

I don't own Harry Potter, and I can't draw.

I got this back from [Nad Destroyer](#), and then spent all day editing it with Grammarly. The Correctness version. So... yea... Clarity is next, but I wanted to give you all an extra day and night to look it over and point out any glaring mistakes if you can before I post it over on fanfic.

Enjoy.

Chapter 29: Rebuilding and New Duties

Thanks to the fact that their magic carpets had come through the battle relatively intact and that they no longer needed to fear warning the enemy that they were coming, Akeno, Cú Cuchulain, and the rest of the surviving attack force turned straight for Alexandria. They had lost five men, three Indian infantrymen, and two Aurors, with many of the survivors wounded in various ways.

Cú Cuchulain and Koneko had been the most battered, having taken the lead in fighting Wadjet and Meretsegar. But both had healed from their wounds by the time the last carpet took off from Amarna. The others hadn't.

All of them were now flying the magic carpets. Even those who could fly didn't have the energy for it. Indeed, the only two who seemed to have any energy at all were their new 'prisoner', although Kuroka's actual place with them was up for debate, and Cú Cuchulain, who looked positively energetic. For Ireland's most famous son, violence and war were like bread and butter. As for Kuroka, she had been locked up for several days and had physical type energy to burn. On the other hand, in terms of magical or chakra-type energy, she didn't have much at all. Kuroka had been drained of most of her Nekoshuu abilities by the ancient queen Nefertiti, who had coveted her Nekoshu abilities and looks.

The process had left Kuroka a bare shadow of herself. Only a single tail waved lightly behind her. Her breasts were much smaller, and her hair had lost its luster. For that matter, Kuroka's overall health seemed well below the norm for a Nekomata.

Despite that, she was humming in delight as she laid out like any cat would in the sunlight. Beside her, Koneko also lay splayed out, purring lightly. But Ddraig's gauntlet was still on her arm, just in case.

"Nyaa, that's a dangerous letter opener you've got there, Shining Son of Ireland," Kuroka stated, raising her hands to make the chains that had been conjured for her by Hermione jangle against one another. Just because she had said she wasn't going to try and run away or return to the Khaos Brigade was not enough reason for either Akeno or Hermione to trust the former terrorist. "It's not like I'm going to run away. And as badly drained as I am, I'm about as dangerous as a week-year-old kitten, nyaa."

"Power isn't everything, and I know your type. So long as you can think, you're never going to be truly captured. That means if you wanted to, you'd be looking for ways to escape. I'm just here to make sure that you know the penalty for trying," Cú retorted.

Normally, Cú would be flirting with this girl like no one's business. She had an okay body, wasn't claimed and seemed the type to be into some frisky fun. But Cú was in something of a bad mood at the moment. The whole fight within the underground reversed pyramid annoyed him immensely. Fighting slave soldiers was all well and good when you were exchanging blows, but once reason returned, it left a bad taste in Cú's mouth, reminding him of several dark times in his old life when he was forced to fight his best friend, Ferdiad.

Then, there was the fact that their primary enemies had fled. They had retreated like dogs with their tails between their legs, a euphemism that came quickly to the Hound of Ulster, but there was some truth to it. Instead of fighting, staying and trying to use their ill-gotten power right away, the enemy had done, as much as it galled him to admit it, the smart thing by retreating. *Maybe things would've been different if they had achieved their full goal, but thanks to our attack and whatever Potter's been up to, I don't think that happened. But speaking of...*

Still looking at Kuroka with a forbidding expression, Cú shouted out, "Hey, Sadist Girl, have you been able to get through to the High King yet?"

Hearing the nicknames, Kuroka cocked her head thoughtfully to one side. They sounded like taunts. At least, the first one was. But Cú's tone had been respectful when he used the term High King, making her wonder what the real meaning behind it was and who it could possibly be.

"No, I still can't raise Harry," Akeno answered both Cú and the silent Kuroka's question from her own carpet, which flew nearby. "He's not answering on the magic mirrors, and since I don't have a radio, we don't have any other way to communicate with them. I don't know the Patronus spell, and my little Oni can't fly or teleport. Drat it. And I am not even going to comment on how you know about my proclivities. I am not in the mood for banter, Doggie."

Cú barked a laugh at that but turned his attention back to the direction the group was going.

The entire formation was flying close together, almost huddled into a clump, such was their exhaustion. The battle had been brutal, and no one, Shinsengumi, Egyptian or Devil, was willing to try and spread out just in case there were still some kind of enemy forces around. That, and dread for what they were going to find when they started to hit civilization. Given how much of the ritual Hermione and the others had figured out after the two would-be gods had retreated, not even Cú or Tonks could work up much enthusiasm for joking around, although Tonks made a few desultory efforts before falling silent.

The reason behind the pillars, the plot behind the entire night of horrors, was to fuel a single ritual. A ritual based on faith and powered by the, as described in Egyptian magic, portions of the individuals within the area of influence of the pillars were the physical aspects of the Harvest. The Ba, the physical vitality of the people so caught. The Ka, the magical energy if they had any. And finally, the Ib, the soul of the individual, was opened up to the Harvest by the victim's faith in the power behind the pillar.

Those pillars within Alexandria had been destroyed during and directly before the night of horror had begun, thanks to Harry's instincts and Tiamat's concerns. Since then, the ones in the combat zones, the cities of Damietta and Damanhur, had also been targeted for destruction since the people within them over time as the battles for those cities continued. Before that, the Egyptians had vetoed any idea of spreading that destruction since the pillars had been safe zones against the monsters that Akhenaten and Nefertiti had summoned. But Akeno knew that Harry had been willing to destroy them regardless and might well have been able to destroy a majority of them eventually in the triangle where his artificial sun and aura of divinity could reach.

That was a far cry from all of Egypt, unfortunately. The attack group had pushed well beyond the territory Harry had begun to reclaim in order to strike at Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Which meant they would soon see firsthand what had been left behind. This had already begun to haunt Hermione, Bill and the locals, all of whom were clenching their hands together in prayer, praying that Hermione had been wrong.

Unfortunately for the people of Egypt, Hermione wasn't wrong.

What little conversation there was going on died with the suddenness of a guillotine as the route of the Nile brought them into the city of al-Minya. At first, nothing seemed unusual. From a distance away, especially up in the air, they couldn't make out much detail. The city seemed mostly intact at first. But then they flew over the city, and the damage to it became apparent. As did the dead.

Hundreds of bodies. Thousands. Not the bodies scattered around, the outcome of the battles the night previous. That would have been bad enough. But the dead slain by the monsters Akhenaten had summoned up was barely a few thousand in al-Minya.

Perhaps because of its proximity to Amarna, this city had an abundance of pillars throughout it. This meant that the majority of the city's inhabitants had been alive until the ritual finished. Instead, the bodies were laid out in perfect concentric circles around the pillars, coating the ground so much that the streets and even rooftops were obscured by them. Those visible from the sky looked almost as if they had simply fallen forward from where they had been kneeling or bowing in prayer to the pillars.

But the silence, the stillness of the dead, was upon them all. Thousands. Hundreds of thousands laid out in windrows around the pillars that had slain them as a horde of flies began

to descend on them. It was easily the most horrifying thing anyone in the attack group had ever seen, and none were unaffected.

The Egyptians began to weep or scream, turning their heads away, hugging one another almost like children, knowing this would possibly spell the death knell of their nation. Tonks just stared her jaw slack, her skin going so white it almost became translucent. Bill turned away, clutching his wand in both hands, while Hermione leaned over the edge of the carpet she was on and began to throw up. Even Koneko, Akeno, the Aurors and the Shinsengumi turned away. Koneko buried her face into Akeno's chest as they clutched at one another, only the need to keep navigating the magic carpets keeping the Shinsengumi from losing it.

Even Kuroka, who had not been informed of the full import of the ritual that her former captors had created, stared, her eyes wide and her face pale with shock. "W, what is this, nyaa?"

"This is what your captors were trying to do. To use magic to siphon off the power of belief and faith, power of life and soul from their victims throughout Egypt," Hermione said between gasps, trying to gain control of her churning stomach. "W, we were too slow. We were too late. I was too late to figure out what was going on. I should have..."

"None of that," Tonks growled, reaching over and rubbing Hermione's back, shaking her head. "This is no one's fault but the bastards who felt that godhood was worth sacrificing a whole nation to. We figured out what they were doing and tried to stop it. It's not our fault that our enemy decided to pull the trigger despite our best efforts."

Hermione's silence told Tonks she didn't believe it, but that was fair enough. Tonks knew she wouldn't be the only one who was going to blame themselves for not doing enough. *Hell, I wonder if that's why Harry hasn't returned our attempts to contact him yet, that he's wallowing in, what's the term for beating yourself up, self-flagellation? Yeah, that's what Harry's probably doing right now. Survivor's guilt is going to be horrible from this.*

As they passed over al-Minya, silence once more reigned through the attack force as they all stared, numb at the realization. How many millions of people had just died? How many bodies lay under the sun, scattered in their thousands throughout the cities of Egypt, piled up like leaves around the pillars that Pharaoh and Nefertiti had created? They had no way of knowing and no real hope.

That changed as they passed over Abū Qurqās. Here, the pillars had not been quite as thick on the ground, and there had been far more people slain by the blades of the Jackal Men and the rest of the monsters. And here, many of those had been saved, torn from the jaws of death itself by Dawn Healing's Balance Breaker.

Hundreds, perhaps several thousand or more people milled around the streets of Abū Qurqās, shouting at one another, trying to figure out what was going on. All of them, knowing

they had been dead, then revived somehow, only to find themselves surrounded by dead with no apparent reason for them to be so.

Without any instruction given, the attack force halted in the air above as the Egyptians stared. One of them was shell-shocked. "This, this is my hometown. I, I might know some of those people. But they don't look like they were within the pillar. Were all those people down there somehow able to hide from the monsters?"

"I don't know, but I..." Hermione's voice broke off as the people in the town below noticed them and began to shout, either in anger, question or fear at the sight of the flying carpets.

Thinking quickly, Hermione waved her wand at her throat. "You all might want to cover your ears. Sonorous."

While everyone around her covered their ears, Hermione stuck her head over the side of the magic carpet, showing remarkable courage for someone who was afraid of heights. Then her voice boomed out so loud it rattled Koneko and Kuroka's ears despite the two Nekoshu covering their ears as much as possible. "People of Egypt, remain calm! The people of Alexandria and the territories surrounding it are intact! They will send help to you! Questions about what has happened will be answered later. Concentrate on surviving, working together, and getting out of the sun for now!"

She looked back over her shoulder at Akeno, an unasked question in her eyes, but Akeno shook her head firmly. "We don't have any medical supplies, food or anything else. The people down there don't need conjured meals... we could maybe use Aquamenti spells?"

"In a place as dry as Egypt that will not work as well as it would elsewhere, but..." Tonks began, then nodded, and grabbing a broomstick, she jumped off the magic carpet, zooming down. The next second, her own amplified voice hit the people below. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls of all ages, if someone could point me to an empty cistern or someplace to store water? I can at least solve one issue you're going to face until help arrives."

In Egypt, no matter where you were, fending off the heat and the impact of the sun was always a problem. Egyptians were used to facing those problems, but in modern times, water at least had rarely been a problem so long as you were in a town of any sufficient size. But right now, there was still no power, which meant no electricity and no running water.

Despite several of their members shouting out about Shaitan and the devilry of magic, more than a hundred survivors of all sorts started to rapidly organize. One man, who looked like a veteran of some kind, shouted the loudest. Moments later, the group was organized, racing into several shops and coming out with tubs of all kinds along with buckets.

"Oh yeah, boys, that's the stuff," Tonks caroled, both honestly happy there were so many survivors here, well out of the 'safe' zone within Alexandria, and that the locals were able to work together. She was also letting her normal ebullience do what it could to remove the fear of magic from the locals.

Her pink hair nearly glowing now, Tonks cast Aquamenti several times, even going so far as to zoom directly over the target tubs. She used it like a water gun or a waterfall, flicking the water up and then down or around in a curve. The sight of the water uplifted the spirits of the survivors, and a few children even cheered, somehow able to ignore the sight of the bodies lying nearby.

Above Tonks, Akeno smiled at the sight but knew water was only one problem facing the survivors below. What about food? Sanitary services? While Egyptians might be well used to being able to do without cleanliness and had long since developed ways to purify water or get enough water. But on this scale? That would be tough. To say nothing about food or medical supplies.

Although as she gazed down at them, Akeno didn't see any injuries among the living. *How odd. I wonder how they were able to survive?*

Rolling back onto the carpet, Hermione breathed in deeply, closing her eyes and trying to imagine she was laying on the carpet that was where carpet and people should be, on the ground somewhere rather than speeding through the air. She tried to ignore the fact that she could feel the wind flowing over her body even now. "We're going to face a humanitarian crisis like the world has never seen."

"To say nothing of the fact that you and your fellow wizards and witches, and perhaps even the Three Factions, will want to do what they can to make certain that the secret of magic doesn't get out," Akeno agreed, frowning. "Which means we can't let the locals call for help even after the Interdict is lifted.

"And how exactly do you think you're going to accomplish that?" Cú snorted. "If the Egyptians decide they don't want to be memory charms, there's more than enough of them to put up a fight."

"I don't know. Perhaps Harry would be strong enough to cover the whole country with a memory-altering spell of some kind? Lord Lucifer would have that same kind of strength, but I don't know if he would have the spell repertoire for it. But Harry has his illusion-based magic now, so it is possible."

Like wizard-style Obliviates, demonic memory charms usually had to be targeted to the individual. If you use the same memory charm on a hundred people, they would all have the same memory, which would be highly suspicious. *Of course, you could also tie in some kind of compulsion not to talk about it. But Harry might be able to subtly change the memory we insert*

into people's minds with his mastery of illusion magic. And yet, I do not see my Harry doing that kind of thing or even allowing it. We fought beside these men and women. We fought for them against this homegrown evil, an evil that should have been discovered and dealt with ages ago if we magicals had but known of it!

Shaking her head to get rid of that thought, Akeno turned back to her original thought. *It would be churlish to take the memories from them in such a manner. But what else can we do? The world is facing so many problems already the last thing anyone, magical or not, is another reason to come along to start a large-scale conflict.*

"That's a conversation for later," she said aloud. "Right now, magic might be able to help us deal with this humanitarian disaster."

Hermione nodded, shook herself, and slowly sat up, staring ahead of them. "Get Tonks up here. We need to keep moving."

This took a bit because Tonks was a very personable individual, and there were a lot of tubs to fill with water. Soon, Tonks returned to the larger group, hopping from her broomstick to the carpet. "You know you could have just flown, yes? You're a devil, Tonks. Good grief, you used your wings last night," Akeno teased lightly, hoping to further lighten the mood.

"Eh, it was a force of habit. But listen, those folks down there, get this, they were shouting about how they had come back from the dead. Not been saved, not come out of hiding or whatever. Everyone I talked to down there had memories of dying against the monsters, but they're now alive," Tonks reported.

Hermione and the others all blinked in surprise at that while Akeno bit her lip. *Asia. Asia and her Dawn Healing could do something like that if Harry empowered it further. But why here? Unless it wasn't only here...* "That is... interesting. How many people are there down there?"

"Around eight thousand or more. That's just an estimate, but I think it's a good one."

At that reply, Akeno shook her head, setting aside her next thought, which was to leave the local youth, Bill and Koneko or Tonks, here to help build some kind of order. "Then we can't afford to break off any of us to help them."

"Hey!" the local barked angrily before his sergeant could stop him. "I can't..."

"Can you say there won't be a riot or backlash against the use of magic from any of those below? More than eight thousand people are down there right now, and that number could climb. Magic can do a lot, but against that many people, when we are constrained to nonlethal means of controlling them?" Akeno shot back, not heatedly, but firmly. "We need a fully organized relief effort, which we are not equipped for."

“Akeno’s right,” Hermione interjected, shaking her head. “I realize Tonks or Akeno could use magic on a large enough scale to stun those people, but even that would be a bad idea. After all, would we just leave them to bake in the sun until we returned? Besides, all of us running on fumes. We need rest, Pepper Up potions at a minimum.”

The local man subsided with ill grace, but his sergeant sat on him, explaining in a loud growl into his ear why the magic users were right. There would definitely be some kind of backlash against the magicals from this, and that estimate of the survivor’s numbers might well be on the low side, regardless.

At that point, the carpets resumed their journey, leaving the survivors of Abū Qurqās far behind quickly. Soon, Akeno could see another town in the distance. Moments later, they were close enough that Tonks, who had turned her eyes into those of an eagle, could see people moving already, walking along the roads in large clumps.

Knowing they couldn’t just pass these people by, the group stopped, and once more, Tonks, with Bill following her this time, headed down into the town. As Akeno became more concerned that she couldn’t raise Harry on the mirror that was locked on him in the communication network, they did what they could for the people below, conjuring up water and cover from the sun. They didn’t stay overlong but still reported the same thing as in the first city: that nearly everyone currently alive within, man, woman or child, had memories of dying against the undead and ancient monsters.

“What kind of miracle is this?!” Bill exclaimed as they finished explaining. “Seriously! I talked to a married couple and their kid. They were slain in their home all three, and then they were alive! No magic I know of could bring back the dead like this.”

Akeno and Koneko exchanged glances as Tonks took a turn biting her lip like Akeno had when the idea had occurred to her. “Asia’s Sacred Gear could maybe do it? But over such a wide area?”

“Maybe fueled by Harry’s power?” Hermione guessed. “Make it a, I believe they are called Blessings?”

“I don’t know, it’s possible. But if it is, I still can’t get through to him!” Akeno grumbled, now nibbling at a finger in anger and growing fear. *What could this kind of magic have cost them?*

“Have you tried reaching anyone else? What about some of the leprechauns assigned to communications with the various attack squads? They are the ones supposed to be handling most of the communication for our forces in the field,” one of the Shinsengumi suggested.

Somewhat chagrined at the fact that her need to hear Harry’s voice had overridden her logic, Akeno flushed faintly, then raised the communication button to her lips once more,

breathing out the instruction to let her talk to anyone within range. "To anyone out there, this is Akeno. The assault force is heading back to Alexandria, but we have yet to hear anything from Harry. Can anyone give me a report on what is going on with him and the overall situation? Should we continue to Alexandria or do what we can to help the locals as we see them?"

That would not have been Akeno's first choice. NBT if they stayed together, the group might be able to help the locals with everything, barring food.

While Akeno waited for a response, Hermione and the locals finished writing out a speech to give to the survivors below as they passed over them. Stay calm, do not panic, no looting, and so forth. It got all of the information about how the people should comport themselves across without giving any concrete answers to questions of what had happened and what help would be coming. That was enough for now.

Several dozen attempts later. Akeno got a response. A leprechaun's voice answered her, saying that he was on the Damanhur front, sounding incredibly harried. "The local commander is handling stuff okay after a right scary start, and we leprechauns be able ta talk to one another here. We also have enough water, and...we might have enough magic users and overwatch ta keep tryin' ta help the reawakened that young lass Asia brought back with the High King's help. But I don't know what's going on back in Alexandria. One of me clan members is sitting in on some kind of argument about what's ta be done, and there's a lot of shouting back there. It sounds as if that Proudfoot fellow is causing waves, and they might be getting overwhelmed by the revived like we were at first."

"What about my Aunt, Suzaku? What about Yasaka? What about Harry!?" Akeno nearly shouted the last word, barely keeping control of her emotions, considering he would never have let some kind of argument get in the way of helping so many people. *What did bringing back so many people cost him!?*

The leprechaun hesitated before stating, "I don't know about yer aunt, lassie. Sorry, I ain't got an idea who that might be. As for the other two, I know some kind of fox lady came through with Lily before the High Princess went back to Danan," the leprechaun answered, causing Akeno and Koneko to start, never having heard Lily being addressed like that before and not having heard that Yasaka had somehow arrived. Both wondered how that had come about but did not interrupt the leprechaun's words.

"I know that Issei character tried to call in some help and said he was with them, but we couldn't send anyone. That was the last we heard of them. I don't think any of them are dead, but they might be magically exhausted."

Akeno thanked the leprechaun and told him they would be heading straight back to Alexandria. "If you can, get in touch with someone back in Alexandria and tell them we'll need a talisman-backed jail cell set up to keep a Nekoshu under control."

"I don't know if I actually qualify as a Nekoshu any longer. I might still have some cat traits, but I certainly don't have any Chakra any longer, nyaa," Kuroka objected mildly as Akeno ended the call.

Akeno did not hear her, staring straight ahead, her eyes lost as she wondered what Asia, Yasaka and Harry had done. Shaking it off after a few moments, she turned to the Shinsengumi driving the magic carpet, growling out, "Is there any way to make these things go faster!?"

Carpets couldn't travel as fast as brooms, and both were much slower than jets or even passenger planes. More because the people and equipment could not handle moving at that speed than the fact that magic itself was similarly hampered. It would take them several hours to get back to Alexandria.

Yet before that, the group would pass over the urban sprawl of Cairo...

OOOOOOO

Irina and Xenovia had been leaning against one another, sharing a weary joke about their present circumstances in one of the pillar-protected zones when the Harvest struck, and everything went black. Irina had just a moment to understand what was happening, not even long enough to make her peace with the memory of the Lord Above when blackness took her.

It astonished Irina to discover that blackness was not forever. Instead, Irina found herself blinking her eyes open in confusion. Her mind only slowly began to come together, and when she did, Irina, for one brief moment, wished it hadn't. Because Irina and Xenovia, who she could see were stirring beside her, were the only ones around them alive.

Everywhere she looked, people slumped. Those who had been standing had fallen where they stood, their bodies becoming boneless heaps. Those who had been kneeling, bowing toward the pillar nearby, had collapsed, either to their sides or forward. Some few still lay where they had been bowing, their bodies locked in the position. And the faces of the dead... it was as if they had been drained of life, vitality, everything that had made the people around Irina living breathing humans was gone now. All that was left were corpses that looked as if they were hundreds of years old, left outside for that entire time, then for some macabre reason, dressed in modern clothing.

It was a horrible sight, and thus, it was no wonder that Irina began to scream.
"AHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!"

Xenovia, whose own mind was having trouble returning to working order, leaped to her feet, grabbing at Excalibur Explosion, grateful beyond words to find it still lying to one side of her. *Not*, she realized muzzily as horror started to replace the confusion, *that my weapon would be able to solve this problem*. "Wh, what happened here..."

Xenovia's voice gave Irina an anchor in the sea of horror, and she grasped at her friend's hand, gripping it so tightly it caused both girls a bit of pain, not that either cared at present. "I, I don't... I felt something, some kind of, of magic hit us? It, it killed us..."

"It did. I," Xenovia broke off, her voice drifting away, her tone becoming smaller, far less certain. Since the revelation about God being dead, Xenovia's voice had lacked the certainty (some would say zealotry) it had carried before. But even so, to hear her be so uncertain, so fearful was startling to Irina, who pulled her into a sideways hug. Buoyed by the hug, Xenovia continued. "I felt it, too. We... we were dead. But then how... and why just us?"

"I don't know the how, though I think the why is obvious," Irina said, her tone turning sad rather than horrified. "Look around you. What were all these people doing?"

"Worshipping the pillars like they were pagans," Xenovia answered, a tiny flicker of her previous attitude coming back for a moment.

"Exactly." Irina nodded, not calling Xenovia out on that. They'd argued very lightly about that point with Dulio, saying they should follow Harry's warning about the pillars. But they hadn't, and now not only had the two of them paid for it, but so too had thousands of other people. "Whereas we were just resting here in the... the safe zone," she spat that term, the very idea of it now a mockery of the frenzied hope and faith that the locals had built up in the pillars. "But we were not worshipping those pillars. We had no Faith in them."

Understanding the emphasis Xenovia put on the word 'faith' Xenovia nodded, keeping her eyes on the pillar like it was a target for her ire, trying desperately not to look at the hundreds of dead all around them. Tried hard not to think about the thousands elsewhere. "Belief, yes. We had learned that Belief gives power to the Heaven System. This, this whatever could have been somehow based on that..."

Irina nodded, and the two of them fell silent, unable to avoid looking at the dead around them any longer. For a moment, they clung to one another like each was a lifeline to sanity. The silence, the oppressive heat and above all, the dead around them. Here, a mother prayed surrounded by children. All dead, drained. There, a group of men lay, weapons they had been recently using to defend themselves out past the 'safe zone' laid nearby, the posture of the bodies speaking even now of exhaustion, despite their desiccated state. There was a father and mother, with the mother holding a toddler in her arms. All dead. Even the toddler had faith in the safety of the pillar in its message of belief. And that had been enough for the Harvest to take him.

It was that last sight that Irina grabbed onto. Her eyes widened as a thought occurred to her, and she was about to open her mouth when someone nearby shouted, "Ho there!"

Both exorcists turned, pulling away from one another automatically, their weapons rising, Excalibur Mimic shifting into a longsword as they stood far enough apart to wield their blades yet close enough to back one another up. But they needn't have bothered. The shouter

was one of the local Aza'imi, who had just jumped down from a nearby rooftop, showing the nearly inhuman level of training that all exorcists were given.

Irina relaxed while Xenovia took a moment to do the same, both insanely glad to see anyone alive in this nightmare. The man in question also seemed just as happy to see them. "Thank Allah you both survived! When that **thing** went off, my team and I were still outside. We had to, to watch everything as it happened." The man shivered, his eyes visible now as he had come up to them while speaking., looking into nothing for a moment. "That was atrocious. But it seemed your belief in God, no matter how false the faith you follow, was able to shield you."

"It wasn't. Not entirely. We... we died," Xenovia said, starting off strong and eager to burst the man's bubble but ending on a quiet tone. "I cannot speak to what miracle brought us back."

"We saw that too. We've also seen others returned to life. Indeed, many of our own that we lost throughout the night have returned." The Aza'imi had lost seven of their number through the night, but all but one, who had his head and upper body crushed under falling masonry had been returned to life somehow. "We are having trouble keeping in contact with one another and scouting the city at the same time. All electronics seem to still be out, but even so, we have found several hundred men, women and children from last night who were returned to life by some miracle from Allah," the man answered.

At that, Irina spoke up quickly, remembering the idea she'd had a moment before. "Babies! Babies won't have been able to have Faith, will they? They might have been returned to life as well. There aren't any here, but maybe in some of the other pillars?"

The man stared at her, then nodded sharply. "Good idea. Yes, babies would be born without sin or faith alike. If the miracle returned those who still believed in the True God, then it might have returned them to life as well."

