only one tail moving not the two she had previously gained when mastering Senjutsu.

When Kuroka looked at Nefertiti though, the changes were obvious and profound. The Egyptian had grown by at least a few inches, her breasts and hips had expanded. And from her head sprouted two cat-ears. Behind her, a tail, black as her hair, twitched. Whereas before she had been merely striking, Nefertiti now was gorgeous.

And if that was the case... Kuroka grit her teeth trying to find the energy to say something to vow to kill this bitch, but after the ritual that was beyond her. All she could do was glare at Nefertiti, who didn't bother to reply, too busy with her self-examination, a mirror in hand as she examined herself from all angles. "Oh do stop glaring, I told you that you wouldn't die. After all, this is the first time I've done this ritual on myself, and the first time I've used a Nekoshuu. I might need to renew it occasionally."

"K, kill you, I'll kill you!" Kuroka screamed as she tried to break free once more, but she had no strength left. The last thing Kuroka saw as darkness claimed her again, was Nefertiti examining herself in her mirror with a smile on her new, Nekoshuu face.

OOOOOOO

Shuddering, Harry pulled his hands out from the river, absently noting that they weren't pruning despite having been in the water for what he had felt had to be several hours. Yet

*another aspect of being a water deity I suppose* he mused, before standing on wobbly knees only to lose his balance.

Tonks was there instantly, grabbing his elbow and helping Harry regain his balance. He smiled at her, then blinked as he spotted a bit of blood on her cheek. He looked around and frowned as he noticed the number of Aurors around them had doubled, and many seemed to be working on repairing some damage done to the surrounding area, while others were repairing damage to the surrounding area. And to one side were bodies marked by white tarps. "What happened?"

"We were attacked, just like you warned us. But it took so long we weren't on guard any longer," Tonks grimaced, shaking her head. "My fault, that. Lost some good men, and the nonmagical lost at least thirty dead. Harry, fighting in this city, or hells, any city in Egypt's going to be a nightmare."

"I can see that," Harry also grimaced, leaning against her for a moment, recovering and taking some solace in her sturdy presence, before leaning away. "We are going to need to figure out some spells to offset that. I have some ideas, but I'll talk it over with Hermione. If she can do it, we can start teaching them to the Aurors and Shinsengumi. Now tell me more about what happened."

Tonks did so, and Harry grimaced walking towards where the cavalry had appeared. "Yeah, it's the same thing. The deific magic is there, I can see it and I guess we can say it's used to summon up the undead, but so specific? And so small a group? Is this some kind of item we're dealing with... or..." he paused, staring from the river to the area where the deific magic had been used. *Or is it something else...*

Proudfoot had arrived after the battle was won to personally lead the cleanup procedure and seeing Harry up and moving he walked over to them, a anxious look on his face. "What did you discover?"

"I was able to trace a few spells through the Nile. Most are benign, a few I can't figure out, and I lost the thread of them somewhere outside the city. And even that exhausted me." Harry admitted, mixing truth with lies. He didn't want the locals to have any idea of his deific powers. Or that Harry still couldn't tell what the majority of the magic within the Nile was from. "This investigation is going to take a long while, unfortunately."

Harry stared down at the dead bodies of the locals, then over to the dead attackers, gritting his teeth angrily. *The Nile's a clue, but overcoming that spell is going to be tough as hell. Could it be some other water deity allied with the brigade?* Sighing, he shook his head. *Those columns are still a loose end too. I think they are benign, but I can't be certain, and there's just, just something **off** about them.*

Turning his attention back to Proudfoot, Harry repeated himself. "This is going to be a long investigation, Inspector. I wish it could be otherwise. But right now, I don't have answers just yet." Looking over at Tonks, he growled out, "Come on, let's go meet up with the others, and sic the other leprechauns on the two asses who were supposed to stay here with you. I'm sending them back home before we do anything else."

Looking back at the Nile, Harry thought, *But I'll be back, whatever or whoever you are. There's a clue there and I will find it!*

OOOOOOO

Arranging a place to meet up was easy enough since Kiba and the others had returned to Alexandria sometime when Harry was trying to commune with the Nile. Bill picked out a caravanserai near the hotel Harry and the others were staying in, booking nearly half the tables there for them.

It would have been more, but the Shinsengumi had come and gone back to their hotel, it being evening, but they had discovered that there were twelve of the strange columns with the Ra symbol in the city. And according to the Aurors, only one attack had been near them. For now, Harry let that issue to the side. he was still suspicious about them, but if there was no correlation between them and the attacks, that mystery had to be set to the side.

After sending off the Leprechauns to find their fellows and making them promise to return quickly, Harry took a moment to glance at a TV hanging from a pillar to one side of his table. It showed news about a series of earthquakes occurring around the world, one near to California's coast enough to cause some heavy waves, and another in South America. A third had hit Australia. That was strange, and somewhat disturbing, but not something Harry could care about right now.

He looked at the trio of of Bill Loup and Charlie, sitting at their own table. "Alright, you three, let's start with you. Because unless you were betrayed and attacked by your contacts, I doubt you had as interesting a day as the rest of us."

"Hahaha, no," Bill shook his head. "My contacts in the criminal underworld didn't really know all that much unfortunately. The guy in question is pretty well-connected to the other local underworld bosses, but none of them have any clue about what's going on. The magical police are too good at their job, and none what he said was pertinent to what we're looking for. Sorry Harry, I thought it was a good idea."

And Harry turned to Kiba and his group. "And you lot? Were you attacked like Kala's group and mine?"

"No, but we were able to learn quite a bit," Kiba said, "although what to make of it, that we leave to you."

What Harry made of it, was worrisome. “Okay, so either the Chaos Brigade is at war with itself, not an entirely impossible idea, or were dealing with a third-party here.”

“I would’ve thought that was obvious given how we were ambushed by the churchgoers,” Yubelluna answered tartly. “But I’m assuming you meant a **fourth** party.”

“Sorry love, I misspoke,” Harry said taking her hand in his and kissing her knuckles, causing her to blush rosily, and for a Akeno to laugh quietly, but Harry had already turned his attention back to the matter at hand. “But that description you gave? The woman that was being attacked, that is Kuroka, that is Koneko’s sister.”

Everyone fell silent at that, staring at Harry for a second then Kiba then slapped his forehead, shaking his head. “Dammit, I should’ve made that connection! I was there when we met her, I knew there was something about that description, but I couldn’t quite make the connection!”

