

I am not British or Japanese.

This was the winner of the May HP poll. It hasn't won for a while because of the carry-over effect (the fic That's gone the longest without being updated is rewarded half of its votes from the previous month into the current poll) and February being short. It should have been updated last month, but I lost the last two weeks of May due to a dental issue and family time springing on me.

This has been edited by *Eric Gozy*, *Daniel*, and edited by Grammarly by me. Yet given how oddly that system works occasionally, I have no doubt I will have missed several mistakes.

A few minor notes: I changed the location of the Ivory Tower to be consistent throughout the story. I also changed the Onmyodo government's relationship to be consistent. The rep to the Wumpus is now called a Wumpie and is a nonvoting member of that 'august body' because Wizards suck at names.

**Summary of the past chapter:** Harry, Asia, and Yubelluna continue to recover, while Rias and then Yasaka wake up from their individual magical exhaustion issues. Rias uses her teleportation tunnels and skill with organizing to bring some order to the chaos of the Egyptian/Magical World/Kuoh Group coalition. Meanwhile, due to a change of leadership, the Wumpus of the Wizarding World decides to poke the bear. Sona and a few of her peerage arrive thanks to Lily and Luna thinking outside the box, while Sirzechs deals with a political discussion that will eventually include the Kuoh Group, as Arcangel Michael puts his foot down and acknowledges the problem facing the world due to Ophis being within the physical realm of Earth. Magic continues to pour into the world creating still more natural disasters thanks to Ophis and the revived Evil Dragons she has gathered. An issue with the Blessing on the Nile is noticed by Yasaka and Lily, but nothing can be done about it at present. Hit Wizards invade Alexandria, intent on taking over Egypt and making certain the Statute remains in place by erasing the memories of every nonmagical in the country. Kalawarner and the others put down the assault with prejudice and the aid of the Aurors already in Egypt, in particular the Indian Kshatriya under Ramagupta, who is on something of a holy quest to give assistance to Harry Potter and his family, so they, in turn, can help deal with Ophis.

Now we rejoin our heroes as Rias leads a mixed team to hopefully halt any further misplaced aggression from the old people currently running the Wizarding World.

### **Chapter 31: Healing and Bringing to Heel**

"I still don't get why I can't go through first," Cú grumbled, crossing his arms as he glared at the entrance into the wizard's Floo Network, the last of his own defensive runes disappearing

as the magic within them faded out around it. He'd used his own blood for them, so there was no need to carve the runes into the stone.

Around the Floo several stunned wizards, who had come through the Floo with what Hermione had said were specially crafted invisibility cloaks, were being put into handcuffs and dragged away. Their cloaks hadn't done anything to the pressure-activated wards Cú had created or the enchantments on a few other areas of the room Rias and Hermione had placed. The one who had come through on a broom at speed had barely a second to halt himself from smacking into the opposite wall before Koneko sniffed him out and tossed a bucket of paint on him.

While all that had been kind of fun, Cú had personally not done anything for the past hour since Rias had taken the wizard's Floo connection to their ivory tower, forcing the connection to stay open instead of letting the wizards lock it down as they had with the Interdict. The enforced idleness as everything Rias wanted to put in place was finished was beginning to wear on him. *Not that I think any normal wizard or even a group of them could give me a decent challenge, but anything is better than nothing.*

The wizards did use runes, after all. Indeed, they had taken them to a far more rarified place than the Tuatha De Danan had. And he'd heard they had things like chimeras and dragons and giants still in the Wizarding World. *I'd love to fight a giant. So much territory to target. But I've been here for an hour now since that last wizard came through, Red even ordered me to not drink while we were waiting! Feck me, I'm Irish. Drinking is my natural right! And now she's saying I can't be the first one through the fecking Floo? Fecking useless name anyway. Fecking wizards have created a near-worldwide network and call it Floo?*

"Because you're prone to slaughtering your enemies. You would go through whatever hit wizards the Mugwumps have gathered to defend the ICW building like a lion through so many Chihuahuas," Rias stated simply, crossing her arms and mock-glaring back at him even as her lips twitched in amusement.

"Lion I get, what's a chihuahua?" Cú interjected, his brows furrowing. "Sounds like an insult, but I don't recognize the term..."

"Tiny little lapdogs with a lot of bark and aggression but nothing to go with it," Rias answered, womanfully holding back a snicker, keeping her expression firm as Cú Cuchulain barked a laugh. *Best not to mention how often their sheer barky nature has scared off larger dogs.* "The point is, we know some of the Hit Wizards retreated once we broke into the office here, and they know we were slaughtering their men by then. I don't want to escalate this conflict further. I just want to shut it down with us holding the high ground."

Cú made to open his mouth, but Rias waved him to silence, turning away as Loup waved at her from the open doorway leading out into the passage beyond. Suzaku moved past the

werewolf, followed by one of Proudfoot's lieutenants and a Shinsengumi officer of the same rank.

"Don't even try to argue with me, oh Shining Son of Ireland. You didn't even lose yourself to your ríastrad, and you still killed every wizard you could get your hands on. You just don't believe in taking prisoners when you're facing magic users," Rias continued.

"Hey! I used Gae Bolg, too. It weren't just me hands I was using," Cú huffed before shaking his head. "And I had to deal with the Morrigan after my rosy-cheeked ass for more than a decade before my estranged father figured out a way ta hide me away from her and the Cú's both, then found myself enspelled to the Wyld Hunt and Gwyn Ap Nudd. I know precisely how dangerous magic users can be if you take your eyes off them unless you make certain they don't have a pulse first. And even then, there are exceptions. Just be glad I decided I didn't have to cut off all of their heads."