Xenovia looked a bit uncomfortable, the topic of toddlers and babies always making her so, an odd feeling of longing and confusion coming to her. As she looked away, she saw a now-familiar head of blond hair in a nearby window. "Wait, what about Dulio?"

The other two looked in the same direction she was, and moments later, they had moved gingerly through the bodies to leap up to the window. None of them wanted to touch the dead bodies. Not only would it possibly cause the desiccated bodies to fall apart, but it seemed appallingly disrespectful. Inside the room where Dulio had also been resting, watching out past the 'safe zone' for trouble. Now Dulio lay, his head resting uncomfortably on the windowsill, his body practically as boneless as the hundreds of dead around them.

But he was just as obviously alive. He was breathing, his chest moving, but his eyes were still unconscious. Dulio's skin was also pasty wet to the touch. And when Xenovia tried to shake him awake, Dulio's body felt far frailer than it appeared, as if something inside of him was broken or had been weakened in ways they could not see. "I don't think whatever is ailing him

has anything to do with the pillars. Or if it is, it has somehow impacted him very differently than it has us.”

Xenovia could think of one way Dulio was different than herself, Irina and Aza’imi. *His Sacred Gear. How would it have been impacted by the... the ritual? The enchantment? The fell magic that took so many...* Xenovia shivered, concentrating on Dulio in order to not see the bodies of forty or so men who had fallen within the room, their bodies smacking together as they fell, a jumble of dead, obscene by any measure of the word.

She said nothing, simply wondering if the effect on Dulio was permanent if his Sacred Gear had somehow been taken, as the boy Issei’s had been. *He was able to live through that because he hadn’t activated his Sacred Gear, and the Gremory girl used one of her pawns on him to revive him. What will we have to do to Dulio to get him back to normal if his Sacred Gear was somehow taken? Or was it just drained and will reform slowly within his soul?*

“Regardless,” she said aloud, “We have to take care of him somehow. Have you been able to create a central control area or something?”

“We have gotten the locals on our side, but we have only barely begun to organize. Still, our safe house here in Cairo should do as a protective zone.” The Aza’imi, who hadn’t given his name or if he had in the past few days Xenovia couldn’t remember it, shrugged. “We can move Dulio there, and then we can get on um... baby hunting and everything else. Be warned, there’s a lot of that ‘anything else’.”

The joke actually made both girls chuckle, and the pair of them pulled Dulio up between them, heading back outside. By the time they were back outside under the sun, their moment of humor had faded. Needing to step around or over dozens of dehydrated bodies would do that to anyone.

Getting Dulio back to the safe house was easier once they jumped up to the rooftops. From there, the two of them joined the efforts to organize and bring together the thousands of living people throughout Cairo. Thankfully for the Aza’imi, none of the politicians, from the mayor on up, had survived. The body of the president had been found impaled on a piece of rubble.

Others, the prime minister in particular, had been found dead within the ‘safe’ zones’, a term that was still being used, although the tone had become derogatory now. This allowed the most senior Aza’imi to take command, to say nothing of the supernatural nature of the night’s events.

Among the living were a few dozen who had been able to find hiding spots away from the pillars, hidden from the monsters and undead. They had heard the message from Harry Potter. Now, even as they helped to organize and figure out what the survivors had to work with, they were all angry, thinking the Aza’imi should have listened to him and should have destroyed the pillars.

But the Aza'imi kept a lid on that by keeping everyone busy. This was helped by the number of survivors and the number of babies and children who were found alive. Most of the babies were found in the area around the pillars, women, babes, and young, having been given priority where space was at a premium.

But there had been many, **many** children who had died during the night. They had lacked the speed, strength, or intelligence to get them through the night, and their parents had either abandoned them or simply not been around for one reason or another. Now, they came forward, and most needed to be taken care of. The surviving police units were assigned to take care of them, and between them and the Aza'imi were able to keep order. But that order was straining when a shout from on high came to them from high above.

Akeno sighed internally, hoping that the exorcists, both branches, would be willing to work with them now. She tried hard not to let that thought, and the thought that they should have listened to Harry's warning, impact her tone as she spoke, one of the Shinsengumi keeping the magic carpet hovering above the locals. She and Hermione took turns explaining what had happened, as well as what Hermione had discovered about why this horrid Harvest had been created.

The knowledge that the majority of Egypt looked much the same as Cairo was beyond appalling. It took some time for that to be believed, but with no ability to argue against it, the Church and Islamic exorcists had to believe what they were being told. With that, they also understood that not only had Harry Potter been right, but he and Asia, the former Holy Maiden of the Church, had brought them back.

The followers of Muhammad did not do so well with that revelation, but Irina and Xenovia felt an odd feeling of vindication: that Asia Potter, the young woman whose words had renewed their own faith in the Word of God despite God being dead, had been willing to go to such lengths to save so many complete strangers.

However, the worst revelation to all of them was why this monstrous ritual had been set in motion. "How dare you say any magic could be created to make someone into a new God! There is only Allah!" shouted one of the Aza'imi held back by his fellows from attacking the magic carpet above.

"I am simply telling you what I believe they were trying to do. I have no idea why they thought it would succeed or if it did," Hermione retorted. "Perhaps it couldn't. I felt dirty just trying to figure out the number of runic arrays, enchantments and everything else down there, so I can't tell you for certain."

The Aza'imi still looked furious, but they subsided slowly. Eventually, the fact that Hermione and company didn't have anything to offer the refugees beyond water spells and transfigured food, "You'll not feel hungry, but it won't give you any actual nutrients, and no, we can't just transfigure ingredients into a meal, it doesn't work like that," caused the locals to

realize they weren't going to get the help they needed just yet. Moreover, after a quick conference, it was decided that the survivors in Cairo needed to be represented back in Alexandria.

"Simply because of the size of the city and how many survivors there are here because of this miracle, we need those in Alexandria to know what is going on here. Food, sanitation, and... and help to deal with the, the bodies. We need all that and more."

"Fine, but it needs to be someone who can work with us without causing further disruption. And you know we will be turning to magic, in particular the Wizarding World for help. The Interdict..." Akeno sighed, but all the exorcists nodded understandingly. While they were not as blindingly fanatical about it as the WW was, the three Factions all agreed that magic needed to be hidden. "Well, with that in place, we will need to work through the wizards to bring in any supplies we need."

That caused further issues, but reality could not be denied here. And with the results of not having heeded Harry's warning all around them, lying in masses of dead, even the most stubborn Aza'imi understood they needed help. But all of them also knew that they could not promise to not cause trouble, especially with the wizards and Devils. Really, that only left one choice.

Moments later, Irina smiled wanly at Akeno as the magic carpet rejoined its fellows above, and they started to fly away from Cairo, still following the Nile. "I, um, I don't suppose Issei is still with you all in Alexandria. Nothing has happened to him, or he hasn't been sent home? I, um, I could really, **really** use a hug right now."

"Oh my word, yes, that I can agree with exorcist-chan, even if my target for said feeling is not the same," Akeno muttered while the carpets started to speed up once more.

OOOOOOO

Alighting down on the roof of the building that had become the pseudo-headquarters for Harry and the alliance with the locals, Akeno gestured for Bill, Cú and Hermione to come with her. "The rest of you stay here and guard our prisoner until I'm certain we have a place to put her. Koneko, you stay here too."

Koneko nodded firmly. As much as she was worried about Harry and Asia, she knew that she probably couldn't help them if they were just magically exhausted. "I will watch Nee-sama."

Smiling at that, Akeno took a moment to look outside and grimaced. There were several large groups of people out there crowding the streets. They were being kept away from the military headquarters for now by a thick line of infantrymen, while she could see a dozen or more Aurors scattered around, too. And in the distance, she could hear shouting. And in the background, the growing sound of an unseen mass of people raising their voices in shock or rage. *That is not a good sign.*

Inside, Akeno and the others quickly made their way to the control room, where the first sight that greeted them was the sight of Proudfoot arguing with Husukai while Suzaku was to mediate between them. Nearby, Abraxas and his officers glared at them all. With them were five men not in uniform, looking both somewhat out of it and furious.

Several leprechauns were by the door, along with two dwarves, glaring at several Aurors and four regular soldiers. Whatever had been going on here, it was obvious that the formerly united front against Akhenaten had split into four disparate camps. *Which is probably why there are no Shinsengumi around here and so few soldiers. Idiots! With the mobs forming, they are at one another's throats?!*

Luckily, Akeno's arrival was quickly noticed, and Husukai called attention to them. "Excellent! Young Akeno, it is good to see you. I don't suppose you would have any wisdom to share with these old heads of ours?"

Proudfoot scowled but remained silent, nodding respectfully at Akeno and Hermione, the first two through the door. Similarly, Abraxas and the officers with him looked incredibly relieved that she and the others had arrived. Why that was, Akeno didn't know but felt it had something to do with why the forces from Danan were acting as peacekeepers. "Good to see you, Ms."

At that point, three of the civilians decided to shout at Akeno, their words coming out in a jumbled rush. It was evident they thought she was some kind of authority over the magicals and had decided to air their grievances with her. "You and the rest of you magicals are responsible for all of this! All of it! You should be burned at the stake like the Devils of Shaitan you are."

"How will you pay for the damages accrued by your fellow magicals? How much aid can we expect from you all to solve the problem that your actions caused?! Who is in charge here!? It certainly can't be you; you look like a college student, for Allah's sake."

While that made Akeno somewhat amused, after all, she was still just a senior in high school in human terms, the other nonmagicals grabbed and ran with it before she could say anything. "Are we supposed to believe that this everything was occurring because of some rogue magical? It sounds more as if you all pulled us into some kind of war, a war that was not of our making! Egypt has a lot of experience with that, let me tell you."

Proudfoot's voice then rose over the quartet, but what he was saying Akeno also did not want to hear right now. "You see! These blasted muggles can't handle what is occurring! It's better to put them all to sleep and use magic to try and put everything back together. We can come up with some kind of excuse or natural disaster to blame it on later!"

Abraxas glared at him, fingering a pistol at his side. "If you even try to take the memories of my men or me away, we're going to have more trouble right now than the mobs outside!"

Deciding that part of the problem here seemed to be too many voices and not enough brains, Akeno looked over at the Hound of Ulster. "Cú, please remove anyone who is currently shouting."

While normally he wouldn't be so quick to obey orders, this one sounded like fun, and Cú smirked. His spear left behind by the doorway for the moment, the Irishman strode forward, his hands flashing forward ripcord quick to grab two of the politicians by their shirts. Lifting them both into the air, Cú hurled them one after another out the door to smash into the opposing wall where Hermione had hastily conjured up a large cushion. They were swiftly joined by their fellow, although by that point, the two other civilians had gotten the message. Shouting imprecations, they hurried out after their fellows.

This allowed Cú to turn his attention to Proudfoot. The Chief Auror had barely been able to lift his wand to maybe threaten Cú before he too was hefted into the air, his wand hand grabbed and wand forced back into his own stomach by Cú. "You know, mate, I think we've had this discussion before. Didn't Harry mention how he was not going to go with the whole memory modification thing?"

"He did. Abraxas, who were those five and Proudfoot, and why in the world are you taking up that old refrain now?" Somewhat calmer now that the politicians had been removed and feeling a little guilty about how she had dealt with them (but not overmuch. Sometimes a tyrant could get things done after all), Akeno addressed both men in a far more normal tone of voice.

"Politicians. All of them are actually Parliament members. They were revived by the miracle that Asia and Harry were somehow able to perform and were here in Alexandria for a fundraiser last night. Thankfully, some of the people revived by that miracle have already proven useful. We've got several hundred of them working now on getting the electricity back on throughout the city, as well as the sewage system," Abraxas supplied.

He shook his head then. "As for the politicians, they shouldn't have been here, but they flashed their parliament IDs and then barged in past my soldiers before I could think up a way to politely keep them at arm's reach. Which made Proudfoot over there mutter something about memory charms. Obviously, we, all of us who were told of such things, were very angry about it. It went downhill from there."

"Of course you were. Proudfoot?" Akeno asked, her tone turning to one better used against a child who just did something that really should have waited until he was in the bathroom. It was a tone she was copying from Rias almost verbatim, but it worked. "Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

"They, we, we got your report that the enemy magic users had retreated. We've been getting reports all over that their minions, the undead and monsters, are all gone," Proudfoot answered, each word coming out stronger as Cú set him down and even let him keep his wand. It didn't occur to the man that the reason behind that was because Proudfoot was about as much a threat to Cú Cuchulain as a flea to a dog. "It's time for cleanup. We need to end the Interdict and call in more Auros to help clean up and start memory-wiping the entire blasted country. The standard operating procedure is to Obliviate first, then stun and keep them unconscious until everything is set up for whatever story we come up with. Surely even you... Whatever you are can..."

"Standard operating procedure?" Akeno interjected as Cú guffawed. "Do you actually have a standard operating procedure for when an **entire country** is impacted by a magic trick or ritual that saps the life from millions of people? Because if so, that is both horrifying and would be news to me."

Proudfoot shook his head, but his eyes burned with all the fervor of a true believer as he answered. "No, but I think we should still use the same procedure. Sweep out from here in large groups, immobilize and then Obliviate every muggle we come across. Numbers won't matter if we stay in the air. Keep them under magically induced unconsciousness until we have everything else in the country contained, until we have a story we can feed them. The golems, dwarves, and everything you've brought in can be of some help in rounding the muggles up. We **must** do this! The Statute of Secrecy must be maintained!"

Akeno's eyes were not the only ones to narrow at how Proudfoot seemed to lump the dwarves into what he called 'things' there, but before anyone else could speak up, Husukai added his own thoughts. "While I believe Proudfoot has jumped the gun on his timing and certainly should not have spoken of it so openly, I am afraid that the Chief Investigator is correct. While we in Japan do not enforce the Statute of Secrecy as Europe and the Americas do, we still do adhere to it."

What he did not say was that the Japanese magicals had not come to near worship the Statute as the Europeans had. To call the Statute the most important law belief, even to most magicals, was understating things. The idea that the Wizarding World needed to remain separate was seen as an inviolate law, like the sun rising or gravity, with the added caveat that the wizards themselves had to enforce it. There was a reason why the head of the ICW was able to hammer the Americans so much after Harry handed over evidence they had been influencing the muggles after all.

"The world is not ready to learn that magic exists, and worse, that magic has existed alongside them for so long, hiding away as we have," Husukai went on. "That is to say nothing about the revelations of the Devils, Church and Fallen. As bad as things are here in Egypt, letting out the secret of magic because of it would be even worse."

Akeno grimaced but understood that Husukai and Proudfoot had a point and thought she would agree with them. The world had a lot of problems already on its own, and if the fact that magic was still around got out, that would multiply those factors a millionfold. "...I can understand your points, but I can also understand Abraxas's point about not wanting to forget the reality of what happened here. We, all of us, fought alongside Abraxas, Sala and their soldiers. Many of them died fighting alongside your Aurors and the Shinsengumi. Can either of you look Abraxas or his men in the eye and say there is not some kind of camaraderie there?"

Both senior magic users nodded in reluctant agreement. Abraxas and his remaining officers breathed sighs of relief. But even as they did, Akeno could see in Proudfoot and Husukai the fear, the concern that the Statute could fall. While the Onmyodo government would possibly be able to handle that better than Europe, the idea was still intensely worrisome.

Still, Akeno could not let them try to enforce it now. *And I suppose I am now in a position of authority drat it.* "These men and their people deserve better than that from us. And I will not stand for it, and until Harry wakes up, I speak for the forces of Danan and our clan. Am I understood?"

Knowing that meant she had a force neither could match at present – it did include Tiamat, after all – both men nodded reluctantly. "Good. In that case, Bill find Mittelt. She can serve as our politeness enforcer until I return." *And thank any deity you believe in that I don't want to put Cú Cuchulain on that duty. He'd probably just knock everyone out, and then where would we be?* "I would recommend you sideline anyone who is liable to make trouble. Beyond that, I'd like to know how I and the forces of the Potter-Gremory clan can help. I am good with analysis and magical experimentation, but I think organizational help right now needs to be our priority going forward."

"We need to know what we have and can get before we can start helping the survivors Asia and the others brought back," Abraxas agreed. "We've been trying to get the civilian population organized, but there are so many people returned to us it's slowing everything down having to explain matters, as well as... well, far be it from me to complain about how happy families are when a slain loved one is returned to them. I'd estimate Asia's miracle returned every four out of six dead from last night. I praise Allah for sending her and the rest of you, but it has mucked up the works for now."

"Speaking of, I want to check on Harry and Asia before we get to work. Where are the two of them, Yubelluna and Yasaka?"

The magicals in the room all flinched a little. Then one of the leprechauns moved over to her, gesturing up to her shoulder, and Akeno nodded in permission.

He quickly scampered up Akeno's body, taking a moment to admire her hips for a second, as well as the sight of her breasts from the side like this before he was up on her

shoulder, shaking those thoughts off. *Now is not the time to be a horny little leprechaun, matey.* "I'll show ya to them, miss. Hopefully, one of ya can figure out what's going on with the princess."

Akeno nodded, once more noting that Asia was also being called a princess by the denizens of Danan now. *Although not High Princess. Odd.* "I will be back shortly, and I will help to try and organize the relief efforts and also hopefully figure out how to create a more detailed magical map. I would wager that will help us a lot going forward." She thought for a moment, then paused before turning away to look at Abraxas. "I understand that the US military forces are well-versed in disaster relief. Is that the same case for you?"

"I wish, but we don't actually practice disaster relief as often as we should," Abraxas admitted with a grimace. "I might be able to find a few units that have worked with UN peacekeeper forces, and I know Sala has. But for disaster relief on this scale? Those are different priorities and parameters. We'll need to keep order among the people or protect them from one another. Although I suppose passing out food and water would be organized the same."

"Water, power, sanitary needs, shelter," Hermione spoke up now for the first time since they'd entered the room, having let Akeno take the stage. Despite being able to rest on the magic carpet after the locals and Irina took over shouting out simple instructions to the survivors they passed over, Hermione was still utterly exhausted mentally and physically and had desperately been looking around for a Pepper Up potion. "Those need to be our priority. Fixing damaged areas, gathering people together, those can come after."

Abraxas nodded, fighting back a headache and exhaustion now that the tensions in the room had subsided. It had been a long night since this disaster crashed over them, and although the real dawn had come, it wasn't over yet. They had just finished the military side of things. The cleanup was going to be just as bad, if not worse.

He said this aloud, then looked at Akeno hopefully. "Unless you think that someone like Harry once he recovers or one of the rest of you have sufficient magic to just wave your hands and make everything back to normal?"

Cu snorted at that, shaking his head. "Not even I'm strong enough to do that over this wide an area. The Chromatic Dragon might have the power but not the magical knowledge. And that's only when it comes to repairing the cities and such. Not the people within them or the bodies. I don't know any healing magic, and I doubt the Dragon Queen does either."

"Her name is Yasaka, and her whereabouts right now is something else I would like to know by the time we return. Right now, I wish to check on my friends and family." Akeno smiled at her Aunt, who had remained silent as Akeno took charge. Indeed, she was still watching Proudfoot and Abraxas through narrowed eyes, ready to act as a physical barrier to

further trouble. "For now, do what you can, please. In particular, keep organizing things here and the other points of the triangle."

Everyone nodded and turned to the map and the communication specialists working with the leprechauns. Suzaku and two of the dwarves who had been at the door did not, instead now serving as physical buffers between Proudfoot, his Aurors and the nonmagicals. Akeno and the others noticed but still left them for now, trusting that Bill could do his part to find Mittelt.

Harry, Asia, Yasaka, and Yubelluna had all been placed in the suite of the first hotel that Harry and company had rented when they first arrived in Alexandria. There, all of them rested in their own beds, the doorway guarded by a worried-looking Issei, while Kalawarner sat by Asia's bed, holding her hand lightly. Kiba and the others were still busy around the city, but it had been Issei who had been with Asia and the others when they collapsed and called in help to extract them.

This had not been easy, as he was quick to explain. "First, none of us had come by magic carpet, so I couldn't just turn around and get us back that way. Then there were thousands of people in Kafir El Shiek. You would not believe how many times I had to use my Gooney Glue Spell or my Anal Prolapse spell because they were shouting at us all like we were the ones causing it!"

"The, the what..." Irina whispered, shocked and horrified.

"Well, it was either that or use lethal spells!" Issei protested, having been quite shocked to see his childhood friend again, especially under these circumstances. "My Stunners and Immobilus spells weren't doing more than knocking a few out at a time."

"But you held them off before help could arrive?"

"Uh, no." Issei grimaced. "I um, had to create a shield on the fly and then flew Asia back here. Kalawarner saw me arrive, and she grabbed a magic carpet and came back with me. Kala had to scare a large crowd away from them with her Light Lances, but we were able to get Harry, Yasaka and Yubelluna back. I um, I did stay there for a bit to, er, cast some cleaning charms before following the magic carpet." He glanced over toward the open doorway. "She hasn't moved since she sat by Asia."

Leaving Issei to guard the door, Akeno and Cú' Chulainn headed in to see Harry and the others.

Yasaka had been placed in the room Kalawarner had been using. She looked the best of all of them, simply sleeping, her chest moving, her color normal. Akeno estimated she'd be right as rain after a few hours of sleep. Harry and Yubelluna shared his bed. Both looked simply exhausted, sprawled in bed limply, their heads lolling to the side in sleep. They looked

somewhat pale and drawn, as if they hadn't eaten or slept in far too long, but Akeno felt they would recover in time.

Asia though? She looked almost washed out. Her skin was no longer its normal healthy color. Instead, it looked pallid, like that of a wraith or vampire. When Akeno touched her wrist, she found Asia's skin was clammy to the touch. The girl wasn't running a high fever or anything else, although someone had set up a small IV for her. The gold streak in her hair that was all that remained of her original color seemed to have lost its luster, and her breathing came in short, shallow gasps, the noise filling the room. And when Akeno touched Asia's hand, it almost felt as if her body had become frailer, not like it would break if she touched it, but as if there was simply not as much to her body as there should be. *Like I could almost push my hand through her arm if I tried, as if she has somehow become a little bit incorporeal.*

"What is wrong with her?" Akeno asked, quickly using Mage Sight (Devil Sight, really), almost swooning given how tired she was. This last little spell seemed to eat away at all her adrenaline, leaving her wasted and barely able to stand. Doing so let Akeno see that Asia's had been drained well past the point where it would have killed the devil or any other inherently magical creature. A human like Asia would be able to survive, but it would take a while to get over it. Yet that didn't tell her as much as she had hoped, as it could not be causing the clammy skin or frailness that Asia was exhibiting.

"We don't know," said a young blonde nurse sitting nearby, Kala remaining silent. Akeno vaguely remembered her as being one of the magicals, and a portion of her mind noticed that the young woman was incredibly attractive, something that Akeno would normally not have felt towards another woman. But that part of her mind could not push through Akeno's overall concerns for her friend.

"'arry and ze rest are straightforward cases of magical exhaustion. Ze one called Yasaka is already building back her reserve 'omehow, far faster zan anything I've ever seen. She should on her feet in a few hours or so. 'arry 'oweever was already pushing the ragged edge of exhaustion, and 'ad pushed 'is mind mentally well past where normal humans would've broken. His mind needs time to heal. Yubelluna is much ze same. Both of zem will be weak for a long while, but zey will eventually recover."

The woman's accent made Akeno remember this was the young Delacour girl, but her mind simply could not concentrate enough on that to bring her name to mind even as the healer went on. "But young Asia? Ze closest I've ever seen to something like zis is someone who 'as been almost kissed by a Dementor. Occasionally, ze Dementors get out of control and come close to feeding on a guard or prisoner. Zose people have not lost zeir soul so much as zeir essence drained to a point they become husks. Something like this," the woman, whose name was Gabrielle, Akeno suddenly remembered, shook her head from side to side. "Zere is a whole wing in Saint Mungo's set aside for zem."

Here, Kala spoke up, shaking her head. "There's a problem with Asia's soul. I can't tell what, but I've seen this kind of thing before from people allied with the Fallen who have done something they shouldn't with their Sacred Gears."

Cu grimaced, stepping forward and sketching his fingers in the air in front of him for a moment. A series of Tuathan runes appeared there in front of his eyes before flowing back into his face, where a series of temporary tattoos appeared around his eyes, ears and nose. Once the marks around his face finished appearing, he looked down at Asia. After only a few seconds, he cursed, volubly in his own dialect, an ancient form of Irish, so harshly that even a sailor would have blushed, and Akeno blinked, backing away from him in shock.

"Whatever the girl did, it's damaged her soul, that's for sure. It's as if a portion of it is just gone now. Drained away like someone stuck a hole in a bucket, all the water is flowing out. It looks as if the hole's repairing itself. Something within the girl is fighting the effect. But I don't know if she'll ever get that portion of her soul back. I've never seen anything like this. She should be dead, frankly."

Kala flinched but remained silent, simply taking Asia's hand in both of her own.

Akeno also grimaced before gasping as a cold glass vial touched her shoulder, where her clothing had been seared away during the battle against Amarna's defenders. She turned quickly, only to reach up and take the vial from Hermione. Hermione and Padma held several other Pepper Up potions and handed them around the suite, although at Gabrielle's glare, neither older witch attempted to administer the potions to the quartet of sleeping individuals.

"Think about it logically," Hermione said, looking far chipper than she had been a few moments before. Well, energetic anyway. In fact, Chipper was the exact opposite of what she was feeling. "I've been told several times that sacred gears are connected to people's souls. We also know that Harry, Asia and Yasaka were all involved in some kind of enchantment that apparently pulled people back from the dead here in Alexandria and elsewhere."

The brunette grimaced a bit, shaking her head from side to side as she looked at Harry before she spoke, giving voice to something Akeno had thought about earlier that day. "And I can already tell it is not going to go over well with either of them that they couldn't save everyone."

Then she turned back to Asia, gesturing down at her. "And where could that power of come from? A healing spell wouldn't have done it. No matter how overpowered the spell was, no normal magic can bring back the dead. But something like a Sacred Gear, which I believe can also be 'broken' so that they can literally create miracles that even they could not normally do? What happens then if the Sacred Gear, already evolved beyond where it could be called a Balance Breaker, was then pushed past its limits as well?"

"... It would break. It would die. Oh, Asia!" Akeno said, her voice now a whisper as she laid a hand gently on Asia's cheek. "You truly are too good for this world, aren't you?" She looked over at Cú. "But you're certain that Asia will recover?"

"She'll never be back to what she was before. If Bushy Hair is right, she'll be changed. Losing a portion of your soul like that will change Asia a lot, even if there's some kind of healing factor still working within her to replace the damage." Cú shrugged. "But she'll be alive at least."