Akeno bit her lip. She had been silent up to this point, but spoke up now. “Should we get contact Koneko? I know the two aren’t on the best of terms, but Koneko still cares for her sister quite a bit.”

Harry thought about it for a moment, then shook his head. “Frankly, contacting her now would only make her worry. No, we’ll wait to call her in when we have something good to tell her. Like a target.” Harry growled that last word, and everyone else there nodded their heads. “Is there any chance of the Churchmen and their allies working with us?”

“No,” Yubelluna declared, before any of the others spoke up. “Oh, Dulio and the girls might eventually be willing to bend that far, but the locals won’t. They are angry, defensive, and have their backs up thanks to the losses they’ve taken here in Egypt already. And they would have to let us have access to their records, which just isn’t going to happen.”

“Just as well, really. Ever since the Golden Age of Islam ended their record-keeping on the mystical side hasn’t been all that well,” Kala opined. “Especially here in Egypt where there have been so many governmental changes over the centuries. We’re going to be stuck using nonmagical history and nonmagical take on mythology, Harry. Although there, at least, Padma and I have some good news.”

“Glad to hear it, and,” Harry smiled, taking her hand and squeezing it before smiling over at Padma. “I’m glad none of you were killed in that ambush. The terrorist’s willingness to use the Killing Curse disturbs me, it smacks too much of someone like the Death Eaters. But we’ll get to that soon.” Ignoring the looks of interest on nearly everyone’s faces, Harry turned to his old schoolmate, noting that Akeno seemed to be bothered by something. “Hermione, Tiamat?”

The two of them relayed their own tale, ending with how Tiamat had circled the city to examine the deific magic on the Nile, only to decide the magical signature on it was not the

same as the Deific spell on the Great Pyramid and the other tombs with them. “The first was familiar to me, this one doesn’t feel that way. If it’s a God, it certainly is not one I ever dealt with in the past. But the structure of it is ancient. Beyond that, I must take your word for what you sense Potter. I am a creature of fire and air, my ability to interact with water spells, let alone one purposely hidden, is small.”

Nodding at that, Harry gestured to where Kala and Padma sat, then to himself and Tonks. He hadn’t thought Tiamat would be any help with that, since Harry’s own ‘godly’ power had proven to not help him in understanding an entirely different school of magic. “Well, these three had a much more interesting time, I have to say. Tonks, start us off. Then Kala please.”

There were some exclamations of annoyance and shock about the attacks on the two groups, and then Padma, who had not stopped leaning against her wife’s shoulder since they had met up, explained what they had found. Most of it was, while interesting not helpful until they started to link what was known about the accoutrements of the Pharaoh and legends passed down in stories from the locals to the powers ascribed to enchanted items. There were even pictures that were, generally speaking, alike enough to be the same thing.

This let them come up with a few items that could be pulling the undead from their resting places and even creating monsters: the Heqa-staff of the Pharaohs called Army Breaker in the wizard’s version of history books. And the Pharaoh’s Ankh of Royalty which was, supposedly an item blessed By Osiris.

“That leaves how they are getting around, and how they are in so many places almost at once. No one’s been able to pin down if any two attacks start at the same time, but whoever is behind this is getting around Egypt faster than I can in Danan,” Harry growled. “I think that’s something to do with the Nile, but to block it, I’d have to tear away the magic within.”

He paused then, shaking his head. “I... might be able to, but not without tearing apart the Blessing, and there’s no way I could be strong enough to replace it. Not quickly, anyway. I... I might be able to push the spells out of just the Alexandrian section, see what happens, but I am concerned about the impact.”

“What about those columns,” Hermione asked. “I’ve always been under the impression that most of archaeology the discoveries were well singular, or at least different from one another to a large degree. These columns don’t sound that way.”

“They’re not,” Shen agreed, nodding towards Hermione. “They have superficial differences, obviously, but the main symbol and the general shape are both always the same. We discovered those within Alexandria, and we are having them mapped out by the local Aurors.”

“There’s definitely some kind of Blessing on those columns for certain. Something tied into the symbol of Ra, it is definitely benign, and powerful. But that’s just it, something as

ancient as those columns, devoted to a God who died, the markings should have begun to erode like they did in Ireland, releasing the magic within them. It hasn't."

"You didn't seem concerned about the river," Padma interjected.

"I'm not. The Nile is such a fundamental part of all life in Egypt that the belief in it is no doubt up to sustaining a Blessing like that, no matter how old," Harry answered, shaking his head with a faint smile. "I, I have to admit to some awe frankly. It's such a simple but all-encompassing concept, simply 'wellness' in Blessing form. It's magnificent."

"And again it is a different source than the blessing on the river, and the crystal that Hermione and I discovered Giza. Although I agree with the frizzy-haired one. That bit of ancient graffiti, it feels important, just by how it was hidden."

"Agreed" Harry said with a nod. "You can work on that, Hermione. I want to find out more about those columns and ancient water deities. Specifically if anything about their personalities has survived somehow."

Hermione's eyes lit up at that, and she nodded firmly. "Good idea. But we're certain a different god was involved in all three?"

"Definitely," Tiamat said. "Although I will not believe that there are Egyptian gods left alive this world unless I actually see one with my own eyes."

"Why?" Husukai asked in some amusement. At his age believing in only what himself saw was a concept he only used during combat situations.

"The Egyptian gods fell by intervals, losing believers, losing faith and power, and then being completely wiped out by the God of the Abrahams. It and what happened to the Greeks are some of the best examples there have ever been as to how pantheons can die." Tiamat shrugged. "Further, there the Egyptian gods were not exactly bright. Indeed, many early gods were not, formed by the general understanding of the world around their believers."

Tiamat though was not looking at the others as she stared at the pictures Shen had taken of the columns, comparing the central sun-shaped hieroglyph to one another. "This image isn't one I recognize."

"it's the image of the Sun God, Ra," Hermione helpfully pointed out, although her brows furrowed. "Odd though, it's one of the images in that weird pidgin graffiti we found."

Tiamat frowned cocking her head, then nodding. "Yes, I suppose I can see that. I never had dealings with that one. Solar deities are always so stuffy and arrogant."

"The sun is often connected to protection against the darkness, but my instincts are telling me there's more to it, and I am unwilling to investigate them fully. Still, for now, we

should all get a move on. Bill, thanks for your help, but I'll wager your wife's waiting for you at home. Do you have a phone?"

Bill nodded. "Yeah, Fleur demanded we get one so she can talk to her parents in France without wearing out her knees in front of the Floo."