While a part of her understood that Rias still scowled, wondering if she was making a mistake bringing Cú along, even if he had helped to defend the Floo Network's entryway before Rias was able to take control of it. *Cú is very much a loaded weapon. Still, between him and myself, we have the firepower side of things sewn up. And he can probably pick out runic-based traps better than any of the rest of us.*

Huffing, Rias turned away from Cu, examining the rest of the team she was bringing through the Floo Network with her. *Regardless of whatever defense they might have set up in the past hour, we are coming through.* From her peerage, Rias was taking Koneko and Mittelt. Koneko was a given, since Rias was leaving Akeno behind along with Husukai, Yasaka, and Sona and those of her peerage here in Egypt to help deal with the fallout. As for Mittelt, having a flying expert along was probably a good idea given the garden the Floo would drop them into, although Rias hoped they wouldn't need to fight through the entire tower.

Kalawarner would have been her choice for that task, really. Not only was she more diplomatic than Mittelt, who simply thought of diplomacy as another way to screw with people's minds when she thought of it at all, but Kala had already been to the ICW Tower.

But Kala was suffering from Crucio exposure, which could not be healed by any magical means they currently had access to, only time and rest. Luckily, she hadn't been held under the soul-targeting torture curse for very long, but the damage had been done.

Rias and the others hadn't been able to do much but settle her into their hotel rooms and make her comfortable until her body recovered. The amount of pain Kala was still in nearly an hour after she had been hit by the spell worried Rias and made her want to commit torture on everyone involved in this latest debacle, but Rias refused to let that color her actions.

Hermione was coming with them, along with Suzaku, an Auror and a Shinsengumi, the last being the ones who had just entered, to give them a Wizarding World component. *Loup will stay here to help watch over the prisoners because the Europeans have a stigma against*

*werewolves. Deprived of their foci they shouldn't make much trouble. I would prefer he come with us right away, but even without Loup, we have the strength side of things covered, thanks to Koneko. It's a well-rounded team, one that should be up to whatever obstacles the Wumpus puts in our way.*

Despite hoping to calm things down by meeting with the Wumpus, Rias knew she'd have to fight her way in first. That, and she wanted to add an exclamation point to the fact that the ICW was not ready for the crap they had stirred up.

Gathering all their eyes to her, Rias went over her orders. Most of the people coming with her had already heard most of this, but it paid to be careful. "I will go through first, so I can start work on creating an anti-teleportation ward. We don't want our real targets to escape. Cú follows as one of our heaviest hitters, with Koneko and Mittelt following if we're still being attacked. If we don't, Hermione can switch out with them and come through earlier."

"I wish I could say that the ICW would be willing to talk, or we could maybe send our prisoners through first, but given the assault, the first is obviously not right, and the second... well, I wager the remaining defenders are even more tense than they were before. No, we will have to fight our way through," Hermione grumbled. She was not in a good mood for many reasons, not least of which being she had taken time out of her other jobs to hurriedly write up an article about the Three Factions and devil-kind that Rias had asked her for in record time, only to be pulled out of bed by the attack from the ICW. Which made all that work useless.

Rias nodded at Harry's old friend, then looked at Mittelt, Suzaku and Cu, then to the auror and Shinsengumi. "I want no killing spells thrown. Cu, I don't want you killing anyone over there. Humiliating or debilitating or stunning. No more killing. We want to prove to these...people that we have the moral high ground in a way even they can understand by not wiping them out when we have the power to do so."

"Bah, seems to me the war's already begun. Once swords are crossed, morals don't matter, only victory," Cú grumbled.

"Maybe in a vacuum or in the old days, when the world wasn't watching, or you didn't have to think about after the war. These days, we don't want to simply slaughter our enemies, take their lands or laugh or listen to the lamentation of their women," Rias retorted dryly, causing Koneko and Mittelt to snicker. "I want the Wizarding World to at least survive and not fall into anarchy or come under even more radical leadership. We want to convert, not annihilate."

While Cú still grumbled, the others all nodded, and Rias went on. "We'll also be transporting a few dozen of our prisoners through after Cú and I go. Hopefully, the sight of so many prisoners coming through, along with our forbearance in killing any more of them, will put the Mugwumps in a more reasonable frame of mind."

Seeing Cú still looking disgruntled, Suzaku giggled, shaking her head. “Now, now, my fine Irish fellow.” The giggling set her chest to bouncing, and Cú found his remaining anger leaving him quite quickly. “One can’t have everything, you know. And besides, the Europeans might have surprises ready for you.”

“Meh, so long as I can have a chance to enjoy the finer things in life, I’ll deal with some small disappointments along the road. Especially if I can travel that road with a fine lady like yourself. I would love the chance to practice some of my spear work with you,” Cú answered.

The innuendo was so obvious that it actually threw Rias off her stride a little, although Suzaku at least seemed a little appreciative of the attention. She might be with Loup, but it was evident Suzaku still felt able to flirt with other men, whatever their relationship might be. *And with Loup within hearing range, too. I still can’t read Loup’s expression at all, so I have no idea what he thinks of it. At this point, I think Suzaku’s just playing with Cu, but I have no idea if he knows that or would care if she’s with Loup at all. Still, that is something the three of them will have to sort out. Unless it spills over into the rest of the clan, at which point Harry and I will need to come down on all involved like a meteor shower.*

In actuality, while at first, Loup had been somewhat annoyed at Suzaku flirting with Cú, as a werewolf, Loup could smell when two people were attracted to one another. Cú was a bit attracted to Suzaku, as any red-blooded man would be, but he wasn’t serious about it. More flirting to pass the time. Similarly, Suzaku was flirting with Cú to keep him happy with the lack of combat in his current vicinity.

Rias turned aside, gesturing Loup to start pushing the terrified-looking Hit Wizards forward, and she moved over to the fireplace. All the prisoners were in conjured manacles and had been searched thoroughly for backup wands, which many of them had. Despite the fact the steel cuffs weren’t doing anything to the wizards and witches, the lack of magical foci and the werewolf growling at them was enough for all of them to be terrified, to say nothing of Cu’s presence, or the rest of the delegation. Most of whom were not exactly terrifying looking, but all of them had seen Rias in action and knew of her terrifying powers of teleportation. And all of them knew of Hermione, the curly-haired terror.