Kala's smile flickered once more on her lips, but still, she said nothing, just staring at Asia.

Across from her, Akeno nodded, then looked lost for a moment before downing her Pepper Up potion, grateful that they worked on Devils.

While Akeno drank, Hermione jerked a thumb towards the nearest window. "I would recommend none of you go outside. There are **thousands** of people praying towards the building for Asia's recovery. They are filling up the roads and the tops of buildings out there. They have also been piling bushels of flowers in front of the entrance. The flowers are so high by this point that you can't even get out the front door."

"What would you expect?" Akeno answered sharply, already feeling the effects of the potion. "They literally just saw a miracle happen. After all, the majority of the dead revived here in Alexandria, where people the men and women outside knew were dead, maybe even saw die for many. The same goes for the other actual battle fronts."

Hermione grimaced but acknowledged the point. A part of her was itching to figure out what had happened during this massive enchantment that Harry and Asia had empowered between them, but she knew they would have to wait for that. Right now, they had things to organize.

She let Akeno take a few more moments, talking quietly to Padma, leaning against the taller girl's shoulder, breathing in her sweet scent, grateful that she had gotten through yet another adventure, and vowing that it was going to be the last before gently rousing herself and tapping Akeno on the shoulder. "Come on, we need to get back to Abraxas, Husukai and the rest. Your aunt is nice, but I don't think she's got a forceful enough personality to get everyone to work together, and we desperately need to get on top of things."

Akeno grimaced, then leaned over Harry's bed, giving him a kiss on the lips, lingering for several seconds. "Rest well, love. And get up quick. I don't think any of us here can keep this going without you." With that, Akeno rose and turned towards Hermione and the rest. For a moment, Akeno thought about pulling Kalawarner away but decided against it. Looking into the Fallen's face, it was very clear she would not come willingly.

Soon, the group was back in the command room. Several more military men had joined Abraxas, and he was taking reports from more than a dozen teams he had sent out through the outskirts of Alexandria along with others via leprechauns who were starting to push out from Alexandria into other areas within what was now being called 'the Potter Triangle'. All of them had the same overall mission: catalog where people who had been brought back to life thanks to Asia and Harry were and get an estimate on numbers.

The religious aspect of the whole returning to life concept would take quite a while to unravel and had already begun to bring them problems in the form of officers and politicians who were trying to throw their weight around without having anything to really add to the organizational efforts. Something that Akeno and the rest had walked in on. All too many politicians were used to relying on computers, which were not working, or communications, which were not working, or secretaries, who, strangely enough, were not showing up to work today.

Still, setting that admittedly thorny issue aside, the situation in Alexandria at least was as good as it could possibly be given the current circumstances. Nearly a hundred thousand people had been returned to life in Alexandria and around it thanks to Asia, and beyond those who were too busy lost in religious furor or trying to regain their personal power, they had all hurled themselves into the reconstruction efforts here in the city, simply following orders from the army.

The city was also where the majority of the magicals and magical resources remained. In particular, the golems were keeping peace throughout the city. More than a dozen were still assigned full-time to watch the areas of the city where the city's children (fourteen and younger) and their minders had been sequestered, kept out from underfoot from the rest.

And even among the children, there had been deaths throughout the night. The sight of hundreds of children being reunited with their families after having been slain by the various monsters had been enough to soften the hardest soul.

Listening to this, Akeno nodded, grateful that the city hadn't devolved entirely into chaos with those returned to life, but also understanding that eventually, with those lives once again returned, some semblance of regular order would return. And with it would come people that they couldn't work with as well as they could Abraxas. "Abraxas, I think the first order of business is for you and the rest of the non-magicals to sit down and have a meeting. I would like you to remain in overall command of that side of things officially, although I will understand if you do not think you are up to it. But we need someone who can work with us going forward."

"Unfortunately, you won't be getting any cooperation from the civilian side of things. The police are split down the middle, but the government officials revived by Asia's Miracle are all very much appalled with everything that's happened and looking for someone to blame. Still, I can sit on them well enough," Abraxas said, shrugging philosophically at taking on power over the civilian government in a manner that would have disturbed most normal Japanese or British

people. But Akeno didn't really care about the differences between civilian and military governments.

"Good. In that case, we need to start organizing out beyond the city, correct? We need to start getting some relief and survey teams on the move."

From there, Akeno and Abraxas began to organize the first small mixed units to search out and communicate with the survivors out there that had been brought back to life within the Potter Triangle. They needed a census taken to determine what kind of numbers they were dealing with. They would then need to send those units out beyond the Triangle. Thanks to the attack group, they knew that Asia's miracle had gone well beyond the area impacted by Harry's aura of divinity.

But that was only the start. They needed to get power back on throughout Egypt, water out to those who needed it, and food. The more hours that went by without power, the more food would spoil in the heat of an Egyptian day. With so much damage done to many of the cities throughout the fighting, water and food would be very scarce resources.

"Hermione, do you think we can come up with a magical solution for the water issue?" Akeno asked. "We can't simply send out single wizards to use Aquamenti spells everywhere. We'll run out of Aurors far too fast, and a loan wizard or witch would be in tremendous danger if we do so."

Proudfoot nodded firmly at that while Hermione hummed in thought, looking over at her lover. "Yes. There is a simple spell that can remove impurities from water, including salt. We'll still have to pull wizards off other duties, though. Or get more of the civilians from the magical street involved. I recommend the second option."

"If you or Padma can be available to teach them the spell, I'll get the civilians out to help," Proudfoot said, already turning to send off a Patronus. While he was very much an obstreperous Brit and equally certain of the sanctity of the Statute, he was at least a very hard worker. And once more smacked down, he was more than willing to work with everyone.

"Food will also be an issue, and sanitation as well. Organizing them on such a scale, Alexandria can't meet that need on its own," Abraxas warned. "We're having enough trouble making certain our citizens have enough water, food and access to bathrooms, to say nothing of everything else."

"Overall, organization is going to be very troublesome," Hermione answered with a nod.

"Knowing where to send food, knowing where not to send food, knowing where water is immediately needed, knowing where medical aid is immediately needed, knowing where military forces need to be sent to keep order because people have obviously started to bully

one another or prey on one another in some other fashion," Suzaku noted, counting points down on her finger.

Everyone nodded grimly at that. While here in Alexandria there was a strong feeling of awe from the miracle Asia had created, elsewhere, people might well be waking up to whole cities completely devoid of life. Surrounded by other people who remembered dying, sometimes in very horrible ways. That was not a set of circumstances that would create calm in people's minds. Even with teams of local military troops and magicals to spread the word that help was on the way, there were sure to be incidents. And they just **did not** have enough transportation. Not without Harry around.

"The magical map is one way to go to help us pinpoint that kind of thing and keep it organized. Let us see if we can alter that first, and then we can get on to other issues," Hermione gestured over her shoulder to the map filling the back wall from one end to another. "We can start there. After that, I think I've got a few ideas of where we can get some help. So long as we can physically get out from under the Interdict by heading out into the ocean, anyway."

But as Hermione and the other magicals began to work on the map, arguing quietly about what kind of enchantments to put on it and what order, they were interrupted by loud shrieking and shouts from outside. Abraxas instantly moved to the door and shouted for his guards to run outside to see what was going on while everyone else headed to the nearby rooms that had windows overlooking the scene below.

That scene was of two massive mobs confronting one another in the street. One of them was led by a group of Imams, one of them the same that had bothered Asia as she had been going about her business healing the wounded prior to the offensive campaigns. Apparently, Harry's overawing him hadn't stuck, unfortunately. "Death to the magic users, death to the followers of Shaitan! Death to the false Angel!"

"Un Shalla Allah!" the murderous crowd roared as they surged forward.

But they were being fought back by another mob, a far larger one. There was no set shout from them at first, simply a roaring cry of fury at the very idea that someone would be coming to kill the magic users, among which Asia and Harry lay. Many of those mobs were not certain what to call Harry. Those few who had been in his presence called him an angel of the divine Allah, or perhaps a shard of Allah, or God, depending on the person, come to earth to save them. Others simply thought he was a very incredibly powerful magical warrior who had come to help them in their time of grief. But there was no ambiguity about their feelings towards Asia. And as the two mobs crashed together, their shouts proclaimed that. "No one will harm the Angel! No one will harm the Angel of Mercy, the Angel of Healing, no one!"

They didn't know where her healing had come from or what Asia had paid for it, but everyone in that mob, many of whom had been pulled back from death by Asia, understood

that she had given of herself in some fashion. She had pushed too far and had been struck down not by an enemy but by her own fragile human body as she paid for the miracle that had tried to fight the darkness that had gripped Egypt.

Which only made them love her more.

Of course, at the present, it didn't matter what these mobs were fighting over. All that mattered was that they had to be dispersed, or else lawlessness would undoubtedly spread.

Abraxas had quickly turned, calling in the nearest police force, urging them to come in prepared to stop a riot. Then he turned back, looking over at the others. "If I could get some non-magical aid?"

"Mittelt, call in the golems! Nonlethal. I don't want anyone killed, but we need to separate those crowds," Akeno ordered firmly.

Soon, golems could be seen marching down the street or hopping over the roofs towards the disturbance. Several of them had tinny, inhuman voices that began to ring out over the streets as they pushed into the middle of the crowd, separating the two mobs by force. The makeshift weapons of the crowd were no threat to any of the golems. "This chaos serves no one. Please disperse. This chaos serves no purpose. Please disperse. Nonlethal violence has been authorized. Please disperse."

Soon, several dozen policemen in riot gear arrived with, astonishingly, a water cannon on wheels behind them. Staring at the odd device, Akeno could only shake her head and wonder what genius came up with that and then became further impressed as it proceeded to work, the water blasting out to hurl rioters out of the way of the advancing policemen. The police rushed forward into the opening, and the crowd who had come together to defend Asia quickly dissipated.

As she continued to watch, the police reformed once more into a line across the street, taking the place of the golems. At a shouted command, the police moved forward, slamming into the mob that had been shouting for the magicals to be killed. Behind the antagonistic crowd, Aurors swooped down, capturing anyone trying to keep the mob's momentum going.

Watching this, Akeno waited until it seemed everything was under control before turning back to other matters, as did everyone else. "We need more mobility. And we need more food," she said to Hermione as she, Bill and Akeno began to finish the new spells on the map.

"Those I think I can help solve. Just get me out past the Interdict, and I can meet with the ICW. I'll get us the help we need, by hook or by crook," Hermione declared.

With that, she and the others turned back to the map, casting several spells one after another. Soon, they had a preliminary enchanted map ready, and Akeno activated it.

As the map updated, everyone there gasped, and several of the locals actually knelt down, praying to Allah in thanks and sadness. The map showed all of Egypt as it had from the start, and while it could not quite pick up every individual within that area, it could show concentrations of what the wizarding-type enchantments called life force. This was a spell Padma added, based on one she had been researching from African voodoo doctors. It worked, and bright flares appeared across the entire map.

Harry's aborted attack had claimed a lot of the pillars in the area around where his Aura had created the so-called Potter Triangle and beyond. Of course, beyond was far more scattered and was only near the Nile. Set against that was that this was Egypt. Literally everything was near the holy river anyway. In doing so, Harry had undoubtedly saved millions of people in the Potter Triangle. There, every city was marked by flares of red color. Beyond... well, there it was a mixed bag. But everyone in the command room had been mentally prepared for that if nothing else.

And then the other spells kicked in. Slowly, colors washed over the map. Orange for areas that needed food, yellow for electricity and blue for areas that needed water. Green, where there were all three, such as in Alexandria.

But after that spell hit, it was clear that it wasn't helpful, instead just making a jumble of colors, so much so that people couldn't make out details. "Cancel that!" Hermione growled out, hitting the map with a Finite Incantatum. "Let's start over. Padma, your spell worked brilliantly. Let's see if we can do more with that."

"Tracking charms," Akeno said instantly. "We can track our people, yes? Where we are sending them, then have their specific locations show up here. Copy some of the enchantments from the original Marauder's map there. And then have them submit reports about what they run into..."

"Oooh, paired charms! Tie the map to items the survey teams can carry, and have them update by hitting them in specific orders or, no, specific items. Fill in specific details for each city, town, or congregation of living souls," Hermione murmured. "That could work."

This was the kind of work Hermione and Padma enjoyed doing, working with spells and trying to create new enchanted items. And Akeno, while not as enthusiastic about it as Tsubaki or Sona, also enjoyed research.

"We need a census most of all," Abraxas interrupted. While no wizard, he could at least understand what they were talking about. "We desperately need to know how many people are alive and from there what all they can do. We need to know how many engineers we have, how many construction workers, how many cooks, and so on."

“And,” one of the other officers growled out. “We also need to know where there is ongoing combat. The spell Ms. Padma used didn’t tell us numbers. Would it dim if people in a certain area began dying again?”

“Warlordism, tribalism, religious fervor. We’ve dealt with the last here. We need order, and with our transportation troubles, that is going to fall on you magicals,” Abraxas agreed with a sigh.

That conversation continued for a time as the survey teams continued to organize. At the same time, the leprechaun communication web began to report in again, starting with Luna out in Damanhur. She was helping restore order there. Similarly, Kiba was with Sala’s forces in Damietta. Between them and the military forces with them, the cities there could be controlled almost as much as Alexandria, although that wasn’t the same thing as not needing help.

“We don’t need water, and we’ve got electricity running here already,” Kiba reported. “The generator sites here were overrun with monsters, and the people are... well, back now.” Kiba sounded almost awed as he spoke those words, yet also uncomfortable. “They were able to swap out a bunch of parts, and between them and the repair spells, we’ve got the generators back online. Food is going to be an issue. We have only been able to find so much preserved food. Tiamat’s presence here is keeping people docile, but there might be trouble here eventually.”

Like across Egypt outside of Alexandria, food would have been spoiled or gone bad without power. As for Tiamat, she had been part of the attack force on Damietta before she had been called back to Alexandria during the surprise assault on the city. She had barely covered half the distance before Yasaka had arrived, and the chromatic dragon had been told to turn around.

“Looting was a problem here,” Luna said, her normally airy tone still there, giving her words an odd lilt to them. “But the locals dealt with it, along with the gryphons, who quite enjoyed the bit of sport, I think. I’ve started to send gryphons and their riders out with some of the Shinsengumi. Our wizards are getting a workout, but here, we need water and electricity returned, as well as food.”

With Flavius and Sala both in the loop as well, the locals at the other triangle points would be able to deal with everything but food. That would be a bottleneck until they got in contact with the Wizarding World at large.

Finally, Hermione and Akeno were happy with the spellwork they had devised, the map covering one wall shifting to display what they wanted. Outside, Proudfoot’s volunteer wizards went to work, placing tracking charms on the groups of surveyors and loading them down with charmed items. As they spread, so too would more information appear on the map once more.

With that, it became a logistical and communication task rather than a magical one, and Hermione decided to bow out. She had a few plans, and more than that, as a veteran of the

second Voldemort War, she had the gravitas to speak directly to Roberto Lyle, the Chief Mugwump of the ICW, as Harry had before. Even Proudfoot wouldn't be able to do that, although she would need his help to get to the ICW Tower. Part of the Interdict had shut down the Floo Network, and Proudfoot, as Chief Auror of Egypt, was the only one who was read into the enchantment to reopen the Network. And even then, only to the ICW headquarters in Greece.

Which was fine by Hermione at present. She also took with her Padma and Kalawarner. Kala needed to get away from worrying about Asia for a bit, and it would be good to have her along in case Hermione needed some firepower for whatever reason.

She didn't notice Akeno looking after her with a semi-panicked face for a second before Akeno turned back to the others, already organizing what she could even while men began to come in two or three at a time with reports and the leprechauns, once more all interconnected into a communication net centered on this room, began to chatter for her attention. *Oh dear. I think we might have missed a few spots in our organizational table here...*

OOOOOO

Within the realm of Hades, Sirzechs leaned against a shattered stalactite, staring between the corpse of the god with the same name and around at the destruction wrought throughout their fight. Even once Ajuka arrived, the battle had been extremely difficult. Hades had somehow broken the ward that Macgregor had created, reclaiming much of his strength during the battle, then pulling still more power from the pocket realm around them. So much so that now that Sirzechs was looking around, he could see areas where the realm itself had been torn asunder, drained so much that it looked as if he was staring at a computer screen with a segment that was glitching out.

And even together, the two Maou would not be able to prevail without the many hands of Typhon. He now stood over the body of his half-brother, his barrel chest heaving, having just finished turning Hade's body into so much paste.

"I think he's gotten his anger out now," Ajuka announced, coming up beside Sirzechs. He was a man built along the same lines as Sirzechs, with light blue eyes and green hair that was normally slicked back but which now was frazzled and sticking out in various directions. His clothing was also quite mussed.

"I hope so. I really, **really** do not want to have to fight him now too. It is clear Typhon was only half-assing it when he was Hades's prisoner, given how hard he fought Hades once we released his bonds," Sirzechs shot back.

Normally, when the two of them spoke, Sirzechs would be joking around, and his friend would be the most perfect straight man anyone could ever imagine. That interaction was at the core of their friendship since they were teens, even before they began the Civil War against the

Old Satan Houses. But Sirzechs did not have it in him at the moment to joke around, and he turned wearily, painfully, to look at his friend. "How is Grayfia?"

"She'll live. She will never be able to use her wings to fly again. I couldn't save her wing. Grayfia's face and legs are both also going to have scars now. The necrotic energies within the wounds canceled out my attempt to use healing magic."

While he was easily the second strongest devil in existence, first and foremost, Ajuka was a scientist. Ajuka had created the peerage system in the first place, which allowed the Devils to rebuild their numbers and bring in new blood from the humans after their disastrous Civil War. Indeed, the peerage system had been the cause of the Civil War. His power, Demonic Calculation, allowed him to quickly master any magic he wished, but there were still some hard and fast rules of magic he could not get past.

And the level of necrotic energy that Hades had been hurling around was on a whole other level than anything Ajuka had ever seen before. *Devils like us can't use much life-type magic, like those stupid RPG games of the humans in the first place, and that necrotic energy, it was like acid. I could barely stop it from making their wounds worse.*

"The same with your broken ribs and that arm of yours," Ajuka added in a drawl, looking down at where his friend's arm looked like a black and purple mass, with bones sticking out of it in various areas. "We can use regular surgery to set your bones, but after that. we'll need to let natural healing take place."

"But Grayfia will live?" Sirzechs asked, ignoring any concerns about himself to ask about his wife again.

"She will. In fact, Souji should be finishing wrapping her wounds up soon."

Of Sirzechs' peerage, Surtur Second was dead, slain in the battle against Hades. So too was Beowulf. Hades had killed them both after breaking the ward Macgregor had put on him. Macgregor and Enku had both died before that.

"Thank you, my friend," Sirzechs whispered before shaking himself, gesturing with his good hand towards Typhon. The Titan was stomping towards them, his many (many) heads twitching this way and that, his hundred hands clenching and unclenching unconsciously all over his massive barrel-chested body. "And now we have to deal with this, I think."

Being the only one in any shape to keep fighting, Ajuka stepped forward, staring up at the Titan, who stood at least three stories tall at the moment. "What now, Typhon? Are you going to fight us now?"

"Hah, no. I have no interest in you Devils or anything that came from the one Hades called that idiot in the East."

Both Maou surprised themselves by bursting out into laughter at that term for Yahweh, the Almighty God. Although it made sense considering how ancient Typhon was as well as Hades. Indeed, Typhon's legend had been ancient and almost forgotten by the time Yahweh began to spread his worship.

"Hehehe, t, that still leaves us wondering what your plans are? Are you going to leave here, explore the world or something? If so, I would dearly like to have some kind of non-aggression agreement with you before you leave. And I'd like to make certain you know some of the dangers out there," Sirzechs interjected.

Typhon made a rumbling noise, and for a moment, Sirzechs thought he had somehow offended the Titan. Then the creature's necks leaned down and stared into the two Maou's eyes with five heads apiece. "Just because I've been Hades' prisoner down here doesn't mean I'm not connected to Mother still. She is very, **very** sick! That sickness began when that blasted Ophis arrived, and it's not gotten any better. I cannot leave."

For some reason as the Titan talked, Sirzechs got the impression of his own son. A dutiful boy doing what he could for his mother. Moreover, he got the impression of youth somehow from the ancient creature. *Maybe ancient isn't the right word. Perhaps timeless is better? He's never aged at all, and come to think of it, how much of that life has he spent as a prisoner? He could have just simply been locked in time, couldn't he? Wait, that's not important right now.*

"What do you mean?" Ajuka asked quickly.

This was immediately followed up by Sirzechs saying, "You mentioned something like that right after you first attacked Hades, didn't you? Something about the world being in pain. Can you elaborate on that?"

Typhon's heads lifted away from them, and his hundreds of necks began to writhe around one another as he thought of how to describe what was going on. "I don't know a lot of the terms or anything that you might understand. It's all instinct, you know?"

Once again fighting the urge to treat the giant Titan like a young boy, Sirzechs nodded and was unsurprised when Grayfia spoke up from behind them, her voice calm and almost kindly, the same tone of voice that she would speak to Milicas in public merely hinting at the care and affection beneath. "Tell us what you can, Typhon. While we know of many problems facing Earth, we usually mean problems facing those of us who live on it. But I get the impression you're speaking of something that is impacting Gaia itself, aren't you?"

To Ajuka's well-concealed amusement, Grayfia's semi-motherly tone seemed to work, and Typhon settled back onto its haunches, once more bringing a few of its heads down to peer at all three of them. "In the beginning, when Mother was young, she was full of magic and power. The power of creation, the power of change. When I was born, Zeus was lording it over the humans and had just imprisoned all of her other children. She was still powerful then. There

was still a lot of magic around, magic flowing through her veins, flowing through her skin, flowing through the air that wreathed her.”

From there, using equally poetic language, Typhon described the problem that Luna had warned Harry and Rias of when they met: that the world had aged and moved beyond the Age of Magic, with magic disappearing from the world over time. But now it was coming back thanks to Ophis and Harry’s discovery of Danan and his continual use of the portals between the worlds. Each time he or Lily did so, they let magic leak in so subtly that no one could feel it, so primal it instantly flowed into Gaia’s veins. “And just now, there was another vast eruption of magic, a dark Curse of some kind birthing a new demigod. I can feel Mother’s convulsions from here. Her pain, the agony it is causing, is almost enough to wake her up again, which would not be good at all.”

The many-headed Titan shook its head, and seeing as he had several hundred of them, that was a sight to see. “Not even if I could find and face the creature behind the magic flowing into Mother’s worn-out skin would I chance returning to stride her physical body once more. It would be too much.”

For a moment, all three of his listeners were silent and then Grayfia shook her head. “You realize that was a most disturbing sentence?”

Typhon’s heads all lowered as one in agreement, a veritable waterfall of saddened heads. “I knew it as soon as I said it.”

“Do you think he’s right? Or is this some kind of superstition ingrained into him as a Titan?” Sirzechs asked, looking over at his best friend.

“What would be the point of that,” Ajuka scoffed. “It isn’t a phenomenon I’ve looked into, but I suppose it could be accurate enough. And if he is right...that is a major problem. We might have to push up certain plans, our peace talks with the Church and the Fallen, our political approach to the Wizarding World and so forth.”

That last was a recent development and one that wasn’t even fully formed. But Sirzechs knew he would be a fool not to use Harry as some kind of go-between him, the factions as a whole and the Wizarding World in general. Indeed, Harry had already done so to good effect with the Onmyodo government, albeit almost accidentally rather than officially. Regardless, the Onmyodo were now fully aware of the supernatural world living alongside the magical and normal. To not try and extend that connection would be foolish, although Sirzechs had hoped to put it off until after the peace talks.

“True. But right now, Typhon’s decision leaves us with a dilemma. I don’t think just leaving you here would work.” Sirzechs gestured around them and observed with some amusement as twelve heads remained concentrated on him, eight on Grayfia, and seven on Ajuka while all of the others turned to look around them. *There is something strangely fascinating watching that!*

But what those heads and his friends saw was not so funny. All around them, the areas of distortion Sirzechs had seen in the background of the dimension a moment ago were spreading. “The very structure of Hades' realm is breaking down. So unless we all want to commit suicide for some reason, getting out of here is—”

“We wouldn't die. We would be spat out into the gap between dimensions. Considering this was a pocket dimension inside Earth, I am uncertain whether or not we would be connected to the Greater Gap or fall into a smaller one.” Ajuka interjected before pausing as Grayfia and Sirzechs looked at him with dead eyes, and he shrugged his shoulders. “Sorry, that's a kind of magical theory about the difference between pocket dimensions and alternate dimensions. It's built on alternate dimensional theory, which states that...”

Grayfia raised her hand politely. “While I am certain it is fascinating, now is not the time for that kind of thing, Ajuka-sama.”

Looking a little chagrined, Ajuka nodded, looking around with a practiced gaze, numbers appearing in the air around him as he manipulated them with his fingers. “Anyway, it looks as if the magic here is definitely breaking down. The structure itself is simply dissipating, the magic being pulled somewhere into the gap, either greater or lesser. I'm not getting enough data to prove that theory, as by its very nature, the dimensional gap is... Well actually... No, we don't have time for that.”

He blinked then, looking at the readings he was getting. “Huh, that's interesting. Beyond the background structure, the souls who inhabited this realm are also being freed! Huh... Where before they would have eventually been used to feed Hades power or to return to the wheel, they are now being sent... They might be going into the Heaven System. Strange. Of course, I haven't had the ability to examine that system closely, but we Devils certainly don't have any crafted magical structure to claim those souls. We did at one time, but it died with the original Lucifer.”

For a moment, Ajuka let a brief wintry smile appear on his face. *How ironic it is that the Morningstar rebelled and created an opposing system to the Heavens System, created his own pantheon of lords and generals, his own minions, all in an effort to stand against his former creator. Only for that creator to turn around and somehow connect their two systems together, creating a place for Lucifer's creation in his mythology. Yahweh might have been far too ambitious and overreaching, but no one could doubt his intelligence.*

“Then I will die.” Typhon's voice was philosophical, but Grayfia wasn't the only one there who heard a tremor there, the fear he was trying not to show. “Pity, I think I would have liked to live in a world without Zeus and the others to mess it up. It would've been fun to live beyond my duty.”

Grayfia astonished Sirzechs and Ajuka by reaching over and patting the nose of one of the many heads hovering over her. That head blinked, its eyes almost crossing to look at the

hand on its nose, but it didn't move away, simply staying there, perhaps enjoying the touch of another for the first time that didn't come in the form of a violent blow.

