Interlude - Loot

The wall exploded as powerful roots grew out from inside the building, debris showered the street and then shapes ran out of the opening. Exiled Shell led the way, his hands carrying a large chest in his four arms. A large animal followed behind him, its fur silver and white, with large antlers— Kael's Lapareu Evolved Form. Tellisa Oakcalled rode on his back, and controlled the roots around them, raising them to close the hole behind them as attack fire came from somewhere inside.

Kael cursed as they hit the streets and found themselves surrounded by guards wearing the armor of the Merchant Guild's Guard. He shaped a technique and hit them all with it, dropping them into a dream like state. They stumbled, then fell to the ground, asleep.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," Exiled Shell was running ahead of them, still clutching the large chest in his arms, at full speed through the city as Kael galloped after him and the city rang with alarms and bells. "They destroyed my hammer! And look at what they did to my wing!" Exiled Shell flapped his beetle-like wings, or rather one wing and half of another. Things hadn't gone exactly according to plan. He shouldn't complain, robbing one of the most powerful factions in the world, even with as much planning as they had done, was always bound to go awry.

"Put that thing in your storage, you idiot!" Tellisa yelled at him as a flying karura guard swooped in on them. Flowerpots on several terraces above them exploded and a canopy formed above them, making the guard slam into it.

"It's not letting me!" Exiled Shell yelled from ahead.

Kael cursed inwardly; it was probably protected against it. They reached a square filled with people trying to get out of the way, stands being wheeled out, and guards marshaling people away. As soon as they were noticed, everyone exploded into action, the people started running in all directions, some stands were abandoned along with all of their wares, others were being pushed by desperate merchants. The guards turned as one to meet them, their shields raised and ready.

Before they could take two steps into the square a flying drake above them swung his large axe.

—Verdant Cut—

A crescent cut flew out, blazing with green light. Tellisa responded immediately.

—Wall of Growth—

A wall of roots and vines, adorned with flowers, exploded out of the ground. The two ideals met and canceled each other out. Kael glanced back and saw more people coming, flying on mounts or just running behind them. Two dozen at least, and each of them would be at the end of their focus, each would have ideals. The Merchant Guild didn't mess around with their stuff.

Something flashed near them, faster than even Kael could react, but he had been pushing his Aura of the Moon around them, calming the citizens and the guards. The speedster faltered for a split moment as she got stuck in the field of his aura and Kael took advantage to kick at her with a **{Primal Blow}**.

He sent her flying across the square and through a wall of the building behind them. Then he turned to the guards coming at them and started throwing techniques at their minds while Tellisa grew roots to impede their progress. They had tripped the alarm on their way out, the guards had barely had any time to organize, but they were still a threat. Even with all the Kael's team had to offer he doubted that they would be able to last long. A lance of light passed through Tellisa's roots and Kael jumped to the side, not fast enough thought, it grazed her arm and she cursed before sending a root spikes at the caster in the distance. They were still running when a shadow came over them.

He looked up and saw water above them, falling as if a lake was being dropped on their heads.

Then, a powerful wind collided with the water, pushing it aside. The water dropped on the side of the square, where some people had yet to move out of the way. It fell on the buildings and spilled in the streets. The carnage of just a couple of seconds of their fight was amassing. Kael grimaced, there would be deaths from that, but it wasn't like they would be after them any harder.

Maya Rebadotter flew across the sky, her swords sending blades of wind at the other fliers, flashing in between the guards. He heard her scream as someone managed to cut her, but she pushed the guard away with wind.

Kael detected a fast moving shape, the speedster again, and focused his mind then brought his **Domain** into existence. The speedster fell as he hit the surface of water instead of stone, slipping. Kael felt his Domain try to influence everything, tranquility spreading. But, there was too much carnage from the battle, it overwhelmed his domain and broke it in seconds. It didn't matter, it had done its job. Tellisa grew roots around the speedsters legs and trapped him against the ground.

Kael, Tellisa, and Exiled Shell ran toward the center of the square where two cloaked figures remained. They had been hiding among the people, but now they stood out as the only people not running away. The city guards noticed and six of them charged at them.

One of the figures moved, and two blades attached to chains crossed the distance to stab two of the guards on the edges of their line. Then, lightning flashed across the chains, hitting the two guards, then it danced and jumped to the others, cooking them all in their armor. They weren't as strong as the guards pursuing Kael and the others behind them.

Kael dropped next to Fethum Starseeker as he pulled his cloak back, revealing a slightly scarred face. His soul was yet to fully recover from his fight with Heor.

"How long?" Kael asked as Tellisa dismounted, and he switched to his other Evolved Form—Infaarg. With a quick channeling of Qi and technique he sent a **{Waking Dream}** at the people heading for them, showing them a nightmare. Some screamed and attacked their fellows, while others slowed to fight off the effects. Even the strongest couldn't quite shake his technique off.