Without further ado, Rias hopped into the green fire that filled the large fireplace. As she did, Rias instantly felt a tugging on her sense of space and body alike as the magic of the Network activated. It was as if her familial sense of time and space, a necessary part of the Gremory clan’s spacial magic, had been taken away for a moment, or rather was being pulled in two different places. *ACK! I expected that, but it is still most annoying! But if my reception is as violent as it probably will be, well, that can be one last bit of irritation added to a mountain load of wrath. I would say righteous wrath, but that sounds too much like something an Angel would say.*

Although she might have put on a show of being the cool, collected leader a moment ago for Cú and the rest, Rias was actually quite furious even now, less than an hour after the

battle had ended. The Mugwump's assault on Alexandria had pushed a lot of her buttons and the reasoning behind it still more. So, while she wasn't as battle-hungry as Cú Cuchulainn, she did want to... make it plain to any wizard on the other side where exactly they stood on the power scale. And not just to give her words to their leaders added weight later.

Rias stumbled a little as she came out of the Floo, which was the same fireplace stuck in the center of the garden that it had been for Hermione when she and her group came through to meet with Roberto, and before that, Harry and Yubelluna. That was the only thing that remained the same, however.

First, the ICW tower was no longer anywhere close to the egress point from the Floo Network. It looked as if the fireplace had somehow been shifted at least a mile away from the bottom of the tower and was now situated in an even wider portion of the garden, which spread out of sight to either side of her and presumably behind as well. Most of the bushes carved to resemble fanciful monsters and animals were gone, removed from this area. Instead, they had been replaced by sturdy stone walls, each of them shaped like a C as if to protect the individuals within, almost like foxholes surrounding the standalone fireplace.

Other random stone walls stood scattered around the area. But from the brief glance Rias could take to look at them, these walls looked like they had been raised recently from the ground by wizardly transfiguration rather than situated on purpose. It was a small distinction, but it was there.

Far more important than the change in location was the more than three dozen hit wizards and Aurors on guard behind those defenses. And Hermione had been right. The defenders were in no mood to talk and on a hair trigger. The wizards opened fire on Rias the instant she came through the Floo, much as they had Hermione, Padma, and Kala. But where most of the spells had been stunning or incarceration spells at that point, here, the vast majority were the green of the killing curse or worse. It was evident the locals had been given leave to go to lethal measures right away.

Not wanting to see if her recent power-up would be enough to protect her from a spell that targeted her soul, Rias ducked, slamming her hands down onto the ground and using a spell Harry had taught them, bringing up a wall of her own to absorb many of the spells. *Have to love the fact wizards always aim high!* She thought, hearing the cracking sound as AKs hit unliving stone, continually powering the wall-making enchantment.

"Take her down!" Shouted a voice that Hermione knew all too well, audible through the network at the moment. "We can't let any more of these, these **things** come through! Hold the line! Flankers move around her. We have to attack her from different directions!"

Even as Rias was stuck in place blocking the way through the Floo with her body - the Floo entrance was only so big, the sound of the fighting carried through. As did the voice that had just shouted over the hissing crackle of spellfire.

“Oh, bloody bollocks... Twice!? Twice!? Of all people, why is **Ernie** still in charge and still ordering the same bloody response!? I swear to Merlin, Morgana and Maeve if that lout is still conscious and in one piece when I go through, I will rectify both of those things in as painful a manner as possible!” Hermione snarled as she and the others behind Rias watched, waiting for Rias to get out of the way. They were able to see the area around her had changed now that the link between the Ivory Tower and Alexandria had been pushed open again, but not much more.

“If I get to him first, I’m going to squash him,” Koneko growled, angry at the sight of Rias being attacked like this.

“Squash? Er...” the Auror going through with them muttered. “What... I don’t think you’re big enough to do that...”

“I know what I said,” Koneko answered tartly.

Thankfully for Rias, after only a few seconds, Rias’s sense of space and time came back to her, and gritting her teeth, she decided to shift tactics, taking a page out of her father’s method of warfare. *I can’t just stay here and let them pin me in the opening.* As she had done in her duel with her cousin, she brought up teleportation circles, eventually having one on either side around her, protecting every direction as the spells continued to pour in and her original wall fell.

But unlike what her father would’ve done, instead of turning those spells back against the user, she sent them into the ground or up into the sky.

The sound of those spells cracking into the ground and the sight of others heading straight up caused many of the defenders to falter, letting Rias start to move to the side of the fireplace.

As she concentrated, still more teleportation circles appeared around her, catching and redirecting more spells away from her. “One chance! Put down your wands and we can talk!”

Alas, the spellfire coming her way did not cease, still coming Rias’s way from nearly every angle as the gathered hit wizards and Aurors tried to get past her large teleportation circles, not quite understanding what they were seeing. The Gremory mastery of teleportation, and in particular combat-based teleportation magic like this, was well beyond anything the Wizarding World could come up with and didn’t resemble any type of teleportation any of the men there had ever seen.

Even if Ernie or one of the other Hogwarts alumni there had seen the vanishing cabinet in action, that esoteric method of magical transportation was nothing like what Rias was doing. In particular, while the effect of a spell could transfer from one end of the vanishing cabinet to the other, such as a cold or heat spell letting the heat through, formed spells would never have been able to do so.

Grimacing and very thankful for all the training she had been doing lately and her recent power-up, Rias took another step to the side, fully removing herself from the entryway into the Floo. "So be it!"

That was all the space that Cú needed. The spear-wielding warrior from Ireland raced forward into the green fire, barely taking a second to nod at the leprechauns above. Then he was through, charging into the hit wizards directly across from the entryway. "Come on then! Let's see if you lot can make this more interesting than yer fellows did!"

"Don't let him close! Aim for his feet or the ground ahead of him. He's supposed to be able to absorb spells!" shouted one of the Aurors, showing that several of the Hit Wizards had indeed been able to flee back through the Floo before Cú and the others could take control of it.