After all, while Typhon was a dutiful son of Gaia, he had been birthed for a single purpose: to try and curtail Zeus's arrogance. He had never truly been allowed to live his own life. *Although he took a wife in Echidna and was the father of monsters according to some legends, I don't think I can believe it now. Not knowing that he has been locked down here for so long, and anyway, I had a problem with that portion of his legend initially.*

Ajuka snorted in amusement. In the original legends of the Olympians, Typhon had been created by Gaia in order to fight Zeus, who had imprisoned her other sons. Zeus, with the help of the other Olympian gods had defeated Typhon and imprisoned him within the earth along with the other Titans. Afterward, it was said that he had married Echidna and together birthed all monsters of Greece. *After all, if you have locked away a being created to destroy you, would you really allow him conjugal visits?*

"There must be something we can do?" Grayfia said, looking over at her husband and his best friend. "We cannot simply leave him here to die."

"You can. In fact, given how you three are all Devils, I'm surprised you haven't already left," Typhon said, although he made no move to move the head that Grayfia was now patting on the nose and chin away from the woman.

"We like to think we have evolved beyond our initial starting point as symbols of evil and destruction," Sirzechs announced dryly, shaking his head. "Ajuka, what do you think?"

"I think I've never taken a peerage, and I have a mutated Queen Piece on me." The other two looked at him, and he shrugged unrepentantly. "Please, do you think I go anywhere without something to experiment on? We can use the mutated piece, inverse its properties and instead of gaining further power, the piece will lock away Typhon's. Simple enough, mathematically speaking. But I don't think my Queen Piece will be powerful enough to contain Typhon's power. Not on its own."

Sirzechs winced, looking around at the dead of his peerage. "It would feel somehow like I was trying to replace them all, but I can understand. How many pieces can we pile on one another?"

"Considering you just lost your pieces, I can replace them with mutated pieces," Ajuka said gently, patting his friend on the arm. He had never really gotten into the whole peerage thing for himself, but he understood that Sirzechs had seen them more as friends than servants. "And I think we'll need at least your two rook pieces together with my queen. Maybe more."

"Make it my two knight pieces," Sirzechs said, holding out his hands to his friend, who pulled out a box about the size of his forearm from his personal expanded pocket. Something he had designed for himself after learning about the wizard version but had yet to put into any kind

of production. "I get the impression Typhon needs all the help he can get to move at any kind of speed."

"Wait, what are we doing now?" Typhon asked, confused.

"We're trying to figure out ways to weaken your power, lock it away beyond a set series of preexisting Devilish enchantments turned upside down. That way, your impact on the background magic of the world won't be as large."

"That will work?"

"If I can work fast enough," Ajuka answered. "And considering we only have about ten minutes before this whole place crumbles around us, I'd say the three of you need to let me work."

OOOOOO

Opening the Floo in his office to the greater network took Proudfoot nearly an hour. First, he had to draw several runes in the Floo itself. At that point, the Floo was back on the network but still locked. Then Proudfoot had to pass through several different items from his office, basically a Floo version of a password. It was a fascinating idea, and Padma watched him do it with interest while Kala and Hermione spoke about how, with Harry unconscious and Lily on the other side, they had no way to travel across dimensions to Danan.

"Could Cú Cuchulain maybe get us across?" Hermione asked.

"No. He doesn't have any kind of powers over traveling like that. He's the son of Lugh, not Mac Lir," Kalawarner answered, scowling and shaking her head, trying hard not to keep worrying about Asia. "He also seems kind of reticent about talking about his abilities at all while Harry is unconscious. I get the impression that he doesn't really respect most of us. He's willing to follow Akeno's orders for now, but since the last order to him was to just go around the city breaking up anything that looked like looting or such nonlethally, which would be the equivalent of fun for him, I don't know how far that would go."

"Drat. The human problem," Hermione muttered. "Don't look at me for any help there. I would very much prefer it if people came with instruction manuals. And that's normal people. Not a so-called hero thousands of years old who spent most of that time locked into the shape of a dog and enspelled to forget his past."

"... you know what, when you put it like that, I suppose it's kind of obvious that Cú would have some mental issues," Kala said after a second's thought. "But I'm not going to be the one to bring it up with him."

"Alright, ladies," Proudfoot finally pushed away from the fireplace, grimacing as he felt at his knees. "Ugh. Damn, I should have put a cushion down before I started. Anyway, I need to

get back out there. Unless you've changed your mind and want me to come with you, Hermione?"

"Thank you, but no, Steven. I can get into seeing the Chief Mugwump on my own. Good luck getting the witches and wizards of Lighthouse Lane out there to help more," Hermione said, patting the older man on the shoulder in commiseration before grabbing some more Floo Powder and stepping forward. "Remember to enunciate clearly, Kala. Get it wrong, who knows where you'll be."

Kala opened her mouth, then closed it and stared as Padma followed her love into the green fire. "Wizards and witches, common sense was not involved in your creation, I swear."

Despite Hermione's concerns about the fallen angel, she, Padma and Kala stumbled out of the Floo into the receiving area of the ICW's power. This was the same area that Harry and Yubelluna had teleported into, an outer garden that surrounded the tower, the Floo aperture being a large fireplace set directly in the center of an open area.

Their stumbling proved to be a good thing as the local Aurors were in no mood to allow unscheduled visitors. Spells began to fly almost instantly as they stumbled and fell, with Kala on top of the others while someone shouted, "Freeze, wands on the ground! Identify yourselves! Further, prepare for magically binding oaths and examinations!"

Most of the spells flew over them, but a few of them struck Kalawarner. While not the strongest of Fallen, Kala was at least as strong as a three-wing (set) regular fallen, so she was able to just take stunners of this strength even while groaning and trying to get over her first brush with Wizarding World-style teleportation.

"We can't identify ourselves if you idiots Stun us!" Hermione shouted, her wand in hand, and only her desire to not make this idiocy worse was stopping her from attacking. A Sonorous let her voice be heard over the sound of the Stunners fizzing their way and crashing into a Protego that Padma had just raised. "Ernie, I know that my hair proceeds me wherever I go, and I know you! Unless you want all of your colleagues to know about a certain incident in our third year when you and Susan Bones were in the library at the same time separated by a single bookshelf, and how long it took you to convince Madame Pince to believe you could be allowed into the library again without a minder, you will stop this nonsense at once!"

The man who had shouted for them to surrender before his fellows began to launch spells spluttered, muttering under his breath after a second, "Well, if she's an imposter, whoever it really has definitely got Hermione's tone down. And I know she took up with that Indian bird. One Metamorph is possible, but two? Everyone stand down! Damn it, stand down. That means you, Dunois! It does not mean shifting to lethal spells!"

By this point, Kalawarner had recovered some of her equilibrium and was about to start attacking when the spells trailed off. Then, a spell washed over her, and she looked down at

Hermione, who winked up at her. “Don’t want to let them know you can just ignore Stupefies,” the brunette whispered.

“Ugh, what the hell boys. It’s enough to make me think you don’t appreciate a girl,” Kala groaned, playing into the idea she had been knocked out by stretching as she got to her feet, moving her neck in a way that subtly drew attention to her bust line even as her legs also became visible now that she was standing up. She was dressed in short shorts and a tightfitting short-sleeved blouse, which, considering they had just come from Egypt, only made sense.

But that was more than enough for most of the men around her, most of whom had never been out of the Wizarding World. More than half of the men who had still been aiming their wands at the three women lowered them now, staring, and Ernie went so far as to apologize. “Er, sorry, Miss, we’re, um, we’re all a little on edge here.”

“Understandable given what Chief Auror Proudfoot told us, but even so, the fact we were coming through the Floo at all should have told you we were on the side of the angels,” Kala retorted mildly while inwardly she was snorting in some amusement, the first spurt of honest amusement she had felt since seeing Asia after she had performed her miracle. *Idiots. Seriously, how backward is the wizarding World that all a girl has to do is show a bit of leg and a bit of cleavage, and they go all to pieces? It’s almost insulting how easy it is.*

“Metamorph?” Hermione asked, somewhat annoyed that Kala’s use of sensuality had worked to lower the guard’s defenses more than her knowing their leader. “We’ve been cut off in Egypt. The last Proudfoot said was that there were dragons loose or something. What has been going on?” Hermione honestly couldn’t remember what the man had said was going on elsewhere, unfortunately.”

“Regardless of our past or how you arrived, you’re still going to have to submit to a series of questions and dispelling charms, Granger.” Ernie attempted to regain control of the situation and stood back, waving each of the women to stand separately as a few of his men moved forward.

Three of them nearly got into an argument about who was going to check over Kala, but Ernie tried not to notice or let his own gaze twitch that way more than once. Given the glint in Hermione’s eyes, if he did, she would never let him hear the end of it, and worse, a lot of other people would hear about it too. *Remember Ernie, if this really is Hermione, she’s got ready access to Parvati and Lavender. She doesn’t need her want to make your life hell. Do not poke the bear, laddie.* “No offense, Hermione. I’d let you in for old times’ sake, but there’s been a major security breach. And when I say **major**, I mean it.”

“Well, in that case, I suppose we know what Nefertiti was up to while Akhenaten tried to battle us in Egypt with that blasted summoning spell,” Padma said, trying to hold back a smile and how her wife had handled Ernie. She had never really interacted with the Hufflepuff boy, but it seemed as if Hermione had some juicy gossip about him. *That’s actually somewhat*

surprising, considering Hermione was never the gossip type, but maybe she was there to witness the incident? And of course it has to do with the library.

Padma's words stopped several of the people around them, and they stared at her, then over to Hermione and Kala before quickly getting back to work. Padma and Hermione handed over their wands then were scanned, while Kala simply waved her hands to either side, showing she had no wand. She still got searched, but thankfully, the magical way rather than hands-on, much to the chagrin of at least two of the guards.

Meanwhile, Ernie asked the question on all their minds. "If you really are from Egypt, then can we hope that things have quieted down there?"

"Not to the point where we can remove the Interdict. We're here to hopefully get some help to get everything further under control now that the people behind the incident, and it was all one incident, not multiple smaller ones, have been dealt with." Hermione didn't like prevaricating like that. But Ernie was one of the last people she would tell the truth to about that incident. Or about Harry and his various allies, hence why she had been so quick to make it look like she'd had to revive Kala, and it was only luck that her already unconscious body had protected her and Padma.

"Damn. Well, regardless, now you need to submit to a final security test. We're going to put each of you under the Imperious charm, and then we're going to ask you some questions," Ernie announced imperiously as his people stepped back and readied themselves for any protest.

"Oh, hell no!" Kala said, stepping back, her whole-body language changing from sensual to closed-off and defensive. "I'm fine with just waiting here for Padma and Hermione to return from talking to your boss. I am **not** going to let any of you put that curse on me! We Onmyouji hate all three Unforgivables, and I'm certain none of you want to start a diplomatic incident at this point, so I will just stay right here."

While Kala had grown a great deal since she had first seen Harry and Lily, most of that growth had been in terms of her personality, combat skills and knowledge, not raw magical strength. And there was a reason why the wizards were considered a threat by Fallen Angels, Church and Devil alike. The three Unforgivables were incredibly hard to block or deal with in general, attacking the soul, something that all three Factions believed was sacrosanct. Only mid-to-high-level Devils or Fallen - five wings and above - could try to fight through any of the Unforgivables. Even the strongest mind below that power level could be overcome because the Imperious charm did not attack your brain but your soul.

Ernie was about to insist, but Hermione, who had relinquished her wand a moment ago, suddenly had it in her hand. "She's right. We don't need Kalawarner with us to talk to the Chief Mugwump. She was along more as a bodyguard, and she should be allowed to stay here or return through the Floo Network. We were seriously worried about what else was going on in

the world, and given the fact that Harry was here for an attack on the tower before we went to Ireland..." She shrugged.

Several of the more senior people around them nodded their heads at that, indicating it made sense, while Ernie puffed himself up. "That is fine and all, but the two of you are still going to have to be put under the curse to answer some questions."

"Keep them professional, Ernie, or afterward, you and I are going to have words," Padma grumbled, having seen the look the boy had given her.

Hermione also agreed with ill grace. Ernie was not their favorite person in the world, after all, and she honestly wondered how he had been put in charge of the ICW Headquarters's defenses. *That... could be a very bad sign, come to think of it.*

After a few very specific questions, the two lovers had finally convinced everyone there that they were who they looked like, and as the effects of the Imperious curse wore off Hermione, she asked a question that had been bugging her, following the line of thought she'd had before being put under the Imperious. "You said a Metamorph, correct? Who were they posing as, and why in the world wouldn't you just be able to take our magical signatures? Surely those are all on record here."

"Auror General Amanda Miltani proved to be an enemy of the state. And we weren't able to trust her magical signature because she apparently was able to change hers," Ernie answered promptly. "That's why I was put in charge of the defenses here. That and my status as a war veteran."

Hermione bit her tongue at that and remained silent as Ernie led the way off, shouting out orders over his shoulder for the two girls to follow him to the elevator. This was the secondary killing ground that was the next layer of security for the tower. But thankfully, the girls had already been vetted, and moments later, they were stepping out of it onto the fortieth floor of the tower.

Here, where there had been just a waiting room and Ernie as a secretary, several people were rushing around with various pieces of paper, and a few tiny desks had been set up. Most of the papers Hermione could see were tiny but very detailed maps of different areas within cities, a few blocks wide. And on each of them were large areas blinking in red and blank with what was undoubtedly showing areas that had been damaged.

Seeing that, Hermione's eyes widened in shock and quickly leaned over to whisper into Padma's ear. "I think Egypt wasn't the only issue that the rest of the Wizarding World was dealing with. Perhaps not even the worst of them. I know Proudfoot said there was trouble, but if those dragons he mentioned actually appeared in cities, then Egypt might not be the only place put under an Interdict. Nor the only place that needs Auror and Obliviator squads."

Padma hissed at that, but she nodded her head. "It makes sense." When Hermione looked at her in surprise, Padma chuckled. "Strategist you are not, my love. Think about it. When you broke into their final bastion, you found the Pharaoh and his wife were there. But he also said that one person could have directed the efforts of the massive enchantment that kept on promulgating the undead and monsters throughout Egypt, yes?"

At that, Ernie stumbled ahead of them. Several other people around them also had overheard Padma and now paused what they were doing to look in the Indian woman's direction in shock. But Padma ignored them all, continuing her explanation to Hermione. "But how else would they have stopped the Wizarding World from simply pouring in more resources? It makes sense that Nefertiti had to be involved elsewhere and redirect those reserves into fights that were undoubtedly meatgrinders, Shiva, damn it. Although I will admit her being a Metamorph is both surprising and disturbing."

"Exactly! Worse, a lot of the officers who have served under her and survived are also now suspect. Who knows how long she's been planning this, how many of them she might have suborned to whatever cause she's doing all this in service of. That's why I was put in charge of security," Ernie declared proudly.

Hermione let Ernie's moment of chest puffery go by as they had just reached the door to the Chief Mugwump's personal office. Here, she pushed past Ernie and knocked resolutely. "Chief, my name is Hermione Granger, and I come with word of our efforts in Egypt." *If anyone can't connect my name to Harry's and realize he brought Padma and me in on this affair, there is no hope for humanity.*

The door instantly opened, showing two other men were in there with the Chief Mugwump, each of them having been given their own desks. Padma realized instantly that the inboxes on each of their desks had been enchanted to show some paperwork coming in from the group of men they passed outside. And as she did, Padma rolled her eyes. *Such a magnificent use of magic, and yet they're still sending the paperwork through the Floo here to be sorted before getting it sent on? Wizards.*

All three men looked harried, and the Chief Mugwump, Roberto Lyle, looked as if he was living off Pepper Up potions much like those in Egypt had been since the crisis began. The man's attire and entire demeanor showcased it. That made both young witches respect him a little bit more. Here was a politician who was willing to put in the hard work that his position required and wasn't afraid to show it.

"Please tell me it's good news," Roberto begged.

"Well, the instigators of the conflict in Egypt, and as my lovely wife pointed out outside, probably the instigators of whatever else has been going on that the Wizarding World has had to deal with, fled the scene. But..." Hermione sighed and shook her head. "I'm afraid that they only did so after implementing a ritual so... so terrible that it will no doubt give me nightmares

for years to come.” Padma’s hand on her shoulder gave Hermione the strength to continue, pushing aside her guilt and sadness at having failed so badly. “Do you want an overview or a full report now?”

The Chief Mugwump stared at Hermione, as did the three men all around them. The disasters they had been dealing with, the dragons first in Berlin, then Norway and Sweden. Worse was that there seemed to be some kind of war going on in the underground warrens of the goblins under practically all their banks. All of which were closed. And the war in Greece had gone hot soon after Miltani’s revealing herself as an enemy. Many of the ICW’s Aurors were now bogged down there, keeping the peace and making certain that yet another territory would not need to be placed under the Interdict.

But this was Hermione Granger, one of the people who had stood beside Harry Potter during the war against Riddle from beginning to end. Which, while admittedly on a smaller scale than the issues they had been dealing with, had been hideously vile on the micro level, with the death eaters raping, torturing and murdering to instill fear in their opponents. And a woman who had stayed fighting through all that was saying this ritual was horrific? This was, to put it mildly, not a good sign.

Closing his eyes, the Chief Mugwump raised his hands to his face and rubbed them up his face into his hair, gripping his head, before moving them back down to his eyes and rubbing his palms into them for a moment. When he pulled them away, Roberto stared solemnly at Hermione. “Just give me the highlights, miss, but before that, tell me why you are here and not Chief Inspector Proudfoot?”

“Proudfoot and his people are still busy dealing with the fallout and will be for some time. In fact, part of the reason we’re here is to get as much help as we can.”

That brought choked-off laughter from the other two in the room, and one of them opined, “Miss, we might be forced to call Aurors **away** from Egypt. With it under the Interdict, we have all the time we need to put things right there, and it makes sense for us to start with the smallest areas under Interdict first, clearing them up, and then moving on to the next. Our losses among Aurors have been disastrous.”

“And thank God that the non-magicals are dealing with so many natural disasters, too. It will make it a lot easier to Obliviate whole city populations and create stories to cover the past few day’s events,” one of the others said.

The Chief Mugwump waved them to silence, staring at Hermione. “The highlights, please,” he ordered once more. “Although if you came here for aid, I’m afraid you’re going to be disappointed, as the representatives of Norway and Sweden mentioned.”

Hermione briefly took a second to wonder why the representatives were here rather than dealing with the crisis in person but decided not to comment on it. They were wizards and elderly ones. The idea of actually being on the ground to deal with something probably hadn’t

occurred to any of them. Instead, she simply nodded and gave them the highlights, starting from how they had discovered evidence that implicated an apparently immortal wizard and not the type who achieved such through Horcruxes. Then she outlined how Akhenaten had apparently been able to create enchantments large enough to cover the entire country of Egypt and how he had suborned spirits of immense power to join him, further empowering his enchantments and serving as incredibly dangerous bodyguards.

She had to use the word spirits because the Wizarding World did not believe in gods or deities. Indeed, most of the Wizarding World felt that those beings that had been called gods by nonmagicals were simply powerful wizards, as befit the loose kind of ancestor worship that most wizards believed in. There were a few exceptions, Morrigan, for example, and a few other magical or simple nature deities that had crossed over into the Wizarding World. But in today's Wizarding World, belief in those was seen as quite backward and somewhat foolish. Even the conservatives didn't have many families who followed such any longer.

But even with that minor alteration to the story, the whole tale came out, and all stared at her in horror at the loss of life. While even Roberto Lyle would raise his hand and admit to believing that wizards were superior to nonmagicals, that wasn't the same thing as believing they were somehow less than human. To hear of how many died there, their deaths caused by this ancient wizard king, was horrifying to these men. And trying to keep the Statute intact after such losses would require a tremendous amount of effort, even with the other disasters that the non-magical world was dealing with right now.

When one of them mentioned that after Hermione had finished the story, she looked at the Chief Mugwump in question, and he sighed before explaining about the various earthquakes and other natural disasters that had begun to hit the non-magical world. Hermione and Padma both stared at one another wide-eyed, knowing the reasoning behind this and very, very worried that in the future, more such events would occur. *We need to figure out a way to siphon off the magic that is clotting the background magosphere of Earth! If we don't, Earth is going to keep tearing itself apart.*

"Well, while knowing Egypt was the center of the issues facing us for the most part - I note that the issues in Greece and Spain had nothing to do with this ancient Pharaoh - is... interesting... I am still afraid that my earlier point about us not being in a position to help much is still accurate, Miss Granger." Chief Mugwump shook his head, leaning back and running one hand over his face again. "We just don't have the manpower. We lost hundreds of Aurors fighting the dragons and the Dark Wizards that Miltani somehow coordinated. Indeed, it is only through various agreements with the Canadians and, more recently, agreements made with the Americans that have us floating above water at the moment in terms of Obliviating witnesses and taking care of our wounded as well as the cleanup. India has been incredibly reticent about sending us any of their manpower, unfortunately."

“I’m not here specifically for manpower resources,” Hermione protested. “Food, tents, banishing toilets. All of that I can get my hands on.”

One of the other men in the room had the gall to mutter something about, “And who is going to pay for all that?” But he said it so low that Hermione allowed herself to ignore it, simply going on smoothly to explain that if money was necessary, she had access to Harry’s accounts with Gringotts, and her own accounts were quite good. Being a spell creator and researcher paid very well in the Wizarding World, especially when you had a two-income household like she and Padma did.

But Chief Mugwump waved that off. “The ICW will make certain any suppliers are given whatever money they need. We’ll send out purchasing expeditions now and use the Floo to gather everything you want to here before sending it on. How much of everything do you think you need?”

“A whole country’s worth. The country has been without power nearly from one end to another, which means a lot of food has gone bad by this point, thanks to the general heat. The fields might be all right, but it isn’t harvesting season, I don’t think.” Hermione wasn’t certain about that. What she knew about farming would be a very small book.

Slowly, the Chief Mugwump nodded, wincing internally at the screaming he would undoubtedly hear during the next budgetary meeting. *But to have that budgetary meeting, we need to get through all of these crises and make certain that the Statute of Secrecy is still standing!* Even someone like the Chief Mugwump, who had been educated on the non-magical side up to the Ph.D. level, still believes that the statue was best for both sides, non-magical and magical.

“That’s going to take a while, but we can get on it right away.” A sudden thought hit him, and he snapped his fingers. “We can also send through about half of the house elves serving here in the tower. They’re not as good at simple paperwork as humans are or logistics, and with the vast majority of the Aurors here gone, as well as all the delegates off to their own countries, there isn’t as much for them to do here. It might be a drop in the bucket, but they could be useful.”

Hermione nodded eagerly. The days of S.P.E.W were well past her. Hermione knew now that the house elves had something of a symbiotic relationship with wizards and could not live without the connection to their masters or their place of employment. She still wished laws could be put in place to make certain they were treated well, but she was no longer trying to, as Padma had put it, “Instigate an uprising of the workers like you were attempting to introduce communism into the Wizarding World.”

Several other men were called for and quickly given orders as well as budgets in order to purchase the items Hermione required. Meanwhile, the Chief Mugwump and the other three in the room began to ask Hermione and Padma more questions about what had been going on in

Egypt. They especially looked closely at how the magicals were forced to work with the non-magical military, how Harry had basically taken over the country (such as it was during the conflict) in many ways, and how helpful the Japanese Shinsengumi were.

While the Onmyodo government was part of the ICW and had quite cordial relationships with several other countries, they were also very standoffish when it came to personal interactions with the rest of the magical world. They had also refused every attempt to get them to start using the same kind of magical system as Europe and the Americas did. So, their abilities were something of a mystery to Lyle and the others.

Beyond that, the amount of damage done to the various cities in Egypt horrified everyone there, along with the sheer amount of dead. Which was without Hermione explaining Asia's Miracle.

When he heard all that, the Chief Mugwump quickly began to write up a requisition form for more help from the Americans. They had been known as extremely good magical engineers before Harry had told the Chief Mugwump about their more... secretive projects. But now, the rest of the world needed their expertise.

The Chief Mugwump also agreed with the priorities going forward: that they needed to help the people of Egypt as much as possible before taking control and putting the Statute of Secrecy back in place via whatever story they could figure out to cover the events there. The very idea of not doing so was anathema.

Lyle also didn't ask many questions about Harry's personal allies, nor did Hermione tell him anything about the Devils or Danan. Those secrets would undoubtedly come out, and Hermione knew that Harry Potter having access to an entirely new magical world would cause quite a lot of waves. But at present, she just did **not** want to deal with it.

However, Hermione and Padma both had a surprise coming.

Alarms wailed throughout the tower as a magically recorded voice intoned, "Warning, unscheduled incoming Floo travel. Warning..."

"Will someone shut that off! Seriously, people. We have people and reports coming in and out every half hour. Do we really need to listen to that alarm going off every time someone doesn't show up on the dot?" Roberto growled.

"Given how few actual defenders the tower has, sir, keeping the tower on the wartime footing just makes sense," one of his fellows protested. "The alarms are annoying, but even so isn't it better safe than sorry?"

Logic and common sense! He must not be a pureblood, Hermione thought it acerbically. Moments later, Hermione and Padma's attention was pulled to the door as a young man whom both of them knew quite well came through the doorway. "Rama?" Padma exclaimed, hopping

to her feet and moving forward to hug her cousin. It had been a few very long weeks since they'd seen each other last. And his presence here could only mean good things.

It did. Ramagupta hugged his cousin back, whispering words of endearment and telling her that Lavender was well back in India at present. "She might have come with me if she thought she had any skills to help, but we didn't think that clothing would be all that much of an issue in Egypt."

"In Egypt?" Hermione asked, beating out the Chief Mugwump by a millisecond. "I take it you are here as a representative of the Indian Aurors?"

"Oh, we do not call them that in India, but yes, I am. I am a secondary commander, Ramagupta, and I have with me two hundred and eighty magical warriors. My government has volunteered us to help in Egypt."

The look he gave Hermione and Padma told him that there was more to that story, but both were too happy to hear that they would have more magicals on hand to try and push. That kind of number would almost make do their losses in the long night.

"But only in Egypt?" Chief Mugwump asked.

"We are the first organized force to be sent out to help the rest of the magical world. More will be coming, but I don't have control of those or the organizational process. If you wish to get in touch with representative Mundali, he could answer some more questions on that score. But we also have brought forward supplies. We feared that food and water would be a major crisis point."