"Good. We'll call you tomorrow if we need a local guide. Beyond that, keep your wand wrist loose yeah?" Harry quipped, then decided to head to the Alexandria National Museum with Hermione and Padma. That, according to Padma, was the one with the largest number of historical artifacts in the city. The five men from Kuoh were looking as if they were still dealing with the time difference between Japan and here so Harry sent them back to the hotel. Kala on the other hand went with Yubelluna to do some shopping. The suite had a full-sized kitchen after all, so it would be an annoyance to go out every night.

However, there was something else that needed to be seen to right now. As everyone else began to exit the caravanserai Harry sidled through the crowd to reach Akeno, catching her by the elbow. "Akeno, are you okay? You seem a little quiet tonight."

Akeno sighed, nodding. "When I was looking into a timeline for the attacks and how well the cover-up is holding, I discovered how widespread this issue has been. But we will talk about that more when we are back in the apartment, Harry."

"Do you want to come with us to the museum?" Harry asked, moving his arm from her elbow to around her waist, holding her there for a moment.

"I think not. Rather, I think I will simply go out with Yubelluna and Kala. Spending some time shopping, if only for foodstuffs, sounds much nicer to me right now than a museum trip." With that, she kissed Harry on the cheek, and sent him off to where Hermione and Padma were waiting outside.

While the Alexandria National Museum wasn't very interesting on the outside, being placed in a regular mansion, the interior was much more interesting, housing a large, cat statue to one side of the entrance, and the image of Horus along the far wall.

Harry paid for three tickets, and believing that they wouldn't find anything in the actual museum, that was way too obvious, dropped a hint that he would like to speak to a curator about arranging a donation to the museum. The man at the desk smiled politely at that, and after being handed an appropriate backsheesh, said he would look into it.

The three of them spent some time moving around the museum, just taking in the sights for now, until Harry spotted another column. This one looked almost the same as the one Harry had examined earlier that day, but much better preserved around the edges. Harry was uncertain what to make of that, but he could see the Blessing within it, and it was of the same type as the first one.



It was also behind a pane of glass, which meant that Harry couldn't physically touch it, unlike the one he had studied. But that was all right, just looking at it Harry knew that he wouldn't discover anything new. *No, what we need to know is to talk to someone who has examined these things scientifically. I'll get Akeno to start examining one of them magically. It'll be interesting to see if she can figure out anything more than I can with my deific senses.*

The three of them moved around the museum for a time, then Harry began to frown, shaking his head. "This is taking too long, and I'm not seeing anything here that really has much to do with what we're needing."

There were lots of names of different pharaohs, lots of examples of archaeological objects, the names of gods and so forth. But Harry needed to know specifics about the gods devoted to the Nile River, and he needed to know more about these columns. So while this was giving him several names to ask about, they weren't really telling him enough about those names.

Padma shrugged her shoulders. "I think I've found a few images of the items of the pharaohs that the Wizarding World books mentioned that are better than the ones I found in the library. But other than that, I think you're right."

At the front desk the same man as before was still on duty, and Harry raised an eyebrow at him, asking politely if he had taken his message about wishing to donate to the museum to the curator. The man waffled a bit, and then admitted that the curator had not been willing to speak to them at the moment.

That struck Harry as unusual, and he very calmly took out several hundred pound notes, placing them down on the front desk. This was quite a bit more than the normal backsheesh amount, by a factor of ten in comparison to what Harry had already given the man to pass along a message. "I really would like to speak to the curator. If you would be willing to be a little more persistent this time?"

The man nodded, and Harry allowed him to take the top hundred pound note, before a finger stopped the man from taking more. The man looked at him, and nodded sharply, and turned, heading towards a doorway to one side marked by a plaque informing everyone that it was for museum personnel only.

Harry and the others moved towards it, and soon enough the curator and the man returned, Harry thanks the front desk man, shaking his hand and Paul letting the man palm two more hundred pound notes, as the curator said sharply, "I am a very busy man sir, ladies, but young Ajib said you would be willing to make a large donation?"

"A donation in return for questions answered," Harry said nodding his head.

The man scowled. "Well, if you would mind making an appointment, I can give you my secretary's phone number, and..."

“I am here now, and I would rather speak now,” Harry said, allowing just a bit of his demigod’s aura out, causing the man to flush a bit, and seemingly nod his head without any conscious decision on his part.

“Very well then, ask your question.”

“My friends and I recently had occasion to go exploring through the city, and we discovered several columns like one of the ones you have on display here. Yet before this, we were all under the impression that worked images like that were normally singular artifacts.”

Seeming to roll his eyes, the man said, “While that column is a particularly good example of that variety, it is clear that they are all come from a temple to Ra, nothing important.”

“If they all came from a simple temple, why are they spread throughout the city?” Hermione asked sharply.

The man shrugged ignorance at that, and Harry decided to change their avenue of questioning. “Is there anyone here who is an expert on River deities? We’re also very interested in the history of the Nile River itself, what gods were worshiped when, what their personalities, how they changed from the worship of one God to another, that kind of thing.”

The man seems to come back to himself at that, frowning even more heavily. “Well, there are pamphlets I can give you about that kind of thing, but you have to understand that those kinds of questions, they are simply too old to truly be answered. As many archaeological digs and artifacts as there are in Egypt, there is very little to tell about when the belief of one God and another took its place, or their personalities, beyond the best known gods. Anything else falls under the purview of mythology rather than scientifically backed history.”

With that, he turned away. “I’ll get those pamphlets for you.”

Harry glanced at Hermione, and got a sharp nod of her head, indicating that she felt the man was acting strangely too. Indeed, her wand was already in her hand but Harry superseded her. “Imperio,” he whispered, pointing his pinky finger at the man. The nearly invisible spell impacted the man, and Harry easily crushed the curator’s will, before stepping up beside him, whispering into his ear, “Is there someone here I can ask about that piece?”

“Yes.”

“Is there something unusual about it?”

The man replied promptly now, any wish to prevaricate gone. “I do not know.”

“Who would know?” Harry asked, annoyed at how the man wasn’t volunteering information even under Imperio.

“ There is a doctor here who might know.”

“Why were you being so obstructive? I have talked to many curators and museum owners over the past few years but I have never met one who wouldn’t at least talk to someone about their exhibits, let alone someone who offered to donate to the museum,” Hermione questioned, her eyes narrowed.