"A few moments," the other cloaked figure said. Kael turned and started firing mind techniques at a distance, causing chaos. Others did the same, and the square turned into a warzone, what had once been a beautiful area of the city was now reduced to debris, dust, and char. One of the guards flew toward them, ignoring Kael's mind technique, his helmet glowing. He swung a large hammer and Kael stepped forward activating his **Ascended State**. He ducked beneath the swing, then

swung with |**Claws of Wrath, Body of Tranquility**|. He rent through the side of the armor, but barely scratched the skin beneath. The guard landed then bellowed a powerful shout. Roots tried to capture him and wind blades came at him, but the roar repelled everything.

Kael stepped up to fight and then space twisted, and the guard was sent elsewhere. Kael turned and saw Berion with his hand pointing at where the guard used to be.

"I'm ready," Berion said as the other guards recovered and started preparing their attacks. Kael felt the sensations he associated with activations of oaths and he gave the signal.

Maya flew and dropped next to them, and before the guards could react Berion activated his power.

A sphere of light surrounded them, and then he felt space twist around them. A few moments later, they were somewhere else.

Berion grimaced and stumbled, but Kael caught him. "You alright?"

"They had a spatial expert, they were fighting me," Berion just said as he caught his breath.

"Ha," Exiled Shell said. "As if there is anyone in the world that can best you."

Berion just gave him a small smile. He truly was the greatest of them. He had dropped the three of them inside one of the most protected vaults in the world, and then teleported all of them out of a city that had been warded against teleportation. He had no equal. Then the others all stumbled, Tellisa vomited, and Maya fell to the ground groaning in pain. Fethum Remained on his feet but he was holding his chest. Kael grimaced as identical runes flashed around them, then dissipated. He could grant them temporary boosts to their power, but the aftereffects were always terrible.

Finally, after several hours of recovery, they were feeling good enough to return to the matter at hand.

"Why were you holding that chest and not fighting?" Maya asked.

The skreen twitched then glanced at the chest on the ground next to him. "It wouldn't let me put it into the storage."

Kael glanced at it, then moved to open it. They had accomplished their mission, they infiltrated their vaults and stole... well, they stole a lot. All three of them had probably filled their storages with loot from their vaults.

Materials, weapons, armors, arrays and formations, potions and elixirs, enough to fund a war. And they would need it if they were to fulfill their plans.

He knelt next to the chest and lifted the lid. "Huh," Tellisa said. "It's bigger on the inside."

It had some spatial enchantments on it, probably why it couldn't be put in a storage. He looked inside and saw what looked like to be rows of weapons and armor, and other items. They were all small, miniaturized, but he assumed that they would grow once pulled out of the chest.

"This had to have been their display chest," Tellisa said. "What they used when they went around and demonstrated items for wealthy clients."

Things inside were very expensive. Kael touched them and saw that none of them were lesser than Masterwork. And then he reached the last row, and realized that they had hit a goldmine. The last row was all awakened items.

He closed his eyes and smiled to himself. They were finally armed as they were supposed to be. He had missed this, he left his people to get stronger and he had. They had improved as well, grown beyond what he had dared to hope. And now they were back together again. He realized that he had never been much on his own. Together was when they had achieved the greatest of deeds. And they would achieve much more in the future. But before that, he pulled out a simple array, work of one of his people, a diviner. Sometimes knowing someone's full name was all it took, if they didn't put in powerful enough precautions. Now, he had a mission to fulfill.

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Heor Darkhoof stood in the ruins of a large square. The city of Meonis was the Capital of the Merchant Guild Faction. Many underestimated them, but Heor had never been one of those people. The Merchant Guild was the wealthiest and probably the best armed faction in the world. Their affairs were never interfered with, nor was anyone foolish enough to rob them. They knew what would happen. Except, someone did rob them.

"I apologize, Adventurer," the Merchant Prince said. "But this is a private matter, we cannot divulge any information until the investigation is complete."

Heor turned his eyes on the kreacean and glowered, not that it would do him any good. "I know who it was, the descriptions match those who I pursue. Our interests are aligned."

"Rest assured, we will deal with this incident promptly and—"

"—you couldn't follow them, could you?" Heor interrupted.

"I don't know what you are referring to, but I assure you that," the Merchant Prince started but Heor shook his head.

"I doubt that you have anyone powerful enough to open a spatial passage with what remained here, I doubt that there even is anyone powerful enough. No, you don't know where they are, so that means that you are useless to me."

Heor turned and started walking away, leaving a smoldering Merchant Prince and his guard behind. It was unfortunate, but he couldn't waste his time. He had been attempting to track the murderer ever since their battle, he had done something to Heor's tracker and now he had to fall on other means.

There was only one thing that he could do now, find a powerful enough diviner or scryer and attempt to find his foe that way. He grimaced as he realized how much that was going to cost him. Regardless of how much he had to spend, he would have his revenge.