"Food is certainly a crisis point. We've been able to control Alexandria throughout the conflict and recently regained control of two other cities; there's basically a triangle between them trying to organize. And beyond that, there are also scattered pockets of survivors. We need to be everywhere and help everyone at once, so the more resources we have, the better," Padma enthused.

Before the two of them could concentrate too much on Egypt, the Chief Mugwump formally declared that he acknowledged and thanked India for stepping up, although he added, "It would have been nice for all of you to have already been integrated into our command structure before this."

"Would it? Given the rumors of your Auror General having apparently been an infiltrator, I would imagine that it would simply have meant my men and I would have been just as liable to be tossed into meatgrinders." Ramagupta shot back, not backing down from the older man.

Forced to exceed to that point with some ill grace, the first such he had shown since Hermione had walked through the door, the older man nodded. "I suppose you are right on that score. Still, it would have been nice to have your help earlier once this Nefertiti woman was forced out into the open by chance."

At that point, Hermione and Padma exited the room, allowing Ramagupta to explain why his magical government had not stepped forward faster. How he did so, neither of them knew, but eventually, he rejoined them out in the foyer beyond the Chief Mugwump's office, and the three of them headed back downstairs to the Floo Room. There, they found Kalawarner watching as Indian men came through, each of them acting more like a soldier than an Auror. As each arrived, they then turned around and changed the Floo's address to head to Egypt as fast as the single-person transportation of the Floo Network could send them.

Nearby, several other men still waited in line carrying expanded bags that, despite each of them being expanded to the utmost by wizard-style magic, were still bulging with what they carried. A few house elves milled around as well, and Hermione moved over to them, letting the two cousins talk. She quickly told the house elves what they needed, explaining the idea of soup kitchens to them, hoping to eventually split the house elves up and send each forward to different areas to set up kitchens like that, then manning them with locals so the house elves could then move on to set up further ones. "We will get you on some carpets and will send you out with strong forces to guard you from reactions from the nonmagicals, but you could be a big help!"

"That is why we are here," Ramagupta answered before leaning in close. "I am also here as a messenger from certain... powers. Who wish to push up their meeting time with Harry Potter."

Hermione and Padma both gulped, remembering why Rama had wanted to stay with them in Barcelona to meet Harry. Through a series of mishaps (she read a book she shouldn't) Hermione had become aware that many Brahmin and Kshatriya families among the Indian magicals had one-way connections with the gods of Sanatana Dharma (the Eternal Way). And that the Indian gods, in particular Lord Shiva, wished to speak to Harry in person. Rama had even given Harry a Blessed device that would bring Harry to Shiva's location.

All that was before the events in Egypt had occurred. *I wonder if they can see through the Interdict?* Hermione mused before shaking it off. Even if they couldn't, Shiva and the others must have felt the reverberations of Akhenaten's ritual, making it clear that they could not wait any longer to contact the new power on Earth. "I see. But Harry, I'm sad to say, is unconscious at present. He performed some kind of major magic, and it knocked him out. We can speak about it later, but he is in no position to meet anyone right now."

"AH, say no more. I am still going to be looking for a moment to speak to him, though. I got the impression, you understand, Lord Shiva talked at me, rather than with me, that there is more than a bit of urgency to their meeting for some reason," Rama answered.

"Yes, I think we can all guess why," Padma grunted, wrapping her arm around her cousin's. "Now come on, the sooner we get back to Egypt, the better."

Soon, they were back in Egypt. There, Proudfoot and Ramagupta quickly began to incorporate Ramagupta's men into the overall magical organizational structure and started to send them out to help where they could beyond Alexandria. The house elves, however, needed a bit more help to be integrated into the locals.

Master Husukai was fine with them flying the house elves out on the Magic carpets. But the leprechauns from Danan kept on staring at the house elves with distaste plain in their eyes. And the dwarves, who were around the command post in strength at present for some reason, shied away from them, staring at them as if the house elves were diseased lepers.

Regardless, five house elves were assigned to Shinsengumi-heavy squads being sent to specific cities or towns within the Potter Triangle to start with. The last house elf was assigned to help the golems and parents watching over the children and babies coming in from everywhere at this point. None of the survey teams could simply allow the babies to remain where they were, saved by their innocence from the Harvest. But occasionally, there just weren't enough people willing to look after them, or, in some places, just not enough adult survivors to do so.

Even one house elf would help deal with bringing in food for the children, cooking, and looking after hundreds of babies. A house elf could also serve as a last line of defense. All house elves were extremely protective of children, even those belonging to families they were not bonded with or nonmagicals.

Two more went out to the towns of the other points of the Potter triangle.

And slowly but surely, even as Akeno, Abraxas and the others struggled with the organizational side of things, the relief efforts truly began.

The impact of that effort was already being felt. As was the impact of the order to maintain order wherever the survey teams went.

OOOOOOO

After a very tearful reunion with his son, daughters and wife, Mamud led them up to a nearby rooftop, away from the arguing and shouting below. What madness was to blame for this disaster or even the miracle that had brought them back, he didn't care. All he cared for was making certain that his family was safe. Here in Zagazig, the straits were still quite dire. But some of the survivors had heard the words of this Potter person, then seen his power throughout the night, destroying many of the pillars within the city, and Mamud listened intently as his wife and eldest explained everything that had happened since his death in their defense.

It was also strange, so fantastical. But so had the jackal man who had cut him down the night before.

“I believe you,” the father of two said as the story wound down. “And I am very proud of you all for looking after one another. That is what a family should do. We will stay out of the arguments below. If they cannot understand that this Harry Potter was sent by Allah, then no words of ours would sway them. That does not mean that we are blind to the truth. These magicals, from wherever they sprang, are on our side. The things, the creatures of the night which they have banished, were not. Is as simple as that.”

His wife nodded firmly, although his son looked a little dubious until his mother clipped him upside the head and told him in no uncertain terms to listen to his father. Mamud made a note of that and made certain to keep his son away from certain elements in the future. Belief in the all-powerful Allah was one thing. Blind certainty of his cause over all others was another.

He turned quickly as his youngest daughter gasped and looked up where she was pointing. “Look up there!”

Above them, two men on a broomstick were circling around the town. Moments later, a shout could be heard coming from them, so loud that those on the rooftops clapped her hands over their ears. “Gentlemen and Ladies, fellow Egyptians! We have been under attack this night. This night has caused horror, some seen, some unseen. But those of you who are alive now have been saved or have returned! Rejoice in that, and prepare for the challenges ahead. I know you have many questions, prominent among them the fact magic has been involved in this. Yes, magic is real. But those behind the horror have been defeated. Now magic will help as much as working together to see us all through this.”

The voice waited a second, then resumed his speech. “Remain calm. Do not take advantage of the situation by lording it over others or trying to hoard food, water or anything else necessary. Egyptians must unite and face this challenge together!”

After the speech was over, a lot of the arguments down below seemed to have stopped. But a few people still shouted out that the magic users were behind everything, and one or two people down there had guns. They fired them into the air, only to be hit by some kind of reddish spell that flashed down towards them from the second man on the broomstick.

A moment later, the broomstick slowly wove down towards the ground, passing Mamud and his family on the roof. He saw both men were of Egyptian ancestry, and they nodded politely to him and his family as they passed by, shouting for people to bring out tubs.

Wondering why but no longer willing to question the magic users for now, Mamud turned to his son and gestured to the youngster to join him. “Come! We’ll bring out the family tub. Whatever they have in mind, I think it’s going to be good for us in the long run.”

OOOOOO

But not everyone brought back to life by Asia’s miracle truly deserved this second chance.

Groups of men raced down a street in Marsa Aram, knives or makeshift weapons in their hands, while others fired over their heads at dozens of fleeing people. The men howled like animals as several women in the group ahead of them stumbled and fell. Two men grabbed one of them, pulling her out of the rest of the crowd as the unarmed crowd retreated or were gunned down by the shooters.

The woman looked up in fear and dread, knowing what was about to happen to her, having just seen her husband gunned down along with several of their neighbors. "No, no!" She shrieked and fought, kicking out hard, but that only made the men laugh louder as two others came over to grab her legs.

Suddenly, the sound of gunfire and something else, a loud swooshing noise, came. A bloody fountain erupted as one man's head was completely removed by something, and the gunners behind the first group were mowed down from above.

No mercy was given as the Indian army men on the magic carpet above them fired into the shooters, each of them crumpling under quick, controlled bursts, completely unlike the wild, almost unaimed fire they had been using against the crowd. While many of the Egyptian infantrymen had not been experienced before all this, the events since the monsters began to appear en masse had hardened them all into veterans.

As for how to deal with looters, rapists and so forth, the orders coming out of Alexandria were absolute. No mercy was given to anyone attempting to take advantage of the situation. Not even government officials trying to set up their own little fiefdoms would be spared if they prayed on the people.

The Shinsengumi controlling the carpet waited a few moments and then lowered down towards the ground, where the soldiers quickly hopped off and began to create a hard point on a rooftop, complete with more ammunition and a SAW. One of the magic users stayed behind, shouting out commands via Sonorus as to what was going to happen, while two others, wearing medical corps badges, headed down into the crowd, asking for anyone who had wounds or injuries to step forward.

As the Auror made use of the Aquamenti spell, which was quickly becoming a favorite of all of them, and the house elf with them began to set up a soup kitchen down below, the carpet raised back into the air and zoomed away, heading back to bring in more troops. The defenders would be on their own, but not for long. Damietta was barely a few hours away, and with the number of military men there, the wizards on that point were free to spread out and bring aid and order as they went.

OOOOOOO

Of course, even the Army had its bad apples.

"I see a group of men moving down there on the road! What in the world are they doing out in the open like this?" A dwarf shouted to be heard over the knees.

"Why are you asking us?" The Auror controlling a nearby broomstick said, looking down in front of him to the tiny leprechaun perched on the end of the broomstick.

"That was a rhetorical question. Let's get down there and ask," the dwarf grumbled.

It turned out that there were several dozen people below, men and women, mostly from two large families. One was led by two men, brothers who had just been let out of the Army a few weeks before. The other leader of the group was a local handyman in New Salhia. All of them were ecstatically pleased to be given some water, as well as some food from the supplies that the Auror was carrying.

"We had to get out of there. Once commander Lupe began to shout out about how he and everyone within the town had been chosen by Allah to be reborn, to serve him, **not** Allah, but Lupe as one of his apostles, we knew it was going to get bad. We were barely organizing our families before we heard people being shot, a lot of screaming, and the shouts of those who believed Lupe over everything."

"Well then, that sounds like something we're going to have to do something about, doesn't it?" the dwarf said, smiling, as his gryphon shrieked in joy at once more going into battle.

OOOOOOO

Groaning, Rias woke up, blinking blearily, wondering why her eyes seemed to be glued shut for some reason. Over the sound of nearby running water, she could hear two little voices talking, one worried, the other upbeat. She couldn't make out the word, but Rias knew the owners of those voices without the need for any visual. Lily and Kunou, her little one and Yasaka's.

That thought brought a smile to her face, and for a moment, Rias just wiggled deeper into the bed, realizing where she was. The island that they had made their home on Danan and named for the goddess whose enneagram Rias had met, the island of Fand. *I wonder she thought, basking in the overall feelings of the island, the feeling of goodness and welcome that everyone who came here felt. I wonder when this will become my home, when we will move away from Kuoh?*

She knew they wouldn't be able to do that completely. They had plans, the plans for an Academy that could teach every school of magic they had run into, the ongoing alliance with Yasaka's folk, and, perhaps more importantly, the need to keep at least one foot in the non-magical world. But even so, Rias knew that someday, this place would become home. They would go to Kuoh to work, to train and teach. They would live here.

Mixed with that thought was the idea she had shared with Yasaka. Rias's images of the future were dominated by images of herself heavy with child or with several other little ones running around after Lily and Kunou. *Lily will be the trouble-making big sister, the one to always lead them into adventures, the one to push them to break the rules, but also the one to defend them. While Kunou will be the big sister who volunteers to babysit, the one to read to them or help them study when the youngsters become old enough to go to school.* The image was so strong Rias could not help but smile, running a hand down her body for a moment to her currently flat belly.

However, eventually, Rias's analytical mind forced its way through the happy feelings this place evoked, and she slowly rolled out of bed. Standing up, she stretched, noticing idly that she was dressed in her everyday clothing rather than her nightwear. That sight made Rias remember how she had collapsed in the first place. She remembered the feeling of her magical reserves being pulled into her connection with one of her peerage pieces. *That Knight piece, the one I put in Dog. Evidently, he isn't a regular magical dog Fae. What he is, I don't know. Peerage pieces can't give you information like that. And I also have to wonder what happened to force that change... and how deep into trouble Harry and the rest are.*

Intellectually, Rias knew that she had probably been brought to Danan and the island to recover behind this dimension's time differential. That whatever was going on back on Earth in Egypt was probably over and done with by this point. Rias had never been as badly drained as she had then, but it must've taken her days, if not a week or more, to recover, longer than it had taken Harry to after he had brought back Yubelluna from the brink of death. Nonetheless, Rias did wonder, and she worried that perhaps the size of the problem Harry and those with them were investigating in Egypt it might have long-reaching consequences.

Her stomach grumbled then, and reminded Rias that while magically and mentally she was recovered, her body did need some kind of substance after going who knows how long without eating. *Well, it's breakfast time somewhere, I suppose.*

While Lily had agreed to return to Danan and wait for her Daddy to come through and tell them it was okay to return to Egypt, that didn't mean she liked waiting. Even with Kunou with her now after dropping off Yasaka, she couldn't help but worry. The brief glimpses of the city she had seen from the suite they had teleported into had been very scary, possibly the scariest stuff that Lily had ever seen. Which included the Wild Hunt in her dreams, fighting them in reality, the Dark Fae on the attack, exorcists attempting to kill her, and, at one point, even before that, dark wizards trying to kidnap her.

"You're brooding again," Kunou said from behind her. Before Lily could turn, Kunou hit her, tackling Lily off the rock into the water, where they both landed with a splash. As the two girls surfaced with Kunou clinging to Lily's back where she couldn't use her greater strength, the kitsune caroled, "I told you I'd tackle you into the water if I saw you brooding again! You are the

one who tells me upbeat when Mama was being attacked. Now, I need to do the same with you!”

Lily growled a little and tried to push off the bottom of the river, but the current was a little too strong. Wrestling with one another, both of them were pulled along by a second later, the two of them separating and then whooping as they were pushed into the series of twists and waterfalls that acted like natural waterslides. The river carried them down to the ocean, and this time, neither of them could get out as they would normally.

Eventually, the two girls wound up on the riverbank where it met the ocean, pushing themselves off the rock and sand. Still, Kunou’s efforts had worked, and Lily was once more in a better mood as the two of them raced back up the rocks surrounding the river, laughing and playing tag.

They were about halfway back to the area where everyone’s homes had been built when Kunou sniffed the air, causing Lily to stop and do the same. If she was in her werewolf form, her sense of smell would have been better than Kunou’s, but Lily was in her normal human body, wet fur never being a fun thing to deal with. But Kunou was in her normal kitsune form, a fox’s tail and ear being able to deal with the wetness easier, and thus, her sense of smell was much better than a normal human’s. Kunou’s eyes widened, and she chittered then raced ahead of Lily, shouting out, “Bacon!”

That was enough to get Lily moving, too, and the two of them burst into the kitchen set to one side of the master bedroom. There, they found Rias cooking, humming to herself as she prepared three plates of breakfast food piled high with bacon, sausage and pancakes. She turned slightly away from the stove, letting the two girls see she had an apron on that said, ‘Yes, I’m counting my calories. The higher, the better, right?’ It had been a gag gift to Kalawarner, the clan’s primary cook, from Mittelt at one point.

“I hope you two are as hungry as I am. But,” Rias waved a large spoon at them threateningly, “I expect the two of you to be able to fill me in on what’s been going on since I collapsed while we eat.”

Kunou simply nodded, smiling happily at the tall redhead, both because of the food and because she was honestly happy to see Rias up and awake. Her relationship with Rias wasn’t nearly as close as it was to Harry, but she still loved her new Onee-san. In contrast, Lily had no time for such gentle responses. Instead, she barreled forward, burrowing her head into Rias’s lower stomach. “Good to see you up, Mum! We have so much to tell you!”

Lily laughed and, setting the spoon down, hugged the little girl just as tightly, kissing her forehead, then slowly pulled back, gesturing towards the table. Normally, breakfast would probably be taken outside on the island, as there was no way they would be able to sit everyone inside at the small table that was set in the kitchen. But with just three of them there, it would do.

As they ate, Lily explained what she knew about what was going on in Egypt. The strange mental effect it had on anyone on Earth outside of its borders to even think about Egypt. How that affected even Devils like Sona and the rest. How even Yasaka had begun to fall into it. The fact that Luna and a large force of dwarves, gryphons and leprechauns here in Danan had gone through to help Harry called forth on his authority as high king. The way Luna had sent a fairy all the way to Japan for more help, only to bring back Lily, Yasaka and Kunou via Danan.

“They even been brought in the golems! The ones that Kala, Tsbuaki and Akeno were working on. All of them, even the ones built here in Danan!” Lily exclaimed, waving her hands in either direction and nearly hitting Kunou in the face with a pancake. A pancake that rapidly disappeared into the young kitsune’s mouth before Lily could realize what was happening. When she did, her eyes widened. “*Gasp* Pancake thief!”

“You shouldn’t have waved it in my face then,” Kunou answered primly. She then squawked in outrage as Lily, quick as a snake, grabbed two sausages from her plate.

“Girls, focus, please,” Rias said, smiling at their antics but not willing to let their fun degenerate into roughhousing. No, she had something else to concentrate on right now. “Could you tell me if the mental impact of thinking about Egypt was from the enemy that Harry and the rest are fighting or something else?”

Lily frowned, then shook her head, but Kunou paused for a moment, thinking hard, then said, “I think someone mentioned the word Interdict? I don’t know what that means, but I think it was in relation to the thing that was making people not want to talk or think about Egypt.”-

“And you are certain that it affected Sona as well?” That sounded like wizard-type magic. *Something built on the same scale as the massive wards that keep the Wizarding World separate from the rest of the world. Something that could just activate there in a crisis? That’s a bit worrisome.*

“Yeah. Yasaka tried to convince her to come with her to Danan and then from there to Egypt, but the moment she mentioned Egypt, some kind of shut down and began to ignore everything she said. Yasaka even said that it was starting to impact her, and she knew there was trouble there.”

“But it didn’t affect the Fae...” Rias hummed, then shook herself. Now was not the time to wonder how that enchantment worked or why it wouldn’t work on Fae minds. “And Lily, could you tell me what the ratio is right now?”

Understanding that Rias meant the time difference between Danan and Earth, Lily frowned, thinking back. Without going to the fal stone on the island, she couldn’t tell, but her memory was pretty good. “I set it to one to one for a bit there, but when I came back through from Egypt the last time, I set it back to 1 to 7.” By this, Lily meant that every day on Earth was seven days here. “Here, it’s been three days since, so it’s been...”

“Close to ten hours,” Kunou supplied, being better at math.

Rias nodded at that, thinking. *Three days is probably not enough time for any more of the golems to be finished, but it wouldn't take them much time to check on. However, more importantly, that means that Yasaka has been on the scene in Egypt for ten hours. Which hopefully would have allowed Harry to overcome whatever problem was going on there. Her, Tiamat, most of my peerage, Harry's household, Harry himself, and whatever my Knight turned out to be. That is a lot of firepower, no matter how you slice it. I can only hope it was enough for whatever they were facing.*

“Finish your breakfast, girls. I think that I'm back to a hundred percent. Which means it's time for the three of us to get into Egypt to get some real answers and pitch in if we have to.”

Lily nodded firmly, while Kunou looked a little apprehensive but just as willing. Her mother was also over there, after all.

Moments later, the three of them finished cleaning up after breakfast, and Lily led the way up to the fal stone set into the lip of the caldera. Laying her hands on it, she opened herself to the undertaking, setting the time difference to one-to-one and then opening the way to the same fal stone she had used to transport Yasaka and her people through.

This put them in the main sitting room of the suite that Harry had rented out for their stay in Alexandria. Which was also where Harry and the others had been brought to recover.

Almost instantly, Lily smiled, seeing her Father's head through the open doorway into the master bedroom, then she frowned and raced forward.

Lily didn't even notice Irina and Issei. They had sprung up from where they had been standing on either side of the door on chairs. Their hands, which had been locked together, pulled apart in a flash, and a flush appeared on the childhood friends' faces even as Irina's weapon coiled around her hand before she paused as Irina realized who had just teleported in.

Although Irina wondered how they had done so. *I thought this place was warded against teleportation! And where's the normal Devil teleportation circle thing?* While she was observant, Irina wasn't very knowledgeable about magic.

Rias paused momentarily, nodding to her young pawn and looking in confusion at Irina before Kunou followed Lily into the bedroom, and Lily's voice reached her. “Mum, Dad's in here along with Yube and Asia! All of them are out of it like you were!”

Rias's eyes widened at that, but she took a brief second to ask, “I take it that the crisis has passed?”

“If by that you mean that the enemies we were fighting here fled, yeah,” Issei grumbled. Although he had been left on guard for Asia and the others, he knew a bit about what was going on in Alexandria and elsewhere. “There's a lot going on, but we're at the rebuilding stage. But

well..." He glanced over at Irina, flinching, and Irina smiled sadly. "Let's just say that this whole mystery was a hell of a lot bigger than we had feared, and a hell of a lot of people are..." He paused again, gulping.

Seeing how distressed both of them were Rias waved him to silence, saying that she would get a better answer from the others. Irina's presence was strange, but given that it wasn't the first time the young exorcist had worked with them, she was willing to overlook it for now.

Inside Harry's room, she looked down at the trio in the bed, quickly warning Lily away from Asia. "She doesn't look like she would be able to survive one of your hugs right now. Be gentle, okay?"

In reality, while Harry and Yube both looked as if they were as badly drained as she had been, whatever occurred to her Knight piece, they both looked as if they would recover in time. Asia though... *There is definitely something wrong with her.*

Rias was no master healer. She could heal to a certain extent, as all Devils could, but slowly and more by pushing her own magic into the individual hurt and forcing their body to deal with whatever injury it had. While Rias could probably do that now to force Harry and Yubelluna to recover, it would be very much a brute-force approach, and she didn't know if it would help in Asia's case. Whatever was wrong with her was far worse than the others.

"But they'll recover, right? Like you did?" Lily asked anxiously. This was the second time she'd seen her father bedridden, and Lily did not like it one bit. She had no doubt that he had won, but the fact it took so much out of her Daddy was disturbing to her.

"I'm certain of it, lovey." *In at least two out of the three cases here,* Rias thought, trying not to bite her lip in worry. "Let's go and see if we can find Yasaka too."

In the next room over, they found Yasaka laid out, snoring mightily, having already recovered a lot of the energy she had lost helping Asia empower Dawn Healing. It was very clear that Yasaka would be the first to recover.

Leaving that room quickly, Rias paused, staring at a blonde woman who had just come in holding two trays of food. She had given one of them to Issei and Irina and placed the other on the kitchen table. Now she straightened, staring back at Rias. *It's that blonde who sent those sexy pictures to Harry! What is she doing here?!*

Mon Dieu, of course, the redhead arrives. As if this cannot get any worse! It is one thing to find out that your dream man is not only out of your reach but already involved with not one but several gorgeous women. It is quite another to actually see them all one after another! Especially in this putain's case, Gabrielle grumbled.

Issei didn't know that Rias already knew who Gabrielle was, so he hastily made some introductions. "Rias, this is Gabrielle, Gabrielle, this is Rias, er... she's kind of Harry's official kind

of wife." He then smirked over at Lily, waving his hand at her. "Although there's no kind of about the fact that she's Lily's Mom."

Gabrielle slowly nodded. Pulling her self-control around her like a cloak, held out a hand. "Enchante, Mrs. Gremory."

"Potter-Gremory," Rias smiled politely, her tone slightly prickly but so subtly that only another woman's ears could hear it and the putdown that the double name was. "Gremory is a holdover from the fact that I am still enrolled under my old name at the school Issei, and I go to where I am his senior. But I much prefer the full name, given how magic itself bound Harry and I together when we exchanged handfasting vows." She ruffled Lily's hair affectionately before she became serious, jerking her head towards the master bedroom. "What did they do, and what is wrong with Asia?"

Lily's eyes were not the only ones to widen as Issei explained what he had seen. Having been at the epicenter of Asia's efforts, he had seen it from beginning to end and had seen all four of the people involved collapse one after another. "And you are certain that you saw Dawn Healing break?"

"Positive. It happened as the spell..."

"Blessing," Rias corrected, not knowing why but knowing that it was right. Whatever Aisa had done was just as much a deific-based Blessing as it was an extension of her Sacred Gear.

"Er, right. Well, when it finally ended, or, well, when she and the others ran out of power, Asia-chan and Harry both collapsed one after another, with Asia-chanb going first and Harry barely able to catch her before he collapsed in turn," Issei reported shaking his head. "A part of me wishes I could've helped, could've added my magic power into it, but I'm not that good at manipulating my magical reserves, and I was running on fumes anyway from all the fighting."

"And then, Issei tried to return them all to Alexandria, but thankfully, Luna had already sent a flying carpet to check on them," Irina finished, giving the boy an extremely fulsome glance, causing Issei to blush.

Well, it seems as if he's ready to move on from Ruruko, Rias thought with some amusement. "Thank you for your efforts, Issei. And unfortunately, your explanation tells me what is wrong with Asia. Sacred Gears are supposed to be connected to the soul, a very part of your being from the moment of your birth to your death. But we already know that they can be removed. And they apparently can also be drained to the point of breaking. A point beyond even balance breaker."

Rias shook her head, looking back through the door to the master bedroom. "Asia's Twilight Healing had already evolved several times. But this, pushing that far? Push it so far that

Asia was pushing the power of her own life force into the spell? Yes, that would be too much for the Sacred Gear to bear.”

In fact, Rias thought that perhaps it would’ve been too much for the Sacred Gear to bear, period. That Asia’s use of the Sacred Gear would remove it entirely from the Heaven System, which saw to reconstituting Sacred Gears as their users died, causing them to be reborn into the next user, a baby just being formed somewhere in the world. But Rias had never heard of one being broken by its user through overuse like this, and Rias had made a study of Sacred Gears for years, looking for someone who might have the power to help her against Riser.

Maou damn me, it’s only been a few months, and it seems as if my worries about Riser were so small and petty. There is so much world than I had thought of before Harry came into my life. Both personally and in terms of the powers of the world. Shaking that idle thought off, Rias looks down as two hands found their way into her own.