At that, Harry saw the first stirrings of resistance and renewed the spell, this time sustaining it instead of simply casting it. This let him feel what was going on in the other man’s head, and he felt the remains of another mind control spell there. It wasn’t an Imperio, it was much subtler than that. But it was older, and less powerful than Harry’s will, unlike whatever spell was in the river. Shattering this one took no time at all.

Instantly, the man answered his last question much more completely than he would have otherwise. “I was paid the day before yesterday to not answer any questions about ancient antiquities beyond the most basic level for a month. The man who paid me was tall, oriental, dressed strangely and was quite haughty, but his money was extremely good. It seemed a small enough thing to do for seven thousand Yankee doodle dollars up front with more every week.”

“Describe him to me,” Harry ordered, noting the timing meant this was something that had been set up to stymie him personally.

“Young, handsome Oriental face, with short black hair and blue eyes, normal height. Extremely arrogant or aristocratic seeming, hands were very calloused,” the curator reported.

Cursing Harry nodded. That sounded like Cao-Cao, the young asshole he’d met in Kyoto trying to force Yasaka to give herself up. *The Longinus, his spear is... deadly. But it’s strange, I never took him as someone who was very elusive. This was subtle. And Cao-Cao shouldn’t have been able to cast a mind control spell, or any spell at all. Just having a Longinus or any Sacred Gear doesn’t mean you can use spells, particularly spells that will impact the mind. And why wouldn’t he hide his features whatever he was planning? “Was he alone?”*

“No. There were a few others with him, all garbed in cloaks and long robes for some reason. They looked truly bizarre, but they didn’t speak, and I ignored them.”

Grumbling, Harry understood what had happened. *A magician then. Cao-Cao’s involved, though. That isn’t particularly good, but with a description, maybe we can find out where he’s hiding.*

“Show us to this man who knows about hieroglyphs and other things of that nature. Act as if we have been talking about me offering a donation, and you wanted to vie me a personal tour” Harry ordered. He, Hermione and Padma began following the man, with the two women looking at Harry with some wariness until he asked, “What?”

“That was a bit more ruthless than I expected Harry,” Hermione answered, not prevaricating, but also not condemning. She had been the one to point out the man was acting strangely after all. “I would have just used Occlumency on him.”

“I don’t think I could control my power enough with that to not permanently damage his mind. As for being more ruthless... five hundred and sixty dead in Alexandria alone since these troubles began. To end that, I rather think that a penny’s worth of ruthlessness is worth the pound of hardship it can save.”

Hermione fell silent at that, understanding his point, while Padma still looked a bit uneasy, though she didn’t say anything.

The curator led the way through the museum as if he was conducting a tour, Harry learned more about the local deities, noting down a few names, in particular those names that had anything to do with the control of water or the river Nile. *If Cao-Cao and the Brigade are aligned with this god or using items one of these gods have blessed, it’s best to know about their powers and personality.*

Soon however, they came to an area of the museum where normally people were not allowed to go. But the man swiped his ID card through a security lock and bowed Harry and the two ladies in. "Now, you said something about some pictures he wanted us to look at, and a possible donation?"

Inside, the trio of researchers found themselves in a slightly darkened, slightly dingy corridor, which led into several different rooms, each of them marked out as being from a different department of the museum, with the name of a different doctor as head of the department in a plaque next to the door. The curator led Harry through the hall until he came to one room near the far back, bowing Harry inside.

Inside was a small wiry looking man and looking at him Harry was put in mind of Indiana Jones, crossed with the absent-minded professor. He had the hair of the absent-minded professor, but the wiry frame and tanned, wrinkled skin of someone who spent quite a good deal of time outside despite his advancing years. He looked up as the door opened, and his eyes narrowed. "If this is some kind of personal tour, I do hope that you have already gotten the money, Jaimal!"

Harry held up his hands peaceably, even as he handed over more money to the curator, sitting down across from the man without a by your leave. Yet he grinned at the man as he did. “Heh, you and the two ladies with me might get along very well, the curly-haired one in particular has smacked me upside the head more times than I can count for disrupting her work. However, I am willing to pay quite a lot for the opportunity to ask you some questions.”

“Ugh, if I had a twenty pound note for every time you interrupted my schoolwork alone, Harry, I wouldn’t ever have had to work a day in my life,” Hermione mock-grumbled, before

sending a smile the archeologist's way. "I'm sorry about him Dr. Baram. Harry believes that affability and big pockets can replace good manners."

"This coming from the girl who makes threats of bodily harm on people for interrupting her research? You threatened to turn me inside out a few days ago," Padma quipped, doing her part to put the older man in a better mood.

It worked, and Dr. Baram chuckled, leaning back in his chair, his equilibrium restored by good humor. "Pull up a few chairs ladies. I suppose as long as the money is good and questions aren't too stupid I can indulge honest curiosity. You would not believe some of the common questions rich people ask me occasionally, up to and including 'how much would this cost me to buy'." He trailed off warningly his eyes narrowing. "If you are another foreigner who wishes to acquire some of our ancient history, I would ask you to go back to Britain. You people already carted off too much as it is."

"I agree," Padma said firmly, glaring at the two born Brits, before smirking, patting Hermione and Harry on the head as she moved her seat behind the two of them. "But have no fear doctor, these are good Brits."

"Oy, I ain't a dog Padma, to be soothed by headpats and 'good boys'. Still she's right Dr. Baram, I have no interest in acquiring anything but knowledge," Harry soothed.

Baram winked at Padma, and then turned back to Harry, a smile on his face once more. "In that case, ask your questions! The pursuit of knowledge is something I am always willing to help."

"Well, first of all, I have a few specific questions about an equally specific piece in the collection here. Harry pulled out the image he had taken out in the main area of the, pointing at the center most column in the display, the column that had the image of the sun God's symbol on it. "There seems to be something off about this piece to me, but I can't put my finger on what."

Baram looked at the piece, then sighed. "You have good eyes, and yes there is something wrong with that piece. It's too new."

"You mean it's a replica? A remake? Yet the information out there said it had been carbon dated to..." Hermione began.

"Oh it was, I did the carbon dating myself," Baram interrupted, pulling off his glasses and cleaning them on his rumpled shirt for a moment. "We acquired that piece from a recently discovered site on the road to Abukir. We assume it was being moved from one place to another, and the convoy carrying it had been lost somehow. Perhaps waylaid by bandits, forced to flee out further into the desert, and then lost."

Harry frowned, but before he could speak, Baram laughed. "Yes, I know that that theory has several holes in it, and yet, it was the only one we could think of for where it was. Which is part of why I'm not happy about it. As I said though, the carbon dating says that it is indeed From around the twelve to thirteen hundred BC. Yet it feels almost like someone is... what is the British phrase for a someone taunting you in a malicious manner?"