Koneko followed him instantly, ducking to the side as the defenders competently split their fire between them, targeting all three of the attackers. Seeing the green of the killing curse, Koneko was in no rush to see if Ddraig could let her tank the spells coming her way.

The defenders splitting their fire let Rias kneel down, keeping the teleportation circles active as she began to concentrate on another. Keeping so many teleportation circles going around her was hard, even if they all shared the same aperture, which was a nearby area of ground already being torn and shattered.

Retaining that spell while concentrating on a new one was even harder, but Rias had gotten a lot of practice on multitasking, and while she was no expert in her family magic like her father was, she could mentally tie that enchantment up so to speak, keep feeding it power, while concentrating most of her mind on her new task: that of creating an anti-teleportation ward. This ward was going to need to cover quite a bit more area than she had first thought, but that was fine by Rias. That was simply a power issue, and thanks to the spirit of Aine Fand and her own heritage, Rias had power to spare.

Cú slammed into the first of the pillboxes around the entry into the floo, forcing more of the wizards to turn their attention to him while other defenses activated. The walls that Rias had taken to having been transfigured from the ground suddenly sprouted fists that stretched out as if the stone had become rubber, trying to hammer Koneko and Cú, keeping the nekoshu from closing as Cú had even as Hermione and the others followed the first fighters through.

The first few fists coming their way were halted in place by Hermione, creating solid shields in front of them or blasting them apart. Behind her, Suzaku pulled out several talismans, hurling them in every direction. The prepared talismans flew forward in the shape of birds for a few seconds before unfolding and, almost like little dive bombers, slammed into the tops of pillboxes, wizards or the ground.

Many of these talismans contained the equivalent of knockout or incarceration spells from the more active, if not as powerful as Onmyodo-style runes. Three, however, glowed for a brief second and were then replaced by three red Oni, who appeared between several of the



pillboxes among the defenders. The magically durable creatures went to work on the defenders, their huge clubs rising and falling, shattering stone and hurling the Aurors and Hit Wizards around.

Mittelt was next, jumping through then instantly took to the air, pushing away and above Suzaku and Hermione's heads. The speed with which she did so saved her even as those behind her came under renewed fire from the ICW security force. One of her wings was clipped by a spell but it wasn't the killing curse, rather a piercing spell, which took several of her feathers out.

"Fucking hell, there really is some kind of swan woman with them!" A German-sounding voice shouted querulously.

Snickering at that, Mittelt flew straight up into the air and began her own divebombing attacks. Knowing of Rias's injunction on killing these assholes, Mittelt forbore using her light lances for the most part. She couldn't exactly dull the edges of those, and while she figured that removing feet and hands was one thing, heads were probably another, given the order against killing people. This didn't mean she was just a target because Mittelt had learned quite a few spells from interacting with Harry and the rest and now used them, cackling as the clothing of several of the ICW's defenders turned on them, pulling arms up behind their backs, threatening to choke them out, or simply biting at any skin they touched, so much so they couldn't concentrate on anything beyond scratching.

But the defenders were not entirely without their own tricks, even beyond the walls of fists. They began to fall back and away from the Floo, using fire and movement. Three of the wizards would retreat, then give covering fire to their fellows. While Rias was still defended by her teleportation circles and Cú and Koneko too fast to hit, the others with them could not say the same. Hermione and Suzaku were now pinned down with the Auror and Shinsengumi with them.

As the security forces fell back, Hermione bellowed, "Ernie! I swear, I am going to break your legs and then tie you to the ceiling of Binn's classroom for a year! And don't think I don't see you over there, Moran! Or you, McDougal, Elberforth!"

All of the so-named quailed a bit, seeing Hermione so wrathful and stalking towards them, bringing back very nasty memories of the war against Voldemort and, even more, less understandable fears of the highly intelligent witch and her lectures. The redhead and her unusual magic were one thing. Even the tattooed warrior whose skin absorbed any spell that hit him was simply a physical danger. Hermione though? Her shouts and simple presence were acting like a psychological attack.

Not just because they knew enough about her abilities to fear her or her personality but because Hermione had developed something that many of her fellow Hogwarts students had called the 'Professor Voice' in her third year. Something about it just reached deep inside any of

her fellow students and pushed the button marked obey or fear her wrath, almost as bad as Snape at his worst.

Yet even as the former Hogwarts students who knew Hermione began to question whether or not they were doing the right thing, even Ernie, others were activating last ditch wards.

Instantly, Hermione, the Auror, and the two Onmyouji's direct attack spells began to fail, while the tattoos on Cú faded for a few seconds before regaining their glow. That was a sign that there was some kind of anti-magic enchantment in the air, but not one that could work on his actual body.

The spell didn't do much to Rias or Mittelt as they were, technically speaking, not human. Since no wizard involved in the construction of the tower had known about devils, fallen, or even youkai, the anti-magic wards couldn't recognize their method of magic. But a second later, two more wards activated.

Portions of the ground faded away, crumbling into dirt, and out from subterranean cells leaped two Greek Chimeras. They stood at least two stories tall, with the head and body of a lion. Bat wings came out of its back set halfway down their body with a goat head sticking out from their backs behind the neck. A snake's head and body replaced the lion's tail, and fire spurted out of the lion's mouth.

Class XXXXX beasts, Chimeras were immune to poison, had a magical resistance equivalent to two giants put together, and were intelligent, something that set them apart from dragons. You also had to kill all three heads, or they could regenerate almost like a hydra, except they didn't continually grow more heads. Or their hearts, but the creatures were well aware of that and would willingly sacrifice a head to protect their chests, which also had ribs that were as strong as steel.

But as dangerous as Greek Chimeras could be to wizards, the response from the attacks to the two monsters that appeared on either flank of the attackers was not what the defenders had been hoping for.

"Dibs." Koneko started, hurling the wizard she had been about to knock out into the ground with an idle tap of her fist as she turned, charging towards the nearest Chimera. Nearby, two of Suzaku's Oni also turned away from the wizards, moving to engage the monster with heavy blows. One of them was cut down almost instantly, its head torn from its shoulders by the mighty lion head of the Chimera it was facing, while the other one barely blocked the blow from a paw, the creature ridiculously quick for its size as well as strong.