Lily’s eyes were wide, and she looked about to cry. “Does, does that mean Asia won’t recover at all?! That she’ll be sickly and bedridden for life?!”

“Not at all, Lily.” She knelt in front of both girls, noticing that Kunou was practically crying already, clutching Lily’s arm to her and staring at Rias hopefully. “Do you remember that ritual you and your daddy did to bring Asia into your family? Where Fawkes appeared?”

Lily’s eyes widened, and she nodded rapidly. “She’s part Phoenix Wolf then! So Asia will recover for certain!”

“Phoenix tears, that weird mix of things that is your father’s blood, your own blood, and deific energies as well. I’m uncertain how losing her Sacred Gear will change her physically or emotionally, but she will recover and still be Asia Potter, the little lady we all love.” Rias answered, perking both girls up. *And if she isn’t, then perhaps I can offer to bring her into my peerage. I know she won’t like that, but it is better than living as a husk, isn’t it?*

Deciding not to examine how Asia would respond to being made into a devil too closely - after all, there was a big difference between being friends or even seeing some devils as family and being one yourself to a girl who believed in God as strongly as Asia did - Rias turned her attention to what they could do right now for the invalids.

She glanced over at Irina and then Gabrielle before looking back at Lily. While Irina was working with them now, she was still part of the church, and Rias did not like Gabrielle at all. Still, the woman was a healer and had been looking after Harry and the others. Rias was willing to set aside her personal annoyance with the older girl for now but wasn’t willing to let them in on the big secret of Danan.

Admittedly, that secret might already be out, but if it isn’t, I surely want to keep it. The Church would not react well to the idea that the Fae Lands were just a part of a wider, equally

magical planet, one Harry and Lily now have sole access. Hell, I can't imagine a single government in the world would react well to that. Even us Devils might not react well. The underworld is a pocket dimension, and it relies on taking things from Earth, incorporating soil, trees and so forth into itself over time. It has a finite limit to what resources it can produce. Danan has no such limit, and we've barely begun to explore the planet at all.

But there was no need to be rude about it, so she whispered into Lily's ear, "Let's send your dad and the rest through to Danan, okay? And then we can come back here. Yasaka looks almost as if she's ready to wake up already, so she can do as a nurse for the rest once she does. But don't mention where we're sending them or anything else about Danan aloud. Not while we were doing it, and not after, okay? Tell Kunou too."

Lily pushed into the side of Rias's head, and she whispered back, "Why?"

"Just because we're working with Irina and the Church now doesn't mean that we don't have enemies in the church itself. And the fewer people who know about Danan until we're ready to share the secret openly, the better," Rias replied.

Lily nodded resolutely, said, "Got it," in a louder tone, and pulled away from the hug to move over to the fal stone. As she did, she noticed that Irina had turned her attention towards Lily, wondering what she was doing, and realized that Rias might have a point. Regardless, by the time Yasaka, Asia, Yubelluna and Harry were hovering in the air, thanks to Rias's magic, she had the portal open.

She heard the gasps from Gabrielle and the others as they looked into paradise on the other side, then turned partly away from the fal stone when Gabrielle stepped forward hastily, holding up her hand peremptorily. "Wait a moment! What are you doing?"

"We're taking them to a place which is an area where there are many different Ley lines crossing, and a lot of background ambient magic. That'll help them recover more than they will here in Egypt," Rias answered politely.

"As I was assigned to watch over them, I feel as if I should go with them," Gabrielle began.

"That is quite impossible," Rias answered, thinking quickly. "This place is under Fidelius, and Harry is the Secret Keeper. Your senses would rebel against you there and would make you less than useless."

Gabrielle huffed, then flounced over to the meal she had brought and sat down, muttering under her breath in French as she began to eat.

Shaking her head at that, Lily wondered what Gabrielle was saying but decided not to ask. Instead, Lily gestured to Rias to bring the hovering patients through as she stepped forward into the portal with the others. It took them about ten minutes to get them all situated down in the bedrooms, then they returned to the fal stone.

“Lily set the Time dilation effect to one day on Earth to four here on Danan. That should give them time to recover,” Rias ordered.

“Um, do you think I should stay here?” Kunou asked hesitantly. She wouldn’t be happy to be left here on her own, but like Rias, she knew her mom would be waking up soon. And she wasn’t certain what she could offer to the ongoing crisis in Egypt. “I know you need Lily to keep opening portals to Danan, but what about me?”

“I think actually you would be a good ambassador,” Rias quipped. When Kunou paled in horror, she went on smoothly, winking at the kitsune, “To children and parents, I mean. You can help keep their spirits up. But if you want to stay here, I understand.”

While that sounded a bit like Rias was making stuff up for her to do to Kunou, the idea of waiting for her mom to wake up on her own did not appeal to Kunou, even if she had volunteered to stay in the first place. So she nodded, and the trio once more stepped through a portal back to Egypt.

Once back in Egypt, Rias clapped her hands together, thanked Gabrielle politely for her help, and turned to Irina and Issei. “Now that the invalids are where they can best recover, it’s time to turn her attention to everything else. Show me where Akeno and the rest are. And fill me in for more about what is going on right now. I don’t need the entire background just yet. I get the impression that would be a very long story.”

Gabrielle snorted, interjecting herself into the conversation. “Short version: an ancient Pharaoh had become immortal, used a mix of ancient Egyptian magic, modern magic and several dozen different languages to create a massive ritual that called for the sacrifice of all life within Egypt to fuel his rise to godhood.” While she had been merely helping out with her potions as a healer, Gabrielle had heard pretty much everything that was going on, either secondhand or thanks to listening to Asia talk about it. “Naturally, Harry decided to stop that, and he and his allies were able to limit the effect but not get to the enemy in time to stop the ritual.”

“There was a lot more going on than that, but I suppose Gabrielle’s right,” Issei nodded, leading the way out of the door towards the elevator. He filled in some of the blanks in the big story despite Rias his earlier words but stopped and began to talk about what they were faced with now as they finally reached the streets.

There, all of them, bar Gabrielle, who left them to make her way towards the nearby hospital, took to the roofs. While Issei needed to use his devil wings to jump up that far, Irina was able to clear it with a single bound, joining the others there before racing off toward the headquarters.

“Anyway, I could go into a lot more detail about the fighting and everything, but right now, we’re dealing with a major humanitarian crisis. There is not a lot of electricity outside of the three cities of the points of the Potter Triangle, at least from what I know. Food is also a

major problem, although the wizards have this spell that lets them conjure up water. It takes a lot out of them in an arid place like Egypt, so the local wizards are using another spell to convert seawater into drinking water.”

“Actually, transportation is the most major issue along with communication,” Irina interjected. Unlike Issei, she had been keeping abreast of things. As a representative of those left in Cairo, Irina had been pushing for more help to be pushed out towards them and had succeeded in getting a four carpets team of Shinsengumi sent out there along with a house elf. It was only luck that she was there with Issei to share lunch with Gabrielle when Rias came through.

“The wizards are producing enough water now, and there have been dozens of small shipments of food coming through. But they are out of magic carpets and broomsticks. The locals haven’t gotten any helicopters or planes up, so all transportation must be done the magical way.” Irina smiled wanly. “Those cute little House elf creatures can do the wizard Apparate thing but can’t teleport more than a hundred miles. That covers a huge portion of the Potter Triangle for sure, but they are so busy already with everything else that we don’t have enough of them to go around.”

“And then there’s the area outside of the Triangle. There are just so **many** nonmagicals out there that need help.” Irina shook her head. “There are only so many cooks, electricians, welders, construction workers and so forth out there able to help right away.

“So numbers are just as much a problem. Still, that one I can’t do anything about. Transportation though, that I surely can,” Rias said, causing Issei to pause in midair to smack one fist into the other palm in an ‘Oh, right’ kind of gesture. It was evident that her young pawn had just remembered what the Gremory family magic was: teleportation magic, Devil style.

Outside of the Command center, Issei and Irina were waved through, but the guardsmen stopped Rias, wondering who she was. Given the nearby crowd of people, many of whom looked to be protestors if their shouts were anything to go by, Rias understood why there was such security. However, the fact that it was local soldiers providing that security was probably a good sign. *But there are so many people here... hmm... I think organization and a certain bit of political chicanery are needed here.*

Issei vouched for Rias, saying that she was Rias Gremory-Potter and was one of the leaders of Harry’s group. That was enough to convince the guards to send ahead, and Akeno also guaranteed Rias’s Bonafides quickly, more than eager to get some help. With the number of reports coming in from both around Alexandria on various projects and the rest of the triangle and beyond, she and the other magical leaders were beginning to be just as overwhelmed, much like the resources they had on hand were. Already, a lot of the food within Alexandria had been sent out, and the groups of volunteer wizards and witches on water duty had to be changed out three times since that effort had begun, despite how hard it was getting to get the water to where it was most needed.

To say nothing of electricity or anything else on the non-magical side of things. There, protests or demands on their time from people who wanted specific projects pushed forward or specific areas to get more resources were slowing the relief efforts badly. Everyone on the military side of things was still somewhat organized, although even there, survivors brought back by Asia's Miracle were starting to overwhelm the local officer corps. Twice, Sala and even Abraxas had to deal with officers of equal rank trying to pull seniority over them, and the surviving politicians were not shy in demanding to be transported to Alexandria. Even now, several surviving Parliament members were in the command room, berating and trying to browbeat Abraxas into doing what they wanted to do.

Regardless, Rias was allowed inside the command center.

But before Rias could reach the command room, she had one personal hurdle to meet first. Outside of the command room, she spotted a tall young man. In his hand, he held a spear whose power Rias could sense even as she stepped into the hallway leading to the command room. She knew from Issei's description of him that this was the being who had once been the dog from Tir Na Nog she had made into her second Knight. The Hound of Ulster, the son of Lugh, Cú Chulainn.

He stared at her as she approached, a smirk on his features as his hand clenched around the shaft of Gae Bolg. "So, this is the lady, the Queen to Harry's king, but my own King in terms of Devilkind, yeah? You put your piece in me, and now expect me to bow and scrape?"

While Cú had agreed to be part of the Potter-Gremory clan as long as they had use for his spear, his nature would not allow him to just let anyone have control over him. And there was a part of him that wondered if this woman was just a Devil succubus, manipulating Potter with her wiles. *It wouldn't be the first time.*

Rias's eyes narrowed, and for a brief moment, awe and even a smidgen of fear washed over her at the idea of meeting a legendary demigod and hero. But a second later, that faded under her self-control and a bit of anger as Cú's comment. "I have never asked any of my family to kneel or scrape! Follow my orders in times of trouble, certainly. Help one another as a family should, yes. But I've never treated them as a slave or merely soldiers to be ordered about. Get that thought out of your head right now, Son of Lugh."

"And I am supposed to believe you just like that?" Cú scoffed, although it did match what Harry had said about the devil girl. "Are you that naïve?"

"You're trying to push my buttons. You want to see how I react when I'm angry. Specifically how I will react when I'm angry at you. Get over yourself!" Rias growled, stomping forward to clear up at the taller man. "There are way more important things going on than your ego, as hard as that might seem to someone with your legend."

Cu growled and pushed forward chest to chest, ignoring the fact that Rias's chest was a whole lot softer than his, ignoring the fact that she was a woman at all at the moment.

Outwardly, anyway. *Holy hell, she's almost as stacked as that black-haired sadistic cailin (girl)! Potter can surely pick 'em.* "I don't like anyone having power over me. What's to stop me from going rogue right now?"

"The fact that my Knight piece is the only thing that kept you alive when you came back from Danan? The fact that without draining my magical power as you did, you would never have been able to transform back into a human form at all? The fact that for all of your egotism, arrogance and self-serving nature in your legends, you were never a complete asshole or a coward who ran away from a debt or a task half-done?" Rias quipped.

"But you couldn't stop me if I wanted to, could you, gleeite (cutie)?" Cú challenged, his smirk turning into a sneer as those shots went home.

"Oh, you want to know if I have enough power to be called your king on my own rather than with Harry beside me?" When Cú just grinned challengingly back at her, Rias allowed her control of her magical aura to fade and reached through the connection to her Knight piece within Cú, growling out, "Heel DOG!"

Cú grunted and began to try to push away the power within him, but the Knight piece had bonded to him, and for all his demigod nature and knowledge of runes, Cú wasn't a wizard or Devil, able to consciously use the magic of his nature to combat this effect. Seconds passed, and despite Cú's best efforts, he felt his knees begin to buckle before Rias cut off the assault abruptly, reining it and her aura in. "I trust that I have earned some respect now, Cu?" She asked mock-sweetly. *Good grief power plays between heroes and devils seem to be quite alike.*

At that, Cú grumbled but nodded, and his entire attitude seemed to take a one-eighty. Grinning so widely that Rias realized he had overplayed it, making her feel a tiny bit foolish. Cú hopped to his feet, smacking one hand over his chest and bowing grandly, causing Rias to back away lest he faceplant into her chest. *Come to think of it, he could have meant to do that. Part of his legend is that Cú is a horn dog, pun intended.*

But when he grinned at her, it was more cheerily than with any ulterior motive. "Aye, you and the high king, you're a right pair. You're so mild-mannered at first blush that people miss the stick underneath the honey. Still, I am at your orders, so long as you agree to the promises Potter made in your name."

"I won't repudiate any agreement made by my husband, but say your piece," Rias answered easily before scowling. "Unless it has to do with money. His mind for money matters is nonexistent."

Cú laughed at that but shook his head. "None o' that. First, I want to return to Ire to learn about how my tale has been passed on and what my fellow Irish believe of my deeds! I want to learn of such with my own ears to know what impact I still make. Such is a hero's right."

"That's fine. In fact, we might be able to send you there once this trouble in Egypt has settled down," Rias shrugged.

Smiling at that (and what a shrug did to the redhead; she was taken, sure, but he wasn't dead), Cú continued. "My second demand is that I am free to explore Danan once you all aren't facing any more foes worthy of my spear."

"Done. We might ask you for reports, as we've only just begun to do so, but that sounds more than fine to me. We might even be able to get you a ship to do it in."

"Done and done then. As I said, I am at your service!" Cú answered with an easy smile.

Rias smiled prettily at him even as she stayed well back, then paused, thinking. "Would you mind then working with Gasper for now? I would like to see what advice you have for us about ways to train his Sacred Gear, Baalor's Eye." Cú's own eyes widened in shock at that, and Rias nodded. "You can see why I would like your insight there."

"Aye, I can agree ta that. But I'll stay with ya for a bit to just add more gravitas ta your entrance, lass," Cú answered.

With that, Rias opened the door, only to pause as a wall of noise hit them all. Kunou and Lily, who had kept silent during the confrontation outside, both clapped their hands over their ears while Rias stumbled back and Cú grimaced at the cacophony.

There were three dozen leprechauns all shouting for attention all around the room. In their hands, they held small buttons from which other voices could be heard, tinny but adding to the background noise. Seven or eight locals in civilian clothing were shouting at Egyptian military officers, who were roaring back, while their junior officers tried to make themselves scarce while also talking to one another in the background. Proudfoot and Husukai were trying to be heard over the noise, and Akeno, Suzaku and, very weirdly, Koneko were trying desperately to concentrate on one communication at a time. All of this was not helped by the fact that those who had been fighting throughout the conflict were exhausted, and the civilians were not.

Shaking her head, Rias sighed, then cast the devil equivalent of Sonorous over her throat. "Gentlemen and Ladies, this is unseemly!" Her voice overrode every other voice in the room, causing silence to fall and every eye to turn towards her. At that, Rias walked forward, smiling cheerily as she pulled Akeno into a hug. "Hello, Akeno! You and everyone else have been very busy, haven't you? I'm sorry I haven't been here before this."

Akeno mumbled, "You were unconscious, Rias-chan, don't worry. But we..."

"Shh... Go get some rest. You and Koneko look as if Pepper Up potions aren't enough to keep you going," Rias interrupted, tightening her hug around her best friend, then releasing her gently, smiling brightly at her and then around at the others. "Koneko, if you could please get

yourself and Akeno to a break room. Some sleep will do you better good than another Pepper Up potion.”

Such potions could keep you going and even build up your magical reserves but did nothing for your mind. And when the user crashed, they tended to crash hard. Pepper Up Potions also built up an addiction in the user, which was never good.

For a moment, the rest of the room was silent, and Koneko took a moment to hug Rias, too, then took Akeno’s unresisting arm and pulled her out of the room. Rias watched them go, letting the silence in response to her shout and sudden assumption of command settle, breathing in deeply and inwardly psyching herself up for what was to come.

I can do this. I can do this. This is an organizational, logistical, and political problem. I’ve learned all of that since I was old enough to walk. My father taught me a lot about business and people, and I need all of that now. Heh... along with my Devil Aura...

Finally, she turned back to the rest of the room, smiling sunnily, radiating a sense of gentle femininity as well as an underlying layer of steel as her mother had taught her. *I might not have been thankful for the lessons, and our relationship might have suffered thanks to Riser and that nonsense, but thank you for this, Mother. And now for Nii-san and Grayfia’s lessons...*

“Wizards, Onmyouji, Fae and Egyptians. I apologize for seemingly running roughshod over you all for a few moments, but at some point, you need to be the largest voice in the room to get everyone’s attention. My name is Rias Gremory-Potter, and as you might tell from the name, I am Harry Potter’s wife.” She let that sink in, watching closely, quickly realizing none of the civilians in the room seemed to show the automatic respect that the military officers did. *This must mean they were among the ones resurrected by Asia’s Miracle.* “As such, I have certain powers and abilities which might be able to help us. But first, I believe it is time for a bit of diplomacy and organization.”

While all the civilians attempted to stop themselves from showing a positive reaction to the use of the word ‘diplomacy’ Rias turned to Major General Abraxas. “Sir, while I fully understand your need to keep a hand on the pulse of what is going on, you look like you are on your last legs. Go out. Get some food. Some sunlight. And maybe even a nap. I understand a General Sala is still in the field around Damanhur?”

“That’s correct, but I can’t possibly...” Abraxas began, but Rias held up a hand.

“Sir, I am not saying you should hand over your command or anything similar, nor am I saying I am qualified to take your place or will even try. But I think that you need some rest. We are not under combat conditions here in Alexandria any longer, so surely you can take an hour while your well-trained junior officers take over?”

Those worthies winced, while even the politicians looked a little worried. They didn’t want to replace Abraxas. They wanted to force him to do what they wanted. None of them

were foolish enough to think they had the organizational skills needed to control this growing mass of trouble.

Perhaps that was why they all twitched as Rias turned to them. “That leaves me with you, gentlemen. May I ask who here can speak for Alexandria?”

“That would be me. I am Mayor Akun Abas, and I have been sidelined since I... I was revived by the miracle that pulled me and most of these other gentlemen from death.”

“I am sorry to hear that, but that is easy enough to fix. Surely, as the mayor, you know who the police chief is, or who can step into their shoes?” he nodded officiously. “In that case, we should be able to turn over much of the issues facing Alexandria to you.”

Without waiting for a reply, another lesson from her brother, Rias turned to one of the nearby leprechauns. “Could you please assign two of your fellows to work with Mayor Abas. Mr. Mayor, I suggest you gather a group of secretaries and runners. You’ll want to set up a small command staff for yourself, of course. Where you should do so, I leave to you.”

Closing his mouth from his instinctual response, Abas thought about it for a few minutes, then reluctantly nodded. While he had wanted to push that fewer resources be spent on the survey teams and more on getting Alexandria back to normal, this way, he could at least divert some of those resources himself, and he could build up his own power base. *And after this disaster has somehow been contained or controlled, then I will emerge as the strongest politician in Egypt!*

Far too few of the executive or legislative federal branches had survived to build an interim government, a fact that continued down to the municipal level. There were just too many demands not enough infrastructure to build a civilian government across Egypt right now. Thus, the local mayors and politicians, like the rest of the group, could place themselves in a good position to step into the top spot, whatever that might become.

“I think the first thing you’ll want to do is start to let people get back into their homes and so forth. An audit of the city will help point you toward zones that are relatively undamaged. That, and getting more aid to those watching over the children. I... I understand there are a lot of babies without parents,” Rias added.

Abas gulped at that, knowing how much work it would be, but nodded, unable to back away now.

“Excellent!” Rias smiled, and the men and women alike throughout the control room tried to answer that smile, taken in by Rias’s beauty as many of them had occasionally been by Akeno and the others but also buoyed up by her simple good cheer, untainted by the shock, horror or anger they had all been feeling at what had occurred to Egypt. That was something that none of them were feeling at this point, but they did begin to feel a bit more hope that

they could get on top of this. Even the politicians were not immune to Rias's smile, enhanced further by her devil aura.

"Now, I think we need to do a quick census of the civilian population out there. Not just volunteers to help with physical tasks but to organize things. We need secretaries and people good with pen and paper, numbers and notes just as much as we need people who can heft large weights or figure out how to get electronics working again."

There were nods all around and wincing from several officers. None of them had thought of that, having thought they could handle it all. But they couldn't. "Good. Now, to start that process, could two of you gentlemen take over that project? And Auror Proudfoot, assign them two wizards apiece? I understand there are no more broomsticks, but certainly, they can use Sonorous and other spells to help."

"Er, I've got a few volunteers, yes, Mrs.," Steven answered, somewhat overwhelmed by Rias's almost pushy good humor and enthusiasm. Some of that was certainly his tiredness, but also the fact that all of them had honestly been so overwhelmed by the problems facing them the command group hadn't been able to see they needed to break it down into smaller problems and solve those to build up to solving the overall issue. Instead, outside of the survey teams and sending out supplies, they had bogged down badly.

Three of the officers and two of the politicians hurried out. From there, Rias turned her attention to a few others, including a few officers from the logistics corps who knew about engines. She sent for a few dwarves, many of whom had been brought back to Alexandria to be assigned to further survey teams.

"But getting more helicopters and even planes into the air to do that would be a great idea." From there, she pointed to Damietta and Damanhur on the map. "And I think that these cities also need someone on the civilian side to get them organized. Someone who we know we can work with."

"That's well and good, but getting more resources out there is going to be a large problem even after we start getting some planes flying again," one of the politicians interrupted.

"That is not going to be a problem. My magical specialty is teleportation arrays." Rias paused then and nodded. "In fact, I think now is the perfect time to show you what that means in real terms. If someone could pick out a sending area here in Alexandria and a receiving zone on the other side for Damanhur? I will need their longitude and latitude."

When she had first created the teleportation tunnel leading from Kyoto to Kuoh, it had taken a good bit out of her. But Rias was a good deal stronger than before, thanks to both her own training, the war against the Winter Court, and the gift from Aine Fand. Rias **knew** she could do this. Twenty minutes later, she was proven right as a group of Egyptian soldiers marched through the new teleportation tunnel. They stared around her in the city of Damietta,

then exchanged thumbs up with soldiers already there waiting for them before turning and waving back at the people remaining behind in Alexandria.

Grinning, Rias looked around at soon-to-be Mayor and former parliamentary member Muda Nasseem, noting absently she barely felt drained from that. "Mayor Nasseem, your city awaits."

Shaking his head in awe, the man nodded. With a gesture, he sent the two hundred men and women he had chosen to bring with him through the portal, waving farewell to the rest of his fellows before following quickly. Fifty were civil servants he had picked out from the civilian population. Forty were people who had worked or lived in Damietta, while twenty others were engineers and plumbers. Eighteen were dwarves, twenty wizards, and two Shinsengumi. The other fifty Rias had no clue about. She just hoped they would prove useful.

An hour and a half later, Abraxas returned to find that all the self-important politicians were no longer crowding his command post. Even better, the large crowd outside was gone, and Senator Zosar was also gone. How that last happened, he had to know and asked the redhead who seemed to have taken over in his absence. *Not that I am going to do anything to move her. The young woman is as much a miracle worker as her husband!*

When asked about Zosar, Rias laughed. "Ah, I sent him forward to take control of the group of surveyors and workers you all had already sent to Cairo. While he will probably screw up, one of the senior dwarves, Xenovia and the Aza'imi will keep him from screwing up too badly. He jumped at the chance to be involved in regaining control of Cairo, but I don't see the city retaining much importance going forward." Rias sobered, shaking her head. "Not going by the fact we've only seen around fifteen thousand survivors coming forward. Even if that rises into the hundred thousand..."

Abraxas shivered, shaking his head. There were over twelve **million** people in Cairo's urban agglomeration. And while that was easily the biggest city in terms of population, it was but one of many. *What of those to the southeast down the Nile from Amarna? Damn them. Damn Akhenaten and Nefertiti both. May Shaitan take their souls into purgatory!*

"Yes, well, as you reminded us, best to do what we can and solve the problems we can. Solve enough small ones, and we might be able to get on top of this," Abraxas said.

"That's the spirit." Rias smiled. "Now, we've untangled the whole communication network thanks to Akeno's previous work there, but I put in several different cutouts. That way, each city area at the points of the Potter Triangle has its own command structure rather than calling back here for everything. They are both connected to us here in Alexandria with teleportation tunnels, letting us support them with men and supplies. Now we need to..."

From there, the two of them began to further organize everything. Luna was quickly called back, and Lily began transporting people through to Ireland to buy food in the muggle world there, bringing it through quickly. With several Fae to keep her on task, Luna was able to

overcome the Interdict once she left the Wizarding World, so this would be her job going forward. Meanwhile, Bill and Fleur were leading the wizards in repairing the damage to the city.

Steven Proudfoot remained in overall command of the Aurors in Egypt, but with order slowly returning to the city, he took over contacting and organizing the various relief forces within the Potter Triangle, working closely with Suzaku. Shareef commanded the Aurors in the survey teams moving out beyond the triangle, with four sub-commanders chosen by the two men. Rias had demanded more organization but had not tried to influence them beyond that. Husukai went through to Damanhur, taking over the magical side of things there and slowly building up a supply station. Eventually, the push southeast down the Nile would take precedence over everywhere else since out beyond the waterways of the Nile, there wasn't much life, and even less left now.

Tiamat was pulled away from Damietta. With a group of gryphons, she was out doing what amounted to showing the flag missions, telling everyone continually to remain calm, work together and so forth. Meanwhile, half the dwarves had been pulled into working with the engineers here in Alexandria on getting helicopters, planes and, most importantly, the radio towers working.

Despite their best efforts, the leprechauns were nowhere near as efficient as radio towers. After all, the leprechauns could be doing a lot of other things. As for the dwarves, they seemed to be building up a strange fascination with everything engineering-related. They were also far stronger than humans of similar weight, sturdy and willing to learn.