"Taking the Mickey?" Hermione supplied.

"Exactly!" Baram said slapping hands down on his knees. "Yes, taking the Mickey out of us historians. I think, and this is just a pet field theory of mine, that some rich collector had acquired it somehow earlier from one of the pyramids, and then had it stolen away, before he could take delivery. Then whoever had stolen it in a way the first place just decided to dump it out there, believing it was too hot to fence."

At the trio's dubious looks, the archeologist shrugged. "I'll admit that is a convoluted concept, but other than it being deliberately placed there, there was no other reason for it to be there.

"Well, at least I know that my instincts were right," Harry chuckled, with the archeologist chuckling along with them as Harry thought that Baram was right, someone had indeed placed there. The question was for what reason. And Harry again cursed the fact that even with his own deity based magic, he could tell nothing about whatever spell was on that thing.

Harry ended by asking a few questions about the name of the gods of the Nile, when they were worshipped and so forth. This proved to be somewhat fascinating, because while the Nile itself was almost a religious icon, for most of Egyptian history, no one god was claimed to have been god of the whole river. Anuket, the first goddess associated with the river as it started through Egypt. Wadj-wer, the personification of the Nile delta and the Mediterranean, who apparently was both male and female. Hapi, the god of floods. The ram god Khnum, god of the source of the river. With each name, Harry asked about the cults around them, what their practices were, what they looked like and what their relations to other gods were

From this discussion, Harry felt Khnum might be the source of the Blessing on the river. In conjunction with his wife, Anuket, goddess of fertilization and water purification and, apparently, a second wife named Satet who insured fertile crops, he was part of a Triumvirate. It made sense that three who were so into creation purification and the preservation of life would be able to make a Blessing like that, and three deities working together also would explain away the power of that particular enchantment. There was also the fact that images of them still survived, despite these gods having been some of the oldest in Egyptian mythology.

However, what there was no information about was the god's different personalities. Some, Osiris, Ra, Anubis, Set, Horus, their personalities, and, indeed, several stories devoted to them were known, marked out in ancient hieroglyphs. But there was no such thing beyond

how they were worshipped for most of the water gods. That was annoying, but perhaps knowing the names would help, Harry reflected.

"Tell me, did any of these gods or goddesses also have power over monsters like giant crocodiles or other, more fantastical creatures? Or even the undead?" Padma asked innocently. "I mean, there's Osiris and Anubis, were there other gods who dealt with the underworld?"

No." The Egyptian doctor shook his head wondering why Padma was asking but deciding to humor her. "You have to understand, that the gods of ancient Egypt had very clearly defined boundaries. Priests could cross from one cult to another, but the gods themselves stayed within those defined boundaries."

"It sounds to me as if you're saying that the ancient gods were limited?" Hermione mused.

"That is precisely the case, and why belief in the ancient gods began to fall away when monotheism began to creep in."

"And further, the way you're speaking it, the priests had quite a bit of power in ancient Egypt. We've always been told the real power lay with the Pharaohs."

"Oh yes, it did since most of the time, Pharaohs were seen as living gods, or were priests themselves," the archeologist chuckled and shaking his head. He paused thinking. "But compare it to the Greek traditions. Power, strength, all authority resides in the gods, and in their work and of hand and craft, yet mostly in their brute power. Here in Egypt, mythically speaking, **words** were the ultimate power. Priests became important to intercede, to speak for the people, and with the right words, could compel gods, creating miracles."

Harry felt a shiver run down his spine. *Is that what we're doing dealing with here? Cao-Cao or someone else compelling a goddess to do their bidding? That's kind of a horrifying thought, a human's subtlety and a god or goddess's power. Or worse, could it be Fallen or Devil who learned how to use wizard spells? The very longevity of the breed would make such a nightmare.*

At that point, Harry asked Baram for his contact information in case Harry came up with more questions. Somewhat intrigued by the way Harry and the others seemed so serious about this, Baram complied, handing over a business card.

"That was interesting," Harry murmured, as he led the way out of the museum.

"Yes. It's fascinating how much mythology remains after wizards tried to remove every scrap of anything that could be called 'real knowledge' of wizardry. I wonder when the Pharaohs stopped looking to the gods for their magic and so forth," Hermione mused. "Was it

gradual, sudden, or in steps? Regardless, I honestly don't see how that helped us beyond giving us background information."

"Hmm... perhaps that will be enough. Or we missed something. Some question that we haven't asked?" Padma tugged at her long black hair in thought.

The two ladies kept bandying about theories on this point as Harry looked around the street with interest. It having turned dark out while they were talking to the doctor, the city was now lit by streetlights and lights up on top of several of the windowsills and tiny balconies that dotted the city. And even at night it was very busy too, although there were nowhere near as many people as in the day, the numbers slowly dropping off as people went to bed.

When they eventually reached Harry's suite, the first thing they saw was evidence that the leprechauns had returned. The two miscreants who had skived off prior to the ambush on Tonks and Tonks had been found and were now trussed up against one wall by their beards. Literally, as their short, fuzzy beards were now being pulled every which way, with the rest of their bodies, in such a way that it looked as if someone practiced shibari on them. Which, judging by the faintly smug look Harry saw on Akeno's face, might well have been the case.

Next to them however, the maps of Alexandria that Harry had enlarged and stuck on the inner wall of the suite that morning had been replaced by two other maps. One was of Alexandria and showed the attacks that occurred there, while the other was of Egypt as a whole, showing the same information. These were the maps tied into the detection arrays that the ICW had set up in Egypt, and which could tell the Aurors when magic was being used illegally. *Although only magic that the WW recognizes as such. It can't detect Devil or Fallen magic, let alone deific. Still the undead and the summoned beasts at least are able to be detected.*

"Why do I think you had something to do with this, Akeno?" Harry asked, turning his attention to his Lightning Babe, while also wondering what she had been keeping back earlier.

"Bah, Akeno did give us some suggestions, but we be the ones that did that to Les and Mark," Ysabel huffed.

"Aye, We all agreed and gave our words we'd not be going tearing off every which way, that we'd be doing our part in your mission here. And then most of us were there when ya met with Overly Proudfoot, and learned about how serious these troubles be," Robbett added.

"We leprechauns might be troublemakers, pranksters. Yet no real leprechaun be hearing that people be actually dying due to whatever be causing the undead to rise, and still be thinking only of having fun. Off the clock aye, but not when they be supposed to be watching your back Lord Potter," said a third leprechaun.