The beast turned, the goat-like head braying a challenge as its lion head spoke. "The little morsel comes to me instead of fleeing? The little morsel should know that it will get no better treatment than these humans would even if you smell distinctly different from them."

“This little one thinks big things should always make certain they can back up their boasts,” Koneko drawled, even as Ddraig’s Sacred Gear form appeared on her hand, and she slammed the punch into the creature’s paw as it came down towards her. Both paw and arm exploded in a welter of viscera, causing the beast to howl in agony. Yet even as the force of the hit faded, the arm began to regrow within seconds, and the lion tried to chomp down on her.

Koneko dodged to one side, grabbing its mane and pulling it, then punching out with the Boosted Gear towards the tail, which had just whipped around and attempted to bite at her. The snake head and most of the tail, the snake’s body, disappeared under that blow, but a kick from the Chimera’s back leg sent her flying. It howled and charged after her, forgetting entirely about the other humans in the area.

On the other side of the battle, the Chimera had raced into the fight. This let a lot of the security force pull further back, but it was definitely a double-edged sword, as two of the wizards near where the wards had released the creature from its cage had found out. It didn’t seem to care who it killed, having already bitten one of the defenders in half who had been unlucky enough to be nearby.

Luckily for them, Koneko wasn’t the only one of the attackers who could deal with these creatures or, indeed, would relish the opportunity to face them.

“Finally, a challenge!” Cú shouted, the butt end of his spear slamming into one wizard, hurling him up and over his fellows to slam into the distant outer wall of the tower. Then he turned, charging to meet the rapidly moving Chimera.

Scowling angrily, Hermione put her wand into her pouch and pulled out a pistol, of all things. “Switch to nonmagical weapons.”

Suzaku stared at Hermione askance, while she also noticed that their companions had obeyed with alacrity, similar pistols appearing in their hands. “Where on earth did you get that, and why do you have it?”

“Always be prepared, and I borrowed it from one of the Egyptian officers. We figured something like this might happen, and I didn’t want to be left out,” Hermione replied, lining up a shot on the head of the Chimera that Koneko was fighting. The shot rang out, hitting one of the creature’s ears (she had been aiming for the chimera’s body), although the kick of the weapon caused Hermione to stumble back for a second. The bullet didn’t do any damage, simply bouncing off the ear without even ruffling its hair much.

“Just remember those things don’t have a stun setting,” Suzaku quipped as she hurled more talismans ahead of her. A few more Oni appeared, stepping forward, absorbing a lot of the spellfire coming towards the two of them, while the other talismans allowed her to conjure up element-based spells, fireballs and lightning blasts. Like her niece, Suzaku quite liked lightning and electricity in general. It had so many uses, after all.

In this case, one of those uses was as a shield. A web of lightning revolved around Suzaku for a few moments from a talisman she held up into the air, the parchment of the talisman beginning to slowly catch on fire from the now-activated magic within, even as the web of lightning intercepted several of the spells coming their way.

The instant the shield faded away, both she and Hermione went on the attack before ducking forward, placing one of the pillbox-like C-shaped walls between them and the defenders. There, Suzaku and the others stayed for a few seconds, with Hermione sticking her arm and firing out blindly towards the attackers as the Auror did the same from the other side.

“Carlson!?” shouted one of the defenders, a woman by the sound of it. “What the fuck are you doing?! I heard you and the rest had turned against the law but--”

“The law fails to be worth following when it calls for the death of innocents, Debra!” The auror, Carlson, shouted back. “Don’t worry though, I won’t aim to kill. Not even you, Jamal. You still owe me money.”

“**You owe me** money, you assrggh!” Another defender started to shout, only for his words to cut off as his wand hand was hit by a shot from Hermione.

While the two monsters were being engaged by Koneko and Cu, Rias was still out in the open, and Mittelt was still divebombing. Because of the need to split their fire between those far more dangerous combatants, the four still stuck by the Floo could not be overwhelmed.

Light lances tore into both monsters, slowing them down until Cú shouted at her to leave his fight alone. The monster was already backing away from him, a wound on its forearm from Gae Bolg healing very, very slowly, something that had caused the intelligent monster to flinch away and begin to dodge more rather than simply absorb strikes in order to deliver its own as it normally would.

With that and seeing that Koneko had her own opponent well in hand, thanks to the added destructive power of the Boosted Gear, Mittelt turned her full attention on the defenders as they tried to retreat further towards the tower. “I don’t think so.” She nearly caroled, gaining altitude for a few seconds, then pushing towards the tower herself, only to come back swooping in from their rear.

All of the security men trying to retreat further went to ground where they were in another series of makeshift defense areas, including prepared pillboxes and foxholes, trying to aim upwards at Mittelt. Yet, with the altitude advantage, she could see all their spells coming, and her own spells had just as much range as theirs. More defenders went down to their clothing rebelling against them, pulling other defenders out of the fight to try and help their fellows.

The rate of spellfire coming Hermione and the other’s way slackened. Suzaku tossed out her last two Oni talisman, having taken along all the ones that the Himejima clan members with

her in Egypt had made just in case. *Renewing those is going to be a chore, but one I can cheerfully put off for a while, I think*, she thought, racing to climb up the back of one of her summoned creatures, another talisman wrapped around one of her hands. From it, she shot out a small lightning bolt, feeling the heat of the talisman with each shot as the magic within began to eat away at the talisman itself. She would only have five shots with this, but that was better than being useless.

Behind her, Hermione shook her head at Suzaku's actions, staying where she was and firing only occasionally toward the defenders along with Carlson and the Shinsengumi. Without her magic, she was down to what the pistol could do, and she'd only brought along one extra magazine. *Or are they called clips? I've seen both used in movies, but I think the officer called it a magazine.*

Hermione's idle musing on that score broke off as Rias pushed herself to her feet from where she had been crouching. Above, a dome of reddish energy suddenly shimmered into being, disappearing a second later to normal sight, only barely visible as a slightly reddish tinge to the air above Rias, let alone the others. "I couldn't tell if anyone had tried to escape already, but if they haven't, the various Mugwumps are stuck here now," Rias said almost conversationally.