At the same time, thanks to the mayor, Rias felt safe enough to pull the golems from the streets of Alexandria. She left two to guard the growing orphanage and the hospital each, but all the others were sent forward to join the larger relief forces. In this manner, they were able to strengthen the relief forces and even pull several squads of Egyptian infantry from them, creating further relief teams.

Set against this series of successes was the fact the knowledge of how wide the disaster that had come to Egypt was spreading among the populace. Thanks to Tiamat and the gryphons – the ancient symbol of royalty and safety in Egypt – the fury and grief this was causing were being contained and even directed to further help one another. But there had still been several nasty incidents, and that was within the Potter Triangle. What was going on outside it was undoubtedly worse.

The magical side of things also continued to be a bottleneck, as did food, but with Luna going around and emptying out warehouses of food in Ireland, the UK and France, it was hoped that bottleneck wouldn't last. Transportation was also still an issue, but becoming less so as Rias continued to, every few hours, take a break from the control room to enlarge the teleportation network throughout Egypt.

Indeed, despite all the problems, despite the growing sadness and grief, finally, there was real hope they would pull through this.

OOOOOO

Akhenaten and Nefertiti laid out on two lounge chairs on a personal beach on an equally personal island. One of the Peloponnesian islands, it had been discovered by Nefertiti several hundred years ago during the Age of Sail. Once the Fidelius spell had been created, Nefertiti had learned it and quickly put this island under that enchantment, making certain that no one else could find it. Thanks to that, it had never been on any map and would never be, not so long as she lived.

It was the perfect fallback spot for them, one they had prepared well in advance even as they had pushed their true plan forward.

Around them, two highly advanced mummies moved, two of them fanning the Pharaoh and his wife, while others continued to put away their notebooks and other personal effects, Nefertiti had sent ahead just in case before joining her husband to take what was rightfully hers from the Harvest. Others continued to repair some damage done to the southwestern face of the island by a monstrous storm that had passed by almost as they arrived. Still more were putting down another set of rune stones that she and Akhenaten would carve on soon in order to stave off any further bad weather.

Nefertiti sighed, flipping onto her back, her tail wagging in delight as she stretched sensuously. There was something about the sunlight that was different now that she was a Nekoshuu. It was as if the pleasure Nefertiti got from just laying there in the sunlight was almost on an erotic level for some reason. Whatever it was, she liked it a good deal.

She saw her husband looking at her and smiled over at Akhenaten. "Do you like what you see, my Pharaoh?"

Akhenaten snorted at that, reaching over with one hand and lightly running a finger up and down her spine from where her rear began to her neck. "You know I do, my dear. You were an amazingly beautiful woman before. Your new catlike features have only added to your beauty. Unfortunately, we have a business to think about before anything else."

With another languid moan, Nefertiti stretched out, then curled around like the cat woman she was, looking over at Akhenaten. But despite the silliness of the motion or how she looked, Nefertiti's voice was serious as she asked, "What went wrong? Beyond my power as a Nekoshuu, I can sense some of the power that we gained during the ritual is already draining away. Not all of it, and the drain seems to be stopping. But the Harvest should have made us into powerful gods, strong enough to possibly challenge the Hindu gods. But now? I cannot believe that we are as powerful as even one of the so-called super devils."

"I don't know. Whatever it is, we need to discover it, but at present, I fear that we were not able to push completely through the deific threshold thanks to Potter's influence. We were able to gain a great deal of power, but not quite enough to transform us into gods ourselves. I believe we will be somewhere between where Leviathan is purported to be and that of a Super Devil like Lucifer once the drain we are both feeling stops. Well below our target, unfortunately."

"Curse Potter and everyone else who came into Egypt with him! The souls of all those people shouldn't have been ours as was our right as their rulers!" Nefertiti raged, standing up abruptly and moving to pace, her tail swishing angrily behind her.

For his part, Akhenaten was well past his initial anger at Potter. A night of debauched sex and then a day lazing about in the sun, wallowing in his newfound power to raise several houses and then conjuring up drinks whose composition was now impossible, did wonders for one's anger. "We failed not because of any mistake on our part but because of exterior interference. We could not have anticipated Potter's abilities, his literally falling into being a demigod. Nor could we have anticipated how well he would be able to rally resistance and use his deific powers. But we survived, and few of his other enemies can say the same."

"Yes, we survived. Yes, we will learn from it. But husband, do you really fancy our chances against Potter and those he stands with in open conflict? Because I do not," Nefertiti warned.

"Only a fool fights openly when he has any choice," Akhenaten agreed with a chuckle, causing Nefertiti to smile. "We were ancient immortals, my dear, and now we are demigods. Why would we risk all of that in an open conflict with another demigod? When we have made clean our escape? No, when we face Potter, it will be when we have secured our next objective."

"So you believe that Cao Cao will go through with his scheme then?"

"I believe that both he and the last survivor of the original Lucifer's family have been properly goaded. Will you be willing to do your part to push that segment of the plot forward?" Akhenaten rejoined.

Nefertiti chuckled, then moved over and sat down on her husband's lap. Both legs wound around his waist, whereupon she began to slowly move her hips, chuckling throatily as he began to respond. "You know I will, husband. We might have lost this throw, but we are still in a position to claim the next prize. But for now, my love, this body of mine is quite demanding. Do you think we can take it for another ride?"

This time, it was Akhenaten who chuckled before leaning up to kiss his love, pulling her body down onto his. Unmindful of events back in Egypt, uncaring of the suffering the horrible deaths they had caused, Nefertiti and Akhenaten, the oldest living beings on the planet, lost themselves, waiting for the time when they could put their next plan into operation.

OOOOOOO

As she sat down early that evening to lunch/dinner at the nearest café to the command center, Rias lamented the fact that she was alone at present. Lily, who had been doing a great job bringing in more dwarves from Tir Na Nog, had gone down to the port area. Several restaurants there had opened their doors, and she and Koneko had gone to see what Alexandrian seafood was like. Rias couldn't begrudge them that, but she also couldn't afford to remove herself that far from the control and communications center. Not even if they had brought along a leprechaun or one of the precious walkie-talkies.

Thankfully, the rest of the café goers were too busy with their own issues to bother Rias. She only had to wave off one man who wanted to approach her. Certainly, Rias received a lot of looks, but most were full of awe rather than fear or anything else. With a report on the city of Mansoura laid out in front of her, Rias made some notes on it as she ate, the only thought she spared for the food being that it was worse than what Rias, Harry, Kala or Akeno could make, but filling, which was all she needed right now.

Her working dinner passed slowly, but about halfway through her meal, Rias felt someone standing nearby. Looking up, Rias smiled at the sight of a somewhat weary-looking Luna. "Back again? Take a seat, and order some food if you want. It's... adequate."

Luna snorted at that, shaking her head. "I've been going further afield with each trip so that my emptying warehouses of foodstuffs and farms of produce won't be so noticeable. My last stop was in a village in France near one of their magical communities. French street fair beats Alexandrian café food."

Giggling, Rias nodded at that, watching as Luna sat down, pulling up a chair and twirling it around to sit on it backward, her legs kicking out idly under the table. Rias absently noted that Luna's skirt, which she had changed into after the fighting had ended, had seemingly ridden up as she did this. Many a man was looking at Luna's rear now, some with frowns, others with smiles and giggles from the women. *But no outright leers. That's nice to see. Evidently, Luna's part in the fighting last night has garnered her some notoriety.*

When Luna spoke, her words pulled Rias from her musings about the reaction of the crowd around them. "I'm now primarily using the Floo Network to get around, sticking to the Wizarding World. Tir Na Nog doesn't have enough fruits or vegetables, let alone anything else, much as my court was willing to try. Bouncing around like I am is working for now. The stops I made in Portugal were especially fruitful."

She giggled then, jerking her head around to indicate the crowd around them, seemingly aware of the reaction she was getting. "This isn't the first time I've gotten looks today. Heh, my fairies and I have actually worked it into our thievery. It turns out that looking like you are a marriage of a princess and a fairy – that's someone else's words, not mine - gets me some attention. Especially when I'm down by the docks or near the warehouse district of cities. This

lets my fairy friends get in and start spiriting away bags or barrels of food. So long as there isn't any steel involved in what they are moving or a horseshoe over the door, the fairies are able to spirit it all away, acting almost like house elves, if in smaller trips."

Normally, once she left the Wizarding World's wards behind, Luna would not have been able to concentrate on anything dealing with Egypt due to the Interdict. But thanks to one fairy remaining hidden in her hair, continually whispering jokes and reminders into her ear that they were on an important mission, never mentioning Egypt directly. This let Luna concentrate on what she was doing rather than trying to remember the overall problems they were facing well enough to get the job done. And then, once back in the Wizarding World, Luna was no longer susceptible to the Interdict.

"I'm not about to begrudge you for having some fun. Your help with the food will help a lot. Especially the milk and other baby food," Rias added, causing Luna to join her in grimacing.

It turned out that Irina's guess on how babies would be unaffected by the soul-stealing aspect of Akhenaten's draining magic. And much like with everything else, the magicals had horribly underestimated the numbers they were dealing with. Nearly two hundred thousand babies had been found so far, and in many cities and towns beyond the Potter Triangle, there just weren't enough survivors or resources to look after them. Bringing the babies from these areas back to where they could be cared for had not only slowed the survey teams under Rama badly but had also added to the growing acrimony felt by the thousands of survivors left behind. After all, Ireland wasn't the only place to have legends of those using magic stealing away babies.

"Now, if we could only start getting some more power operating in the other cities within the Potter Triangle, that would help a **lot**. We've only got power so far in seven cities, and that just isn't enough, not even with our transportation issues slowly getting better. And we still haven't reached down past Cairo yet with anything but survey teams, let alone relief forces. Husukai's preparing for that, but it's going to be a major undertaking," Rias went on, looking down at the report in front of her.

Cairo was now the southeastern tip of the area that they were slowly bringing under control. There was still rioting, looting and a lot of fighting. But those incidents were slowly being strangled out as more people joined the local relief efforts. The Indian military thankfully gave them a lot of manpower to start with and a source of trust and stability.

But even it was starting to strain thanks to simply how many mouths to feed there were and, unfortunately, how little food had been able to survive the night's disaster. To say nothing of the other problems.

At the latest census before the disaster, Egypt had a population of around ninety-two million people. Thanks to the importance of the Suez Canal and the Nile River as the only two sources of real water within Egypt, cities had always grown up around one or the other, and the

Nile Delta, where the Potter Triangle had started, was some of the most fertile and heavily populated areas.

By this point, Rias, who had a decent head for numbers, estimated that between Harry's destroying as many pillars as he possibly could and Asia's Miracle, the two Potters had saved somewhere between twenty-three to forty million. On top of that, a few thousand might have been able to survive outside of the 'safe zones' of the pillars scattered across Egypt.

The total number of nonmagicals they were dealing with was a number that Rias very carefully did not share with anyone else on the magical side of things, though she suspected Husukai and Rama had worked it out. But Rias knew that one of the main reasons why the Statute of Secrecy was so sacrosanct to the wizards and witches of the Wizarding World was that they knew how badly outnumbered they were. There were more living Egyptians even now than there were magicals in the entire world. Even India, Canada and America combined had barely more than a few million magicals, and they were the largest magical countries.

And that doesn't even make mention of the fact that the wizards outnumber all three Factions, the Youkai and anyone on the mystical side of things. Yet even so, with those numbers come resources and industry.

Thousands of construction workers, thousands of policemen, a lot of them brought back by Asia's miracle and more than willing to pitch in. Electricians, teachers, civil servants. Several dozen more senators, mayors, and municipal workers by the thousands. For every twenty people who wanted to make trouble, there were a few hundred who had come forward to help. Without them, any semblance of order and coordination would have been impossible.

And... well... Rias had plans. She had been watching the closeness the Egyptian military units who had fought alongside the Shinsengumi, and Aurors showed one another when their leaders weren't around. She had seen the looks of worry about the future and could see tiny clumps of mixed groups from where she was sitting. A witch and a few infantrymen, a policeman talking to an Auror. *I hate what happened here. I loathe it with every fiber of my being. But we can't just put the genie back in the bottle, not without using a lot of force. It's possible, but I don't see Harry being happy about it, and neither am I. Instead, I think we need to... offer an alternative. Or at least a deal of some kind.*

Communication was still a tremendous problem. Indeed, with Rias and her teleportation tunnels, communication outside of simply sending runners through those tunnels was now the major bottleneck. Still, the radio towers here in Alexandria were working once more, as were many cities in the surrounding governates. In three or four more days, Egypt might have full communications once more. The first helicopters and planes had taken off from Alexandria's airports, both military and civilian, several hours ago to help in transporting bulk items and equipment.

Shaking her head from such thoughts, Rias looked across at Luna again. "But why do I get the impression you're not stopping by to speak to me specifically about food issues?"

"The world's magisphere cannot take another blow like it did here," Luna said, her tone deadly serious, and her eyes locked on Rias even though the rest of her body language was completely languid and lazy looking. "I can still feel the earth shivering in aftershocks even now. We need to start funneling the magic away from Earth somehow."

Rias winced a bit. "Luna, I understand your point, but we have bigger..."

"There was another natural disaster just as I was leaving that tiny town to head into the Wizarding World. I saw it on the news," Luna interrupted. "A tornado hit that..." She paused, clicking her fingers in agitation, her seriousness fading for a second. "That strange bit of America that sticks out like a foot at the bottom southeast."

"Florida," Rias answered instantly, a sinking feeling hitting her.

"That was it. Florida. A portion of its tip is gone; some famous fortress or something was hit badly; I can't remember the name. Cuba and several other islands were also named in the news as being badly hit by earthquakes and another tsunami. There were a few people shouting about how it was the end times in the streets before I transferred back into the Wizarding World. And there were others before that, ones that occurred both during and after events here in Egypt."

That caused Rias's words to break off, and she frowned. Finally, she shook her head. "We can't just stop using magic. With the Interdict still going on and so much of their technology still not working, magic is the only thing that is sustaining Egypt right now, particularly my teleportation tunnels. It won't be that way for long, but it is for now. And even after that... Luna, I can't control what other magicals do. So unless you have some solution, some way we can start funneling magic through to Danan, telling me about it isn't going to do anything. Good grief, even if I could convince the Abrahamic factions and the Indian Gods, Ophis would still be out there."

"I know. But I needed to tell someone." Luna shrugged. "And we need to keep it in mind going forward. Any more magical battles need to happen within those pocket dimensions of yours or in the existing parasite dimensions like the Underworld." She became even more serious then. "You and Harry both told me that there was some kind of great peace meeting or something coming up, right?"

"Peace conference, yes. I wager that this incident will have pushed forward the timing for that one way or the other," Rias answered dryly.

"Good. Because Mother Earth cannot take much more of this."

"But to do that, we need to deal with what is going on here in Egypt." Rias thought about it for a few moments, then began to smile. *A way to get some more backup and to start the process of making certain that the warning gets taken seriously.* "Tell me, Luna, you and your fairies have seemingly perfected how to steal large quantities of food. How would you feel about kidnapping some people for me?"

Unfortunately, Luna was not the only one to stop by and disrupt her dinner. Not twenty minutes later, just as Rias was starting on her second coffee, Ramagupta came up to her table, head bowed in respect.

Hermione had bowed out of any kind of leadership duties the moment she got back from the Wizarding World. While she was a great organizer, her efforts in school with S.P.E.W. and trying to organize the Defense Association had shown her that she didn't have, as she had put it several times, the people skills necessary to lead people. Browbeat or intimidate with her intelligence? Certainly. But actually lead, no. Instead, she and Padma had started a small class for volunteer witches and wizards from the local civilian population who wanted to help out.

There were, unfortunately, not that many, making Proudfoot's pessimism quite on target. A lot of wizards and witches looked down on nonmagicals, and there were others who felt they should just wait for the Aurors to be done with everything. But around two dozen came forward now that the violence was over. Many of these volunteers felt that this problem had started in the Wizarding World, and thus, they had to be the ones to clean it up.

After dealing with the thirty volunteers, Padma and Hermione retired for a long nap. Padma hadn't taken any Pepper Up potions, while Hermione was crashing from her latest one.

Similarly, Rama was simply too damn busy from the moment he walked out of the Floo. At first, arguing with Proudfoot, then getting involved with other arguments, and learning the true scope of the disaster had pushed any thought of the... individuals... he was here to represent out of his mind at first. It was only after Rias had arrived that Ramagupta remembered his other mission. And it was another hour before he could get any free time to talk to Rias beyond their initial introduction.

Rias listened as he spoke, then slowly raised a hand to the side of her head and began to massage her temple. "So, to summarize. You represent a group of Indian **gods**. The group of Indian **gods** who wish to break their isolation, their self-isolation, I might add, from the rest of the mystical community." Rias knew she was emphasizing the term gods a bit but didn't care. It needed it. "You think it doesn't have any negative connotations, that they wish to work with Harry and our, I don't want to use the word faction, it's been used too often, our group, I suppose for a better term. They wish to talk to us and are willing to help here in Egypt in some fashion, but they want to talk to Harry personally first. Do I have that all correct?"

"Essentially. The god my family has worshipped since as far back as our chronicles go is Ganesha. He is following his father in this. I get the impression from a brief dispatch from

Ganesha that they are deeply concerned with Earth's overall health and the Khaos Brigade. The Eternal Dragon does not know what she's doing." Rama looked a little apologetic but went on firmly. "And while they seem to be giving your husband a pass, he hasn't exactly made things better."

Rias nodded at that and leaned back in the chair she was using for the moment. The two of them had commandeered an empty office for this conversation, and Rias had been thinking about doing the overall artistic level of Egypt a favor by removing the 'ultra-modern' paintings on the wall, but now that thought had disappeared from her head. "First, can they actually see through the Interdict?"

"No. They know that some kind of disaster has occurred and wish to help deal with it but cannot see through the Interdict, so they do not know any details. I think that the object I gave Harry should still work through it, but I do not know if that is correct." Rama scowled, tugging at his beard and shaking his head in chagrin. "Humans should not be able to influence gods so!"

Rias bit back a desire to snort at that, the thought, *Who do you think you're kidding? Gods have been influenced by humans for far longer than the other way around* going through her mind. But aloud, she merely said, "Alright. That sounds a bit haphazard, but what kind of aid do you think they could be here?"

On sober reflection, direct aid from Lord Shiva was both an amazing and somewhat daunting idea. He was easily one of the two strongest Indian deities, and that was a terrifying thought, considering it meant he was stronger than a Super Devil like her brother. But he could also be a direct help. Being the god of meditation, he could maybe keep the Egyptians calm, which was a major issue right now, and he was also the god of Poison and Medicine. Similarly, his wife, Parvati, would be a major help, being the goddess of nourishment, motherhood and harmony. *Working together, the two of them could stem the anger growing in the Egyptian public.*

"I do not know. I would say that Ganesha would simply hurl himself into whatever trouble we wish for him to deal with. He is the Remover of Obstacles, after all," Rama grinned, teeth shining over his black beard. "No one could say he is as wise as his brother or father, but he is also God of the Masses. Ganesha would be able to further rally the Egyptian populace to overcome their current straits. His parents? I believe they would be willing to use their inherent magic to help us here, providing food and medicine alike."

"So simple things to them but incredibly telling for us," Rias mused, nodding.

"All right, that sounds useful. But it also sounds as if we'd only be borrowing trouble in the long run. Large-scale Blessings like that cause splashes, right? And would impact the background magosphere even more."

“Perhaps I do not know myself how the magic of the gods works. I only know that they are different, they are powerful, and they are gods,” Rama answered simply. “But surely any help would be good.”

“Maybe.” Rias stood up and turned to stare out a nearby window, staring out towards where the River Nile was. It couldn’t be seen by Rias, of course, not with all the intervening buildings. But Rias had investigated the river prior to coming back for her meal, having wondered some things about the disjointed explanation she had been getting of Harry’s battle for control of the Nile and how it had helped them.

Thanks to the power she had absorbed from the enneagram of Aine Fand, the Nile blazed to her senses with a Blessing. The original Blessing that Harry had fought hard to not damage as he took control of the river had been renewed during that struggle. Or purposefully, Rias didn’t know. Regardless, she knew that the water of the Nile was brimming with vitality, literally providing health and life to anyone who lived along it or drank from the river. *Which made all the efforts with water somewhat superfluous, which is so ironic it’s painful. If Akeno or someone else had just been able to see it, they could have stopped that waste of time and resources. Still, that Blessing is ancient and hopefully won’t have caused more strain on the magosphere.*

“But unless they have a way to somehow siphon off some of the magic from Earth, I’m afraid that we can’t take the chance. Have you been keeping up with what’s been going on in the non-magical world?”

Not having been involved in that discussion with Lyle at the ICW headquarters and not having much to do with the non-magical world normally, Rama shook his head. Rias explained the number of natural disasters that Luna had begun to report after each trip out for foodstuffs. “The disaster that your gods were worried about is already starting to occur. I am fully willing to meet with them, and I’m fully willing to pass on the word that they want to come here now rather than wait for Harry to come to them. But without some assurances that their powers would cause more damage worldwide, I’m afraid we can’t accept their help just yet.”

“Do I have your permission then to leave and get in touch with them? I can hand my duties over to my second-in-command for a few hours.”

“Do it,” Rias ordered, nodding, before looking at the young Kshatriya thoughtfully. “If it’s that simple for you to get in touch with them, then yes. Although I am getting the impression that there is more going on within the Indian pantheon than you are telling me.”

“I got that impression myself from the first time Ganesha stayed around after my wedding,” Rama drawled, shaking his head. “Some kind of power struggle between Indra and Shiva, or an overall division between the gods of Sanatana Dharma? I don’t think they want to reach out in terms of military allies, but they might want to simply leave India along with many of their followers. I don’t get the sense that they are the ones seeking conflict.”

“Good enough for me. And don’t get me wrong, Rama. I’m giddy, **overwhelmed** with the idea of bringing several gods into our alliance in the long term and getting their help here in Egypt. But I don’t think they or I should be unaware of the dangers to the world as a whole using their powers on such a large scale would cause.”

To say nothing of the target that might make them. Ophis might see an opportunity to either pressure them or simply attack them outright. Rias wasn’t certain why Ophis if she was so certain of her power, had not attacked and forced the other superpowers out there into serving her overall goal of fighting the Great Red and taking back control of the dimensional gap. Perhaps it was part of her normal draconic nature that she would rather have servants far beneath her than work with near equals? Perhaps it hadn’t even occurred to her?

Or perhaps, and this was a theory Rias felt was most accurate, like the Wizarding World, perhaps the Hindu gods (and any other gods that might still be out there, a thought that she was not comfortable with it all) were hiding themselves in such a way that Ophis could not find them. But if they started to throw Blessings left and right, then it was only a matter of time before she showed up.

In fact, I am intensely grateful that Ophis hasn’t shown up here yet, searching for answers to all the magic thrown around. It seems as if the Interdict even works on someone like her, and isn’t that just mildly frightening? It reminds me that for all her strength, she, like us mere Devils, can be influenced mentally by magic. Oh yes, frightening.

“I think I can make that clearly understood, milady,” Rama answered, bowing his head.

“Good. And as for me,” Rias stretched, and Rama politely looked away, thinking wistfully of his own wife for a moment and wondering how many days it would be before he could see her again. “I need to get back to work.”

OOOOOOO

Elsewhere, others were also thinking of the future, as Rias was. Unfortunately, while Rias was thinking about building, another was thinking only about combat and war. Completely blind to what was going on in Egypt thanks to the Interdict, life had continued over the past two days among the Khaos Brigade. Vali continued to train, growing stronger in using Albion, while Cao Cao plotted an attack on a specific place in the Underworld. Now more than ever, he knew his plans were the only way forward for humanity.

Because Ophis had returned from the trio of missions she had assigned herself. And even as Rias went back to work, Ophis was looking at the fruits of her labor.

Ophis stared at her new companions, currently in human form despite their protests. Those protests had not lasted, as Ophis had crushed each of them even as she released them, using her vast power to grind each into the dirt in turn. “There will be no more of this

grandstanding. The three of you were brought forth from your prisons for one reason. To help me break into the Dimensional Gap, then fight Great Red, letting me reclaim that which is mine.”

The three dragons all had mixed reactions to this. One, the strangest seeming one to her eyes, nodded his head. His human guise was by far the worse. Even Ophis knew that humans should not have bark-like skin, despite what she had seen described as ‘bishounen looks’ in magazines that Kuroka had tried to get her to read at one point. Whether his ruby-colored eyes or green hair took away from his looks or was part of it, Ophis didn’t know nor care. “So long as you allow me to destroy these wards you mentioned, I am happy. No wards anyone else creates will ever be stronger than mine!”

In contrast, the one next to the green-haired man, the dragon standing in the middle of the trio was ugly. Just like she knew bark-colored skin was wrong, so too did Ophis know that stooped shoulders, mishappen arms, and drooling were not a good look for a human. His sallow skin and lank black hair added to his ugliness.

“I will not obey you!” he spat, greenish drool pouring from his mouth as he snarled, showing his teeth were still all carnivore rather than omnivore. “I am the great Níðhöggr and-”

Without further waiting, Ophis flashed forward, crossing the distance between them so fast that Níðhöggr had no time to react before her hand was locked over his jaw. Human form or no, Níðhöggr was a dragon, the Dragon of Abyssal Rage. Prior to being sealed away, he had achieved power equal to that of Albion and Ddraig, the two Heavenly Dragons. Even just having been unsealed, his power could match many of the surviving Indian gods, stronger than any of the Super Devils.

And yet, as that small, childish hand grabbed onto his jaw, his whole body froze. He couldn’t move, he couldn’t break her grip, Níðhöggr could only stare down into Ophis’s eyes as she stared up at him, feeling as if he was a youngling pinned beneath an ancient dragon. “Do you understand?”

One portion of his mind was telling Níðhöggr to submit, demanding he do so to save himself from dying or, worse, being put back into his prison. But Níðhöggr would not be Níðhöggr if he did not try to fight back against such. “What will be our payment then?” he slurred, the strange misshapen jaw letting him get the words out if still distorted.

Ophis’s grip on his jaw tightened to the point where Níðhöggr could feel his bones grinding against one another, where they began to break under her grip. “You speak of payment to one who has already freed you from prison eternal?”

Níðhöggr tried to move the rest of his body, tried to attack, but his whole body was frozen, held there by Ophis’s magical aura. “I, I will submit!” He said at last, and finally, the pressure let up, Ophis releasing his jaw and stepping back.

“Good.” Now that the pecking order was firmly established, Ophis turned to the third. “And you?”