Harry nodded, looking at the two tied up leprechauns thoughtfully. "I'll still be sending them back, but it's good to know that you all realize that this is serious business."



"It is indeed, and it's, it's what I want to talk to you about." Akeno interjected, losing her good humor as she gestured Harry to sit beside her on the sofa.

He did so, while Hermione and Padma sat across from them. Harry now saw that Husukai was also there, out on the balcony with Tiamat and the dog. Tiamat was in her shrunken dragon form, playing some kind of board game with Husukai but both of them turned to the open door when they heard Akeno call out to them. Meanwhile, Kala and Yubelluna, who had been in the kitchen looking over some local recipes, moved to join the others in the sitting area.

When everyone was sitting down or listening in, Akeno began. "Did the chief inspector tell you anything about how many deaths there have been on the non-magical side of things since these incidents began?"

"He said he didn't know the exact numbers," Harry answered. "Although the way you're leading up to this tells me it's bad.

"I got the impression that the Unspeakables might have confiscated all of the notes and everything he had of the attacks prior to their showing up," Tonks added, speaking up from beyond Tiamat's bulk, pushing the chromatic dragon's head to one side to enter the suite. "Or, if we are going to give him the benefit of the doubt, he perhaps had yet to correlate all of the attacks together?"

"I don't know if I'm feeling that generous. Regardless, while I was looking into how well the cover up had been doing, I found all of the similar types of stories that you wizards like when hiding the use of magic. Gas main explosions and so forth? There have been a lot of those, along with riots caused by food poisoning, which seems to be a local favorite as well. That was the one that was used this afternoon to cover up of the attack on you and Tonks, Harry. I checked and saw it reported on the news when I got back from the meeting."

"Spit it out, Akeno," Kala ordered. "We're appropriately tense now."

"All told, there have been at least three thousand, four-hundred deaths since these attacks began," Akeno stated bluntly, like ripping off a band-aid.

While the others there, including the leprechauns all gasped, cursed or just looked sick, Harry slowly raised a hand to his face, rubbing at his face as he took that in, his other hand clenching into a fist. *And here we are a day and a half into our investigation with only the vaguest idea of what is going on, and little to no idea of what to stop it! We're fumbling in the dark, and I just know these attacks are going to get worse.*

Seeing Harry's distress, Akeno reached for his hand while Kala stood up and moved behind the sofa where she began to knead his shoulders. "Stop that," she whispered. "You weren't even aware of this problem until a few weeks back in Earth-time. And you were busy with the Irish issue for most of that. Do not blame yourself or get frustrated over something

you can't do anything about. Trust me, that never ends well. Think about what we can do from now on, My lord."

Harry twitched at that, frowning. "Even you are doing that My Lord stuff now Kala?"

"It is appropriate, my husband~," Akeno teased, trying to jolly Harry out of an impending funk.

But Yubelluna was serious as she returned from carrying the dishes away. "Harry you are our captain, our leader not just our, our lover," she blushed, looking down at her hands for a moment before staring at him fiercely. "Yes, we've walked into a much more confusing, mysterious issue than we expected. But we aren't without recourse, and you are not alone. We trust you and know you can figure out what we need to do going forward."

Harry stared into Yubelluna's purple gaze then looked into Akeno's violet eyes before tilting his head back to look at Kala, who was still kneading his shoulders. All three had a look that told him they trusted Harry, and looking around, the others all had the same look, even Husukai and Tiamat.

He breathed in deeply. *No, don't think like that Harry. You've got the tools to start doing something about this even if we can't excise it at the source. Runes, Blessings, and people, you have access to all of them. I wager whoever is behind this can't match your people's abilities. If we can't go for the jugular or do anything about the whole problem, we need to stop what we can see and worry about taking the offensive when we can.*

"You just thought of something, didn't ya, Harry," Tonks asked, smiling at the determined gleam that had just entered Harry's eyes.

"Yes. I, I'm sorry Tonks, all this time I was thinking if we could only find the source of all this trouble we could shut it down fast. Find where the local Chaos Brigade branch is, and it still might be the CB, they could be infighting, and hunt them down. But that's just not the case." He leaned forward, tossing off his doubt and uncertainty as he came at this problem from a new angle. "So, we need to change tactics. We are now in prevention mode, like the Aurors have been. We need to let our enemy make a mistake while we keep building up our information. And our numbers."

Everyone there nodded agreement, even Tiamat and Harry went on. "Hermione, Padma, I'm pulling you out of the field for now."

"Thank you!" Padma bowed where she was sitting, looking very relieved. "The library and the research was nice, the brush with death offset that and then some."

Hermione snickered quietly, put an arm around her wife's shoulders, while Harry merely nodded and moved on. "Yubelluna you'll stay with them here, taking over for Akeno. You're Bombardier Sacred Gear and bandrui powers are most useful on the defense. I'll also

want you to work on the maps, see if there's any connection between places where these attacks have occurred, or more likely, if there's any kind of pattern overtime. The dog can stay with you as guard. We can rotate him out with Kiba or the others occasionally."

"From what Proudfoot told us I don't think there will be any kind of connection or pattern," Tonks warned.

"I'm not looking for the size or amount of the attacks, I'm asking about where they occurred, how fast there were follow-on attacks in each city, whether any city hasn't been hit as often, that kind of thing," Harry answered.

Holding a hand up, Akeno put her own two cents in. "I've already begun to put a timeline of them together, and with the magical map you should have a good head start."

Harry nodded her way, squeezing her hand, before turning back to Yubelluna. "I also want you to work on your bandrui powers. Play your violin outside on the streets near the hotel every day, be seen and, get a feel for how the mystical connection between us operates here in Egypt, while I try to figure out what kind of spells to use to banish the undead like I did back when Kiba, me and the others fought those Warrior Skeletons."

"Of course!" Hermione laughed suddenly, although she hadn't heard the story about the warrior skeletons before. "Manannán Mac Lir was the ferry man to the land of the dead in the Tuathan pantheon. You might well have some kind of powers that will enable you to deal with the undead quickly, which will only leave the conjured monsters for everyone else to deal with. But what do you want me and Padma to work on?"

"Spells," Harry declared bluntly. "Anti-undead spells for the Aurors and Shinsengumi, spells we can use on the undead without harming living people, as well as spells to just... get the people out of the way. Maybe it won't be as much of a problem at night, but there are just too many civilians around during the day."