Then she looked towards the still-fighting defenders, and with a gesture, the teleportation portals around her disappeared to be replaced by one beside her, which she held out her other hand to. Several small teleportation circles appeared instead over the heads of the defenders, and the stupefy spell she had learned from Harry lashed through, dozens of them in one long spell chain.

Defenders fell unconscious all across the field, and then Rias pulled her hand back. Using a spell on her mouth for a second, she began to stride forward, quickly passing Hermione in her march towards the guards. A few spells still came her way, but they disappeared into the teleportation circles that snapped into being at a gesture even as her voice, boosted by the devil version of a Sonorous, rang out across the gardens that had become a battlefield. "Surrender! We are not here to engage in wholesale slaughter. This continued fighting serves no one!"

This did not prove to be enough to fully cow the defenders. Instead, they kept on fighting, even as one of the Chimera, the one that Koneko was fighting, died. Its central body exploded under a punch from the Boosted Gear, which had enhanced the blow several dozen times over since the battle began.

Either linked to the chimera's death or the touch of one of the guards, a final ward activated suddenly. This turned yet another segment of open ground to one side into so much loose gravel, falling down into a pit below.

From out of the pit leaped a giant cat. In shape, it almost looked like a panther, except that it had a slightly thicker neck, which could distend further, bulging out to contain the gases

within. When that happened, any resemblance to any nonmagical beast disappeared, and it was then that you realized it didn't have a normal cat's whiskers but instead tiny feelers that grew and merged into one as the cat moved, shifting into two prehensile tentacles and back randomly. And as it moved, a thin streak of gas began to waft from between its fangs.

Rated an XXXXXX dangerous magical beast, the Nundu didn't have the regeneration of a Chimera or their intelligence, yet it was more durable when it came to its ability to take damage, both in physical harm and magical resistance. Its speed and strength were also much higher, and its breath was so poisonous that even as the creature leaped out, several of the nearby defenders began to gag just from being within twenty yards of it, and the beast wasn't even breathing its gas out on purpose.

"Back away!" One of the Aurors panicked as he leaped up from where he had been sprawled behind one of the pillboxes, racing back towards the Floo, dodging spellfire all the way.

Hermione and the Shinsengumi with him did the same, while Suzaku followed, leaping off her mount as the miasma came towards them. With no way to use magic by themselves, they needed to just stay away from the poisonous cloud, making Hermione very grateful that the nundu's gas didn't spread very quickly and always was tinged with the same dark purple color.

The remaining Oni on the field, including Suzaku's mount, proved even more susceptible to the Nundu's gas than the humans. The gas hadn't even come much closer before they collapsed to their knees as their hands went to their throats, their eyes bulging. Within seconds, they faded out of existence, their eyes rolling up in their heads as they expired.

Cú snarled from where he was still fighting his own monster, the creature having decided to play a game of cat and mouse instead of trying to fight him standing still as the Chimera facing Koneko had foolishly done. Rias also backed away, staring at the creature with her head cocked to one side, wondering but not really wanting to test out if her own devil resistance to poison and magical attack would work against the creature's breath.

Similarly, Mittelt had pulled out of one of her divebombing attacks and was now staring at the creature, several dozen light lances appearing around her as she began to think of how to attack it. *I'm assuming that this thing has some kind of magical resistance. But a lot of that kind of resistance can be bypassed with light lances... well, for creatures from the Familiar Forest or anywhere else in the Underworld, anyway.*

Thankfully, Mittelt didn't have to test that. Koneko stepped forward towards the creature, cocking its head to one side.

Unlike the two Chimera, who had been entirely aggressive from the get-go, the panther-like monster seemed more curious and happier to be out of its cell than anything else. The Nundu snarled a little at the humans nearest it but didn't move instantly to attack them, letting

the security force and attackers alike back away, only noticing Koneko as she moved to stare up at it.

The Nundu growled, crouching down as if to charge, only to pause as her scent reached it, and her typical disguise faded away, leaving her tails to wag behind her and her ears on top of her head to twitch. It looked even more confused now than it had a moment ago, and the Nundu sat on his haunches staring at her, its neck slowly shifting back to normal size. "MRRRR..." It growled.

"Grmmrr..." Koneko growled right back as she stood in front of it, waving her arms to either side, sniffing the air in front of her. The two of them sniffed at one another, then continued a staring contest for several seconds.

Since the creature wasn't attacking directly, Mittelt decided to land in between the previously retreating defenders and the entryway into the tower. Seeing that and dozens of prepared light lances around her, as well as Rias striding towards them, the guards finally began to cease trying to attack the invaders.

Many of them stood, staring at where the cat girl stood. Ernie, who had 'survived' the fight up to this point, muttered, "Holy crap, those muggle magazines I read were about real people?"

That was as far as he got before Hermione reached him, having raced past Rias, a thunderous expression on her face. "Ernie MacMillian, I am going to tear off your boy bits and make you eat them! What is it with wizards always wanting to cast spells first, ask questions never?! First that attack on Alexandria, and now not even trying to talk to us when we come through, just attack?!"

The man flinched and turned, opening his mouth, but Hermione reached him. Before he could say anything, Hermione smacked him upside the head so hard Ernie fell to his knees, his eyes crossing as he nearly blacked out from the strike. Hermione ignored the sight of his wobbling body and began to upbraid him and the other former Hogwarts students she recognized who were still among the conscious, her voice a near-strident shriek that both frightened them and began to stab into their brains like a needle.

The other defenders surreptitiously tried to reach back down to their dropped wands, but a cough from Rias drew their attention to the redhead, who was now standing only a few feet away from them. Rias crossed her arms over her chest, hiding said chest from view rather than below it as was normal, one wintry albeit red eyebrow rising. "My name is Rias Potter, and I am here to speak to your leaders."