This one had made his human form look the best of all of them, although given how he was shifting from one foot to another, he might be just as uncomfortable. He was a tall man with a Mongolian look to him, wearing clothing that would not have seemed out of sorts in the Great Khan’s horde save for the six gems on his shirt and his hair falling down his back in three long braids. He had a small smile on his face, his eyes lighting up in delight as he looked at Níðhögr then Ophis. “AHahah... if you let me fight, let me inflict pain, let me feel blood on my claws, I will follow you.”

Ophis smiled faintly, nodding her head. “Do not worry, Aži Dahāka. You will have your fill of such. Should the three of you aid me in reaching the Dimensional Gap and fight with me against the Great Red, you three will be free after I return to the dimensional gap. And what you do after that is no business of mine.”

Even Níðhögr smiled at that while both of the others grinned.

Seeing that, Ophis nodded, quite pleased by how this day had gone.

“Good.” Ophis smiled thinly. Even though Great Red was stronger than her, she knew he would not be able to handle not one but three dragons, along with the rest of the Khaos Brigade she had brought together to serve her purposes. The Great Red would die, and she would return to the dimensional gap once more, to the silence beyond and the solitude that her soul craved. *Now, all that remains is for Le Fay to come through with a ritual that will allow us to open a doorway to the dimensional gap.*

OOOOOOO

“GAHHH!!!” Sirzechs shouted with joy as he leaped out of an emergency portal, landing on his feet, if barely beside his queen and best friend. In contrast, Souji grunted as Typhon landed on top of him. “We survived!”

“I never doubted it,” Grayfia announced placidly, although her body was shivering now, knowing how close they had come to being dumped out into the nothing that was the Dimensional Gap. *Some things are truly worse than death. Being stuck there, with no way home, would be one such.*

“Oooh, I feel weird. Is it always like this for you two legs?” Typhon grunted, pushing up off of Souji’s chest, rolling to his side, ignoring the man. From there, he seemed to have some trouble getting his feet under him, as if he thought he should use both hands and feet to stand before remembering himself. “This is going to take a bit of getting used to.”

It had taken both Ajuka’s Mutated Queen piece, all his pawns and two Knight pieces, all of which had been created right there by Ajuka, their natures inversed to curtail and contain

Typhon's power. They did so, but Ajuka had to mutate both Knight pieces to finally reach the limit of Typhon's power. Now, he was about as strong as one of Sirzechs' original peerage, all of whom had combined been called the Strongest Peerage.

Now, Typhon was in the form of a young boy, around the same age as Milicas, around ten or eleven years old in human terms. He was tallish, very well built, like a young bodybuilder, and wore the remnants of Surtur Second's clothing, shaped to fit him by Ajuka.

Standing straight, Typhon wobbled, and his flailing hand struck the side of the sitting area where they had teleported in. This area served as a kind of meeting area for Sirzechs' peerage, the center of their own wing of the Gremory mansion. It also served as the emergency return point for everyone in the peerage, including Sirzechs.

Now he and Grayfia watched as Typhon's flailing hand smashed into the wall, creating a large hole there to the outside, cracks appearing around the hole. "Oops."

"Perhaps concentrate on moving slowly and keeping your balance for now, Typhon," Grayfia advised, using her concerns about Typhon to push away the grief that she had been feeling since the battle ended for their dead companions. It would take quite some time to understand they were truly gone.

Almost as if he hadn't heard her, Typhon looked around, interested in everything, as he stared around the mansion. When he moved, he stumbled forward, slamming into and through a side table, the glass going everywhere as it literally came apart under the impact. "UGH. Okay, maybe taking this slowly might be a good idea."

He blinked, and he tried to jerk his neck forward, his mouth gaping as a tiny bat thing passed over where he lay. But since it was flying at around eye level for the standing trio, this did nothing but make Typhon look sillier than he already was. "Drat. A better question than the legs: How do humans get by without having any neck to speak of?! How do you catch your prey, just grabbing them in your hands? So slow."

"We usually have other people catch and occasionally even prepare and cook our meals for us," Ajuka said dryly, watching as the tiny bat flew to rest on Sirzechs' shoulder.

Thankfully, it was the shoulder of his unwounded arm, or else even that little weight might well have hurt, given how wrecked Sirzech's arm was. In its mouth, the fang held a small message.

"And what does my Onee-sama have to say to me?" Lucifer said excitedly, almost bouncing up and where he was standing like a little child told he was about to get a gift.

Terry looked at him in confusion, then looked over at Grayfia. "I understood that, though one word came out strangely to my ears. Why is that?" Like all devils, Typhon had been

given the gift of tongues upon transformation. But Japanese was different than the normal Devil language and thus sounded different to him even if the spell told him what was meant.

"Oh yeah, we never told you about the automatic translation, did we---" Ajuka began before Lucifer shrieked and turned, racing away towards the teleportation room.

"My little sister needs me!" his voice reached them, dopplering away.

"Lucifer-sama! You have duties here you must see too! Rias-sama can certainly look after herself," Grayfia shouted, grabbing the piece of paper out of the air from where Lucifer had tossed it behind his shoulder as he raced off. On the paper was written a simple message:

Help! We are being overwhelmed, and we need you here!

It was certainly Rias's handwriting, but if she was in the middle of combat, how would she have time to write out a message? Furthermore, the message didn't seem hurried at all. *Indeed, it seems to be well crafted just to spur Sirzechs into acting.* Grayfia thought suspiciously. But then she frowned, thinking. "Isn't Rias back in Kuoh from that adventure they had in Ireland? Why would she need help with those somewhat frightening wards all around them? They could have held off anyone below the level of the two of you more than long enough to get a proper message through, not this small, short thing. It almost seems as if she's goading you!"

Despite practically shouting this, Grayfia was not surprised to see Sirzechs ignoring her words. The only way to stop him in full Sis-con mode was to freeze his legs to the ground, but Grayfia was far too magically exhausted to do so.

Thankfully, she was not alone, and Sirzechs was, if not as magically exhausted, just as badly battered. And Ajuka both heard her words and understood. A light green string of energy appeared in one hand, and with a smirk, he flashed it forward, letting it wrap around Sirzechs' waist, and for just a moment, Ajuka let his inner Gamer Otaku out. "Get over here!"

"Gah!" Sirzechs found himself pulled to a halt, then dragged back the way he came. "Let me go, I have to---"

"If you were at a hundred percent, I wouldn't bother you Sis-con. As it is, you're not going to be worth anything against something that could get through those fascinating wards you've told me about. Hell, even I'm drained. I need rest, and the two of you need healing. I will contact Sona Sitri. She'll tell us what we need to know without us going there ourselves."

Since Sirzechs had just tried to use his mangled arm to push to his feet, he had no recourse but to nod, a pout forming on his face.

"The mighty Lucifer, folks," Ajuka announced with a sigh, numbers once more appearing around his hand, flowing into the image of a phone.

"It is kind of pathetic to see the warrior who fought Hades looking so... silly," Typhon announced.

Ajuka was still snickering at that as Sona picked up the phone. "Yes?"

"Ah, Sona-san. This is Ajuka. I'm with..." Ajuka began to explain about the message from Rias.

Sona had been almost completely left out of events, barring meeting Lily as she attempted to get to Yasaka to then take her through to Tir Na Nog. Before that, of course, she knew that Rias had exhausted herself magically for some reason. "All I know about is there's some political issue going on there. Yasaka tried to get my attention, but I was still busy with school. Rias certainly isn't here in Kuoh, but she is also just as certainly safe wherever she is if she's with Lily and Yasaka in Tir Na Nog."

"Then why did she send a message like that?" Sirzechs exclaimed, jerking the phone out of Ajuka's face. "Why did she call for my help!?"

"I don't know," Sona drawled, the tone of a young sister who understood what that kind of message would do to her own big sister. "But I don't even know how Rias's bat familiar got to you." Her tone turned pensive. "I will investigate this and get back to you tomorrow. It's nearly one in the morning here."

Ajuka blushed faintly, having forgotten that. "Right. My bad. Sorry Sona-san. And thanks." With that, he hung up and turned to Sirzechs. "You see, there was nothing to be afraid of. We can let Sona handle whatever Rias thought she needed your help for."

"But, but," Sirzechs whined.

That was as far as he got before Grayfia, tired, in pain and utterly done for the day, grabbed him by the ear. "ENOUGH! Leave that to Sona-san. She will handle it. You, my husband, need to rest and recover. As do I. Typhon, if he tries to get past me, hit him."

"Okay... I still don't know what's going on, and I'm as likely to fall on him as I am to hit him, but I'll try," Typhon warned.

"That would serve just as well," Ajuka snorted, waving to Souji. "I'm going to sleep here tonight." *Something about that message and Sona's response bothers me. I know about Tir Na Nog, but what could be so important that Rias would want Sirzechs to head there so quickly she punched his Sis-con button. I am going to follow up on that tomorrow. And maybe take Typhon with me. I've been meaning to examine those wards, and Danan sounds fascinating, too.*

OOOOOOO

Despite her soothing words to Ajuka about Rias, there was one thing that concerned her about the message sent to Maou Lucifer. How in the world had Rias's bat familiar gotten to him? There was only one teleportation circle to the Underworld that connected directly to the Gremory House, as far as she knew. Now, it could have gone through one of the other Gremory territories, but even so, it felt... off to Sona. As did the idea that Rias would send a message asking for help to her brother at all. Rias had just as much pride as Sona herself did. Running to her big brother was the last thing Rias would do. No, there was something else going on here. And her mind had not stopped going back to the way Yasaka had, after going through herself, tried to get Sona to come with her into Danan for a bit. Why?

There was a mystery here, and on a whim, Sona called her Rook. "Tsubasa, this is just on a whim, but I know that you're a night owl. Could you perhaps head to the school and check if there is anything going on in the ORC building? No one should be there right now." Even Youkai were not allowed to just come through the teleportation tunnel at any time of night, after all.

"Sure, boss," Tsubasa's cheery voice answered. She always seemed to not need as much sleep as any of the others and had probably been up playing on the Knite or something similar. "What am I looking for?"

"Anything? As I said, this is on a whim. But for some reason, I am wondering if something odd is going on with Rias and the others in Danan."

"Oooh, I would hate to be left out of something like that business with the Fae again," Tsubasa answered eagerly, accompanied by a rustling noise of her moving around. "I'll call you back when I get there."

Sona nodded and waited only a few moments before Tsubasa called her back. "Sona-sama! There's a light on in the Orc Club room, and I just saw a few Fae flying around."

"You have got to be... wait, no, that doesn't make sense. Rias's familiar was real, for certain... although maybe it could have been enchanted... no, the message was written in Rias's..." Sona shook her head for a moment. "Darn it, too many minor mysteries here. Drat it all." Sona sighed, then ordered Tsubasa to wait for her. She then used her phone to call Momo and Tsubaki, the only other members of her peerage who might be awake. Both were not normally night owls but did occasionally lose themselves in books. Momo didn't answer, but Tsubaki did and quickly agreed to meet Tsubasa and Sona at the school.

There, both of them did see small fairies flying around the old school building that was the center of the Occult Research Club, the training center, the labs and practically everything else they had been doing in Kuoh. It had turned out to be extremely convenient to have a

building already being used solely for the ORC like that. And looking at the building, Sona could see lights were on in the clubhouse. "Right. Let's get to the bottom of all this."

With that, Sona marched into the old school building, her three peerage members falling in behind her. Even though this didn't look to be a combat situation, all of them readied themselves for combat, with water beginning to appear around Sona's arms and a sword in Tsubasa's hand. Tsubaki didn't seem ready for combat but prepared more to use the spells they had learned from Harry since he had come to Kuoh and begun to share his spell books.

With Tsubasa in the lead, they barged into the ORC clubhouse only for all of them to come to a stop, bunching up for a few moments as they looked at a blonde woman in her mid-twenties who was sitting in Rias's chair, twirling around in it as fairies sat on her flinging themselves off with tiny whoops of delight. To one side, Lily sat beside the fal stone, two more Fairies on her hands chattering to her.

"Oh, drat it, I wanted to be turned to the wall so I could twirl around ominously like all the muggle villains do!" the blonde grumbled, pouting as she stared at the three girls.

"Who are you?" Sona asked tightly, moving to one side and looking over at Lily in confusion. "What is going on here? Why are you here so late at night? And what is going on with Rias, Lily?"

"My name is Luna Lovegood, and yes, that is both a name and a description, although only my husband will ever know the truth of it," the blonde answered, causing Tsubasa to laugh and Sona to blush while Tsubaki narrowed her eyes. "As for what is going on here, my little friends, of all sizes, are here seeking help, a process that Rias helped along with. We hoped for the one called Sirzechs, but I suppose you three will do."

"Do? Do for what?" Sona asked, a bare few inches away from shouting. There were just too many minor mysteries piling up, and she had never done so well with mysteries at all.

"Now, Lily," Luna said calmly, and as Lily willed it, undertaking activated through the fal stone, reaching out with fog around the room. At the same time, the fairies flew into everyone's faces, fairy dust and glitter blinding all three devils for a few seconds. The devils had calmed down from a combat stance when they saw Lily and had not been prepared at all for any kind of attack.

By the time they were able to blink their eyes open and concentrate, Lily had taken them through to the top of the caldera on the island of Fand. "Welcome to our home," Lily said with a little giggle. "My dad is still unconscious down there, but now, I bet you and Auntie Luna can actually talk about Egypt."

None of the Devils answered at first, simply staring all around them, feeling the sense of sheer goodness and welcome flowing over them with the warm air coming in from the ocean.

Had this been two generations ago, the feeling of deific-empowered goodness that this island gave off would have been something like poison to Devils. The stronger the devil, the worse the effect. After all, Devils were made, created to be evil, to feed off souls and Sin. Something like this place would have forced them to flee within seconds or destroy it.

Thankfully, not even Sona felt anything other than awe, simply staring around them, feeling that goodness wash over them, taking away many of their worries and concerns. Sona smiled while Sona and Tsubasa grinned openly, with the Rook moving forward to sit down next to Luna, also kicking their legs against the side of the caldera.

"This place looks amazing!" Sona said, smiling. "But I gather that we're not here just for sightseeing? Is there some kind of mystery about this island you need our help solving? Or..." She frowned then, as she was fully able to remember the fact Rias had both collapsed and where Harry had been going. "Egypt! Why couldn't I think of it before?!"

Tsubaki also looked stunned, while Tsubasa simply looked confused. She hadn't noticed anything unusual going on before this, other than Lily coming up with some excuse to get out of school the day before last. "What are you all talking about?"

Sighing, Luna explained about the Interdict, causing all the Devils to become shocked. While they had seen firsthand what Wizard-style ingenuity could do, that was a far cry from realizing that the wizards could craft wards that worked on their minds at a level like this. *There is a difference between the wards separating the Wizarding World from the rest of us and then creating an Enchantment that can cover an entire country and impact the minds of even Devils and the rest of us!*

The rest of the story about Egypt was equally astonishing, but eventually, the story wound down, and Sona asked the most pertinent question. "So what do you want from us?"

"How good are you Devils at construction? Or Organization?"

Sona smiled, the sunlight glinting off her glasses. "I believe you will find us more than capable of that."

OOOOOOO

While more help arrived in Egypt, things were even looking up in the Wizarding World. Berlin was now fully under magical control, the Obliviators and the Aurors finally getting a handle on the sheer number of nonmagicals they needed to memory wipe. The German Ministry of Magic even had a story set up: an attack by a group of insane ex-Communists who were trying to become relevant again.

Still, just because the Germans were finally getting ahead of the disaster curve, that didn't mean that they, and indeed many of the representatives whose area had not yet been

attacked, had stopped being fearful about how badly things had gone. Or angry at that very thing. And as Rias and the others were rapidly discovering when people were fearful, shocked and angry about something going wrong in their lives, they turned to the most natural of defenses: looking for someone to blame

Roberto had known this was coming from the moment Norway had declared the emergency there was coming to an end. His fellow politicians were even faster to jump on the blame game than normal people, and it was obvious that as Chief Mugwump, he was a prime target. While he had never changed policies or could be pointed at as the cause of any of the troubles, all of these problems had erupted on Lyle's watch.

Yet, as he put on his ceremonial robes, Lyle tried to convince himself that he had the perfect defense against any attempt to make him a scapegoat. After all, several of the problems had been contained before they could become far worse thanks to his backing Harry Potter in his attempts to deal with each successive issue. Lyle had also forced the Americans to play ball with the rest of the ICW to an unprecedented degree.

Only Lyle himself knew who had supplied the leverage for that. And he had taken credit for it as much as possible in an understated manner, spreading the news via back channels, hinting at some manner of espionage, but not giving any details.

It was thanks to the numbers of the American Aurors that the issue in Egypt and elsewhere had been contained as well as they had. If not for those added Aurors, the destruction wrought by the dragons would have been far worse, to say nothing of the issue in Egypt. Well, that was what he was going to tell the representatives anyway.

But Lyle knew that very few of them would want to really acknowledge how much they owed one individual, especially a loose cannon like Harry Potter. When Dumbledore was in the same position, they at least understood what they would get. Albus had never been one to overthrow the status quo and had been fully Wizarding World Centric during his war with Grindewald and after when he became Chief Mugwump.

Harry was not predictable to these men and women and was 'dangerously muggle'. Harry tended to buck the system or make waves just as much as he solved problems. And, to put it bluntly, Dumbledore was of an age with most of the representatives. Harry's youth was just as against him here as his actions.

But as Roberto watched the representatives arrived and saw their faces, the Portuguese politician felt a shiver go down his spine. Those spaces were not the faces of people looking for answers. Those places where the faces of people who had already determined they knew the answers and were going to hand out judgment. *This is not going to be good. No wonder my attempts to open dialogue before the meeting failed. Someone beat me to it.*

The ICW's Wizard's Wumpus met on top of the Ivory Tower, which itself was magicked to seem as tall as the tallest mountains. A bit of symbolism that, much like the fact that the

tower's top was shaped like a crown, was about as subtle as a hammer to the face. Here, this view declared, were the most powerful, most wise and far-seeing people in the world, listen to their dictates and tremble.

The meeting area itself was set up like an ancient Greek auditorium, open to the sky, with several rows set up in a crescent moon shape, each row higher than the first. As Chief Mugwump, he presided over the meeting and had a special desk residing at the bottom of that atrium, facing the rest of the delegates. Each delegate had their own assigned chair. This wasn't so much because of ego. It was because certain countries historically did not get along very well.

Some countries were no longer represented here, a harsh reminder of how times could change. China, for example. That ancient nation had been wiped off the map. Russia was also no longer represented here, most of its magicals having migrated during the muggle World War 2, the same war that led to the genocide of the Chinese magicals, leaving little behind. *One would think that we would have learned from those examples, but I think all we learned was we needed to bury ourselves in the sand ever deeper.*

More than one representative stopped and stared at those seats now, then exchanged nods. Those nods were another sign of trouble, but it was too late to try and stop what was going to come. *I can only weather the storm.*

Nonetheless, Roberto was the Chief Mugwump, and he had considerable power here. When the doors shut behind the last representative, Roberto did not even wait for them all to be seated before smacking his gavel down on the enchanted wood of his desk, causing not the thump of wood on wood but the jangle of bugles to come from the seven crown-like protrusions sticking up from around the atrium. "This emergency session of the ICW is now open. As we are in a time of emergency, certain rules will be waived, but recall that others will be heavily enforced. There will be no shouting, there will be no filibustering, what we are interested in here is facts specifically reporting on the current troubles facing the Wizarding World and solving those problems."

Albus Dumbledore had never really used the rules of the ICW as well as he should have, even when circumstances warranted it. Of course, he was hamstrung by the fact that the representative from the United Kingdom had been an enemy of his for nearly his entire time at the post. But even so, Albus could have been more proactive about steering sessions like this one. And just because someone else had called the emergency session into action did not mean that the Chief Mugwump handed over command of the meeting to that individual.

Men and a few women rushed to their seats or as quickly as very elderly witches and wizards could. They were remarkably spry for humans pushing well into their second century, but there was a limit to it. And Roberto did not wait.

By the time the last of the representatives had sat down, he had already activated a magical screen set behind his desk and begun to elucidate the various violent fronts facing the Wizarding World. "... And so the violence in Greece seems to be collapsing in on itself. The sudden deaths of the budding dark Lord down there and his chief lieutenants took the Auror forces and his own followers by surprise, but the Aurors were quick to capitalize. We now have at least a hundred, maybe as many as a hundred and fifty prisoners who were formally trying to instigate a general uprising of the Greek magicals."

As the last representative, an elderly woman who represented Canada sat down quickly, Roberto moved on to Germany, Sweden and then Norway. As he mentioned each, he detailed how far along they were to repairing the various cities and covering up what it happened.

Here, the German representative held up his wand, the end of it glowing, the signal that he was requesting to speak. Since he was requesting to speak and following procedure, Roberto could not stop him. "The chair recognizes the representative from Germany. Please tell us about what is happening in Berling. Are the reports we have accurate?"

This attempt to steer what was about to occur did not work. The representative for Germany stared him down, his voice coming out harsh, and it was only now that Roberto remembered a surprising fact. This same man had served as such since before World War One, much like several of the other European representatives. That struck Roberto as important for some reason.

But then Roberto waved it aside. After all, he had served as Portugal's representative for nearly 40 years before winning the election for Chief Mugwump.

"I thank the Chief Mugwump for summarizing the least important events as we know of them. But we have yet to talk of the most important one. The one which was tied to the near-disasters that occurred in my nation and that of my friends in Norway and Sweden. The fact that a Metamorph had infiltrated the ICW! Not only infiltrated but had risen as far as an Auror could aspire to, the position of Auror General! This body should demand answers for that. How was such a thing allowed to occur? How much damage did she do to our Auror corps? And how was she tied into the disaster that has occurred down in Egypt?"

The German representative glared over at the old man representing the UK. "Further, how was that disaster allowed to grow to the point it was?! According to all reports, it is only the fact the Interdict is still in place down there, as in Berlin, Oslo and elsewhere that the Statute of Secrecy is still in place! But eventually, the Interdict must come down. And what will the nonmagicals find when it does?"

This continued, and although Roberto tried to stem the tide, he didn't really have enough answers for everyone. He had Hermione's report, short though it might have been of what had occurred down there, but that simply made it worse. The idea that there were two apparently immortal Dark Lords out there working together and that they had been hiding for

thousands of years was horrifying. The scope of events in Egypt also **terrified** the representatives, and Roberto watched as a note of censure was given to the United Kingdom for their 'mishandling' of events.

Roberto tried to break in at that point, asking how they should have handled it, but got nowhere. As he had noticed when the representatives came in, these men and women were not looking for solutions. They were looking for people to blame.

And Roberto himself was among them.

"And all of these things, all of these problems have occurred on the current Chief Mugwump's watch! I call for an immediate vote of no-confidence on Roberto Lyle. Further, I move that the new Chief Mugwump be ordered to send in as many Auror as we can possibly get into Egypt. Once there, their order will be to begin Obliviating the survivors of Egypt as fast as possible and to restore magical control of the communities there until such time as we have figured out a cover story for what occurred."

And there, Roberto thought worriedly, was the rub. During the 'debate' Roberto had been forced to tell the representatives that the magicals down there were working hand-in-hand with the nonmagical military. That the nonmagical military vastly outnumbered the magicals, and further, instead of following the lead of the magicals, it was the Egyptian military that was doing most of the leadership.

The Wizarding World could not allow that. They could not allow the Statute of Secrecy to be broken.

Roberto tried to do his best, but against the face of the worried, frightened faces of the old men and women all around him, he could do little. Eventually, the vote of no-confidence was called, and Roberto found himself removed from office.

Slowly, Roberto removed his hat of office. This was an ancient, pointed wizard hat made of blue velvet with several stars around the edges. Setting it and the gavel down, Roberto then removed his cloak of office, a deep purple and vermilion-colored cloak that clasped around his neck with a broach on the shoulder in the form of the Ivory Tower. "I accept this body's ruling and will step down. As a now neutral party, I will be in charge of counting the votes for the next Chief Mugwump."

At those formulated words, two large columns rose to one side of his desk. One formed a seat, and he sat down in it, feeling all of his hundred-and-twenty years as he did so. On the other column was a large box, empty now.

At the same time, tiles of purple and yellow appeared in front of all of the representatives. "In front of you, you will see the tiles used to vote. When I call the vote to order, separating walls will rise from around your seats to provide anonymity during the voting. Purple is yes, and yellow is no. As this is a vote of substance, you cannot abstain. All

representatives present at this time must vote one way or another for each choice put forward to be the new Chief Mugwump. Before I call for those who believe themselves worthy to put themselves forward, are there any questions?"

There were not. While these words had to be said as that was part of the ceremony, everyone there had been a part of this process at least twice before, bar the representative from the UK. It had been years, but that hardly mattered.

Eventually, the last tally was in and to Roberto's complete lack of surprise, it was the representative of Germany who won. The one who had been the most forceful about keeping the Statute of Secrecy in place and restoring order in Egypt by **any** means necessary. *And by that, they mean wizards knocking entire city populations out, then Obliviating them one man at a time, uncaring of the consequences or how long it will take. Never mind that we are talking about tens of millions. The numbers only scare them more, make them more certain we need to do this. Never mind that the Egyptian military and even the Shinsengumi might fight back. To say nothing about what Harry Potter is going to feel about all this.*

Still, it was out of Roberto's hands for now, and a part of him was happy to hand responsibility for solving this problem to someone else. He ceremoniously helped place the cloak and the hat on his successor, clasping the cloak on his shoulder with steady hands. He thought about whispering some warning, he thought about whispering some advice. But he knew the one would not be heeded, and the other would be ignored. So all Roberto did was say simply, "Good luck. I fear we are all going to need it."

The other man merely nodded brusquely, then sat down at the desk. He picked up the gavel, bringing it down once more as Roberto had to start the session. "I now declare my assumption of the mantle of the Chief Mugwump. As my first act, I request a vote for full military intervention in Egypt. The goal will be to restore the Statute of Secrecy over the muggle populace through force. Do I have a second?"

End Chapter

So, this was the beginning of the recovery arc. It will be done, and things will move forward even faster in the next chapter, but even if Harry, Yasaka, Yubelluna and Asia weren't recovering, the issues facing Egypt were not the kind any magic he has access to could be solved easily. So I had to show all the little problems, of which there is a multitude, that make up that one larger issue. Eventually, the magicals will have enough power to start wiping memories, but... what then? Well, Rias has her own ideas. We'll see how that goes. And as for the Wizarding World, did anyone doubt that, eventually, someone was going to overreact and try to do something stupid?