Tonks nodded in firm agreement at that, remembering how many Alexandrians had died to the lances of the Mamluk cavalry as they closed on the wizards earlier that day. "Too bloody right."

"Agreed, of course, I'm not going to argue with either of you about combat related matters. But I still want to investigate that bit of graffiti. How it was hidden under a waring array seems important."

"You can work on that at night if you want or reach out to our doctor friend and have him do it," Harry answered. "I agree it seems interesting, but I don't know if that's the same thing as important."

"To return to the idea of anti-undead spells, I believe perhaps that we should reach out to Aunt Suzaku," Akeno spoke up once more. "The Himejima clan and the other clans who were fully aware of the mystical side of things rather than the merely magical in Japan are used to

dealing with restless spirits. I might be able to quickly create some runic arrays or perhaps ofudas to combat them, but having her on hand would certainly speed that research up.”

“Excellent thinking,” Harry smiled warmly at her, happy to see everyone getting into this now. Once he set aside the idea of simply hunting down whatever was behind this and started to deal with the attacks as they were, a lot of his guilt and doubt disappeared, and it was obviously the same for everyone else.

“I’ll call home tomorrow and have Rias pass on that message, and then go get Suzaku whenever she wishes. When I send back to leprechauns, I’m also going to take a moment to speak to the dwarves and everyone else in Danan. I want them to keep working on getting the griffins and dwarves ready for whatever we might need them for. If the attacks get even worse, we could be looking at someone not only trying to overthrow the statute of secrecy, which would be bad enough, but simply taking control of Egypt openly with magic. If that’s the case we’ll need more troops to fight throughout Egypt instead of just one city.”

“In that case, we will need to work with the Aurors. They have very good reaction times as it is, but if we spread out their men, they might be able to get to attacks fast enough to capture whoever is behind the undead and monsters,” Husukai stated.

But Tonks shook her head. “Not really. There’s a dozen tricks we can pull to speed up their reaction time that we learned them during the war against Riddle. I’ll work with Proudfoot and the rest on that startin’ tomorrow but moving them physically into the different cities probably won’t help much. We could have a few Aurors assigned to any of the small communities out there, but that’s about it.”

Seeing Husukai nod, Harry went on. “Similarly, Kala, Akeno, when you aren’t working on those ofudas, I will want you to work with the Shinsengumi on tactics. We’ll want to perfect our doctrine against these attacks, so that we can pare down the numbers needed to combat each one in turn and thus deal with a greater total number of attacks. I am not going to let us spread out past the suburbs until we can deal with any size attack with only two or three people, regardless of who those three people are.”

“We leprechauns be part of that,” Ysabel interjected. “We can coordinate response times better than you longshanks, and, if we get there in enough time, and there be not enough people around to disturb us, we might be able to track whoever is conjuring the undead or whatever into being. All we need is a bit of cloth, or a shoeprint. Same with yer dog.”

*If it is a person who actually has to be on scene to be doing it. But if it is someone who is connected to the magical structure of Egypt like I and the Fae Queen were during our battles in Tir Na Nog, that could be useless,* Harry thought, but kept that idea to himself for now. “Good thinking. Meanwhile, I’ll continue to probe the Nile and try to determine what magic is hiding underneath the Blessing. If what’s there is connected to these incidents, I will try to separate it

out and then tear the spell apart if I can do so without damaging the rest of the enchantments on the river.”

He shivered, shaking his head. “I refuse to remove that Blessing, not unless I **know** I can replace it instantly. I have no idea what the impact to the Nile or anything else would be if I just removed it suddenly, but even if there wasn’t an immediate physical response from ending an enchantment so ancient and powerful, the long term impact would still be very bad.”

Falling silent, Harry looked around to see if he had anything to add, then smiled. “I think that’s enough brainstorming people. Let’s head to bed, we have several long days ahead of us, I think.”

Unfortunately, their night was interrupted. Around four hours after everyone bar Harry Kala and Akeno were asleep, the map in the main sitting area began to pulse with light and wail.

Hastily throwing on some clothing and leaving Akeno more than a little annoyed, Harry raced out, staring at the map, and then looked over to where Yubelluna had woken up even more abruptly than he had, having slept out on the sofa. The doors to both of the bedrooms then bust open and Kiba stepped out from one, while Kala, having thrown on a bathrobe stepped out of the other while Akeno was busily cursing like a sailor behind her.

“I’m going. Kiba, with me, if any of the monsters are there, you can handle those, while I do crowd control. If there’s undead, there’s no time like the present to see if I can effect do anything about them without resorting to direct attack spells,” Harry ordered. He glanced at the map, then pulled out one of the enchanted stones from their pouch and heading out to the patio, noting absently it was already pulling at his hand.

There, they found the dog and Tiamat sleeping. Tiamat was still in her smaller Dragon body and had already heard the noise as had the dog who was about as far away from the dragon as possible.

Without a word Harry and Kiba took to the air, with Kala and Tiamat on their heels quickly. Akeno took a bit longer and was still annoyed when she finally caught up to them.

This attack was occurring on the outskirts of town near the port that dealt with bulk freight. Undead legionnaires had roused themselves from their slumber underneath the waves and were attacking the workers there. Several Aurors had already arrived by the time Harry and the others arrived on the scene but the legionnaires had mixed up with the people, forcing the Aurors to be very careful with their spell work. Even using Stupefy wouldn’t work, that would simply knock out the people running away and the few people fighting, leaving them open to be attacked.

From the air, Harry stared down at the group, then reaching inside of himself, Harry brought out his magical power into one arm, then his hand, as he gestured down. The spell was barely formed, but Harry kept his mind on an image in his head, the image of the ferry, carrying

the dead from one world to the other. A harsh bright light appeared in his hand as he shouted out "Begone! Return to your rest!"

The spell washed out from Harry, covering several dozen blocks. And as it did, the undead below them disappeared instantly, banished back to wherever they had come from.

"Ara, that was rather anticlimactic," Akeno drawled, pushing some sweaty hair out of her eyes with irritation, as the Aurors all around them stared at Harry in awe. "I don't think I needed to...mm..."

Harry had turned, pulling her into a hug, then kissing her tenderly while one hand, unseen by those below them, went to her rear, squeezing hard. Pulling back he whispered, "I promise to make it up to you." Then, as Akeno blushed happily, looked down at the ground once more, watching the Aurors swoop down and start to modify memories.