Her voice still had the power of a Sonorous, and it hammered into the Aurors and Hit wizards. Some even had busted eardrums, but Rias went on regardless. "As a gesture of good faith, I am going to return to you the Hit Wizards who survived the stupidity they were sent on. I will, however, demand that they remain here in the tower. They may face criminal charges in

Egypt for their actions in Alexandria. We are simply returning them to you so you know we have not killed them out of hand, an overture of peace, so to speak. Despite the fact that you have given no such to us.”

Before Ernie or the others could recover what little of their wits remained, Rias turned her head away, shouting over her shoulder, driving them again to their knees despite no longer facing them. “Loup, bring the prisoners through.”

The werewolf entered the floo quickly, fighting with himself not to transform and charge forward to take part in the battle still going on between Cú and the Chimera or towards the defenders. The fighting was over for the most part, and any attempt to join in now would simply restart everything. Behind him, the prisoners began to make their way through the floo network one at a time. By the time the fiftieth prisoner had come through, most of the surviving defenders had laid down their wands and moved away, moving towards the prisoners or simply towards their own wounded fellows.

With Ernie being upbraided by Hermione, there didn’t seem to be any clear consensus on who was in charge until one of the surviving defenders stammered, “What, what is this?”

“I just told you. I am going up to meet with your Chief Mugwump and the Mugwumps as a whole,” Rias reached over, grabbing Hermione’s shoulder. “What happens after that, is on how truly stupid they are, or if they can see the writing on the wall as well as you lot were able to. For now, I suggest you all wait here and do what you can for your own wounded. You all nearly started a war. I am here to make certain you wizards do not do further damage.”

“I love how she didn’t use the words, or else,” Suzaku whisper-shouted to the Shinsengumi, who snorted.

The fact that Cú was now stalking towards them from the now-dead second Chimera and that Koneko had led the Nundu towards the corpse of the Chimera that she had killed, scratching under its chin, added to both Rias’s glare and her word. As did the aura Rias was unconsciously putting off, a corona of red around her like the outer edge of the sun. The sight of still more prisoners coming through the floo network behind Loup was simply icing on the cake.

“Wh, what are you people?” one of them whimpered, staring between the attackers and the area around them, blasted and broken by the short but extremely violent magical battle.

“Hmm, finally, an intelligent question,” Cú taunted. Coming to stand to one side and behind Rias, he leaned on Gae Bolg negligently, the tip of it still gleaming with the heart’s blood of the Chimera. The Irishman felt good at the moment, the fight against the Chimera having proven just hard enough to get his blood pumping and not hard enough to take a lot of time.

“In answer to your question, I am a Devil, a literal one, rather than figurative. I am here to explain the reality of this world to your employers, a reality that will see you all realize that



your little Wizarding World is not the only magical realm that exists. I suggest you all get used to that now," Rias answered before sweeping forward another word, gesturing the others to follow her towards the elevator.

They waited there for Koneko to catch up with them. Behind her, the Nundu happily munching on the corpse of the Chimera. At the same time, still more prisoners came through, along with a dozen Shinsengumi and Aurors who had previously been assigned to Egypt and had backed the locals against the incursion from the ICW. Loup stayed with the prisoners, making sure that none of the prisoners or defenders made trouble down here. Loup would be in overall command, but there was at least one guard for every seven prisoners.

When Koneko reached them, Rias drawled, "Needless to say, if this elevator doesn't take us to where we wish to go, that being the topmost floor from which we can access the Wumpus, there will be further trouble. Do not make the mistake for one instant of thinking we are mere diplomats despite my intention."

"And if this elevator has any of the mus-ack crap that is such a rage in the nonmagical world, I am going to hurt someone," Mittelt intoned firmly, causing some smiles from her companions along with a confused look from Cú.

The moment the elevator's doors closed behind the group, one of the Aurors turned to his fellows, shaking his head as he wrung out his arm, which had been twisted up his back by his own clothing turning against him during the fight thanks to a spell from the flying girl, the one with black wings which looked like a preteen but was very obviously not in terms of her combat ability. *I'd best count my lucky stars even so; I could have ended up in close range of that tattooed Irishman with the scary spear.*

"What does she think we are, morons? Or was that some kind of fucking joke after they kicked our asses? There's nothing 'mere' about her or that man with the tattoos. The way she and the rest of them just blew through our defenses like that was fucking terrifying, then she taunts us like that?"

"Agreed. I sure as hell don't want to mess with any of them again, whatever the fuck is going on here," a German Auror grumbled. "I am thinking our honorable Chief Mugwump did not look before he leaped, ordering us to try and regain control of Egypt."

"Ooh, look at that, a German heading into a war not really understanding what he's getting into? Where have I heard that before?" An American snarked, gaining a sneer from the German as he went on. "I don't know about any of you, but I am going to just keep my head down, help our fellows here, and not reach for my wand for a while. We've lost too much already."

A few of the Aurors grumbled at that, while others began to make fun of Ernie and the other recipients of the bushy-haired one's ire. But one of the prisoners, a Hit Wizard who had been taken out of the fighting before Rias and the others showed up, simply nodded his head. "I

don't know what the redhead did here to your lot, and I don't want to find out. She was ordering around this woman with black wings who could toss around a veritable storm of lightning all at once earlier. I've only seen Voldemort and Dumbledore in the last war able to do that kind of thing. I really, **really** do not want to know what the redhead can do, especially since she's married to Potter, of all people."

Luckily for everyone, the elevator did indeed deposit the 'diplomats' on the topmost floor. From there, they were easily able to find the staircase leading up to the roof where the amphitheater resided.

When Roberto saw Hermione and her companions entering the Council chamber, he had to bite back a vicious grin. It looked as if vindication was on the menu for him, and quite a bit of humble pie for the rest of the Wumpus.