*That was a lot easier than the time we dealt with the Skeleton Warriors. It's just a summoning spell then, there's no will on the other side of it!!!* And watching, Harry could tell that the spell hadn't harmed any of the civilians below, and that made him happy, pulling Akeno against him, his teeth bared in a fierce grin. "Yes, I think we can deal with this."

**OOOOOOO**

Over the next two days, the attacks continued throughout all of Egypt. With Alexandria being mostly patrolled by Harry's fellows, this allowed Proudfoot to indeed redistribute some of his men to the few smaller communities, allowing them to respond faster. And whenever they ran into a particularly large one, they were able to call in Kiba, Issei and the others. Cairo and its surrounding area was also turned over to Dulio and his group, since, to the surprise of everyone, Dulio had let Irina call Issei and tell him that more than a hundred more exorcists had arrived. They still weren't willing to work with Harry and his group, but they were willing to look the other way as they continued their own investigations.

The leprechauns also proved to be a force multiplier, able to travel with the wizards on their broomsticks, communicate, and fight both undead and monsters with equal ease although they hated fighting the undead. There was no way they could fight them without closing with their hammers, and that produced... unfortunate results when magically amplified hammer blow met rotting flesh.

Hermione and Padma also had great progress creating a series of spells to help the Aurors and Shinsengumi deal with the attack, bouncing back to Danan for a day and then back, using the time difference to good effect. One spell was simply a modified Leviosa spell, which, while power intensive, was easy to cast. It would simply lift all living things in its radius, up out of the way of the Aurors, who would then deal with the undead. Up to this point, the undead and monsters were a purely land based issue, giving the Aurors an advantage the others expanded on.

Akeno too had come up with something by the third day in Alexandria: paper ofudas that could banish the undead. Keeping them from returning was much more difficult, as most of the spells of that sort depended on being used on what could be termed holy ground, but the ofudas helped the Aurors and Shinsengumi tremendously, so much so that keeping up with demand was a problem and kept Akeno out of the field, much to her chagrin.

That was alright though, as it allowed her to perform some experiments on one of the columns with the Ra sign on it. But she wasn't able to discern anything much about it, other than the magic within was tied into the magical structure of Egypt. That was enough for Harry to order a few of them removed, just in case. Tiamat worked on that, while also mapping out how many of them there were elsewhere, slowly moving away from Alexandria.

On the fourth day in Alexandria, Suzaku arrived along with several of her family members. Most, once given hotel rooms, were put on creating ofudas to further help with the idea of 'area denial' in terms of the undead and even the conjured animals. Suzaku joined in on that side of things as well... after dragging Loup into his hotel room for an hour and Issei wept bitter tears at seeing another set of immensely fine oppai being off the market.

That day, Harry spent most of breakfast - on the phone with Rias, Yasaka, Kuno and Lily it being four in the afternoon in Kuoh and both out of school. Beyond basically exchanging sweet nothings with the one and catching up with the other, he was filled in on how well his simulacrum was doing covering for him in class. But the most important thing was that Rias had convinced two Gremory clan members and their peerages to be ready to step in if she called for them, and even reached out to her cousin, Sairaorg. "In case we need even more big guns than you and Tiamat. And can I say again how much I am displeased by being stuck in school at this point? I could honestly teach most of my classes now."

Harry didn't really want to call them in, since if they did, he would have to, ironically, Obliviate any of the Aurors who saw them in action. The Shinsengumi and the ofudas had covered a lot of what Akeno and the others could do so far, and Harry's own abilities were being put down to him being the Man Who Conquered. But Harry didn't think the greater Wizarding World was ready for the revelation of their being other magical societies just yet. Or at least, he didn't want to be the reason it became aware of them, because then he would be the one dealing with the fallout.

Still, despite an atrocious start, the change of tactics, the new spells, the reorganized reaction forces and the various special abilities Harry's group brought to the battle were turning the tide. The defenders were now able to bring more power to each attack, crushing them. In turn that kept the death toll from rising too much more after the evening attack on Harry and Tonks.

For his part, Harry spent a few hours every day working on molding the spell he had used that night, enlarging the area he could cover with it and working with Yubelluna so she could use the same. Beyond that, Harry spent his time delving into the Nile, slowly pushing his

will into the magic within the ancient river, building a better idea of what spells were upon it, and the layout of the local magical structure.

It was slow going as those spells resisted his attempts, but Harry's willpower carried him forward. He was getting close he could feel it, every day it was easier for him to impose his will, to peel the Blessing away, and soon enough, Harry felt he would be able to trace the other magics within the Nile, or at least figure out what they were doing. Whether that would be enough to let him find whoever was doing this, he didn't know, but it would be a start.

OOOOOOO

"Mistress, I cannot hold him off for much longer! This former human is **powerful**, vibrant in a way that I am not, even in my home territory. He will overcome me soon, and though I do not think he will be able to break the Curse on the Nile, he will at the very least understand what is there. He could, perhaps, if he is more subtle than I believe, even trace the magical structure of Egypt to here," the ancient shade of a dead god whispered, his voice strained, knowing that his final destruction could be the result of such a report, and, like all immortal beings, fearing death beyond all else.

Nefertiti bit her thumb angrily, her new tail swishing behind her as she thought furiously. "Damn it, and damn Potter! How could he just, just fall into the power that my husband and I have been chasing for millennia! And now be here, trying his damndest to get in our way."

"Agreed. I believe I hate that man more than I have ever hated anyone before. He simply stumbles into power, while we had to experiment, steal, and murder for every aspect of our own."

Nefertiti quickly whirled around, a hiss on her lips which died as she saw her husband standing in the doorway. Akhenaten took in her new features, eyes alight with some amusement and more than a hint of lust. "I see that you did not just get the bare Nekoshuu features and abilities from Kuroka, darling. We will have to **experiment** with that in the future."

Hurrying over, Nefertiti gave him a quick hug, very deliberately pressing her newly enlarged breasts into his chest, then stepped back, casting several diagnosis spells on them. He was still a little weaker physically than she would've liked, but his magical reserves had built back up to normal, and she breathed a sigh of relief. "Good, you are fit to resume our work. I'm very afraid that Harry Potter is getting closer to our secret, or at least to one of our secrets, every day. He's also removed some of the columns in Alexandria, tossing them into the sea."

Akhenaten nodded firmly. "We will need to release some of our other greater servants to help. But beyond that, I believe we need to push up the timetable even more than we already have. We will begin tomorrow night my wife. And at that point, Potter will be far too busy to do anything about the Harvest until it is far too late."

**End Chapter**