He was not the only one to realize that instantly. The representative of India also smiled, having been given a very good description of Rias Potter. Further, he could feel the energy coming off the man with the spear, both the power within him and his weapon. And the man, Mugwump Pashto, had been in the presence of a god once when he was much, much younger. *Oh my, what fascinating allies Potter has gathered.*

Meanwhile, the Japanese representative also frowned, staring at the Shinsengumi, whose uniform was most distinctive. *Roberto told us all that Potter had brought in many of my countrymen, but to see one here is... interesting. Is this mandated by our government or a local issue?*

For a moment, all of the Mugwumps stared at the newcomers, torn between fear and anger. When the battle below started to go against the guards, many of the old men and women here had tried to use portkeys to escape. They had found their attempts blocked despite the fact that specific defensive wards on the tower were present to prevent that very thing. Having realized they could not escape, they had tried to calm themselves down, trying to put on a show. The amphitheater gleamed, cleaned from one end to another, and frescos and bunting that were only put up normally in times of ceremony were out. All of the Wumpus were also sitting perfectly still, their clothing unrumpled, cleaned.

The looks on their faces gave the game away to Rias. They were not nearly as poised as they tried to act, not even the Chief Mugwump. He tried to bluster to put the invaders off-balance, not knowing that his attempt seemed almost childish to her, given Rias's knowledge of how badly out of their depth the Wumpus was.

"I recognize Miss Granger behind you. With her is a man who is wearing the robes of an Auror. You also match the description of Rias Potter from our British compatriot, Mrs. But I do not recognize any of these others. Nonetheless, I welcome you to the Wumpus." The elderly, an extremely officious, somewhat austere man with a German accent who might have had a falcon

in his ancestry, announced. "I've had reports that after the, the unpleasantness below ended, you began to return our Hit Wizards to us. Are you here before us to surrender?"

"No."

Rias allowed her single word response to resound in the Greek-style amphitheater for a moment. She then stepped forward, her steps nearly silent thanks to the acoustics of the room, her aquamarine eyes snapping in fury while an aura of fiery red magical power appeared around her as she finally let her inner anger out for a bit.

*These are the old fools who ordered that attack, they are the mind behind that tragedy and lead the Wizarding World. And it is high time they are taken to task for their arrogance.*

"I am not here to surrender, ladies and gentlemen of this so-called august body. I am here to **demand** answers!" Rias roared suddenly as she stamped her foot, sending a pulse of magic into the ground. This caused the amphitheater to tremble a bit as if the tower had been hit by a miniature earthquake, and the gathered Wumpus trembled to a man, leaning back in their seats, any attempt at decorum or comportment draining out of them under the pressure Rias exuded. "I am here to learn what kind of madness made you think attacking Alexandria as you did to try and take over everything before trying to enforce your vaunted Statute of Secrecy! I am here to inform you of why that was a horrible mistake. I will peel back the veil of ignorance and stupidity that has blinded all of you to the reality of the world beyond the bounds of your wards. And you all will sit there and take it!"

Every man and woman in her audience, even those who had entered the amphitheater with Rias stepped back, bar Cú. He simply leaned on Gae Bolg, shaking his head, muttering under his breath, "Feck me, I do not envy Potter when they have an argument. Cold, controlled, then suddenly becoming a screamer? Worst of all worlds, that."

Rias ignored him, glaring at the men and women in front of her as she moved forward, literally pushing the Chief Mugwump back with the power of her aura as if it were a physical thing. The man stumbled back a few steps and soon found himself sitting in one of the empty seats in the front row of the amphitheater.

He then tried to push to his feet, but a glare from the redheaded woman had him freezing in place like a mouse in front of a cat, and he slumped back, knowing that whatever hope to control the situation he had was gone now. *Where did this young woman come from? Where is that powerful aura coming from? Why had we never heard of her before those rumors from Britain reached us about her being married to Potter?*

The Chief Mugwump was about to get a response to some of his questions. That didn't mean he would be happy with those answers, though.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen, you seem to be under several mistaken apprehensions both about Egypt and about the world in general. Point number one is going to be easily the

largest point because all the others are built upon it, so I suppose I must start there before pointing out how stupid your recent actions have been. You are not the only magical community in this world. Not the ICW, not even the Wizarding World as a whole. There are other magical societies, ones with powers that far outstrip any of your people in raw magical potential.”

Rias smiled in a manner that was more teeth than good humor as those words began to percolate through the minds of the old men and women. Shock, disbelief and simple raw, instinctual denial roused them into reacting despite their semi-cowed state. Several of them leaped to their feet, trying to shout, trying to say that was impossible, while others roared about how she was deluded. Only a few stated it was possible but that any such society would need to be brought into compliance with the ICW posthaste.

That last response infuriated Rias a lot, but she said nothing, simply waiting for the histrionics to fade away as the members of the Wumpus began to stare at her anew. As they had ranted, Rias had allowed her wings to flutter out of her back in mute counter to their words. The sight of the black-as-night devil wings showed precisely what Rias was. Even wizards knew legends or tales of devils, at least. “I was born into one of those other mystical societies. My name is Rias Gremory-Potter, and I am a true blood Devil.”

She flapped her wings several times and then, as her audience attempted to regain their equilibrium once more, held up several fingers. From each finger, tiny balls of Power of Destruction gathered. At the same time, portals appeared as they had earlier in the battle in the gardens below the tower, directly in front of the faces of a few people who had reached for their wands. Something that all of them must have heard about because many of them screamed and ducked the instant the portals appeared.

One man though attempted to shoot an AK at her, but Rias redirected it with another portal, sending it into the ground with a loud crack, grimacing internally at the concentration it took but letting nothing show on her face but anger and disdain. “Don’t do that. I’ve been very nice so far, and I really don’t want to wave goodbye to Mrs. Nice Woman. Unless any of you wish me to do so?”

The portals hovered there for a moment as the gathered Mugwumps stared between them and the woman who had just created a magical means of transporting **spells** from one place to another. To a man, they sat back down, placing their wands on their laps, moving their hands away from them. Even Roberto, who had known that Harry’s Group would at least fight back against the invading Hit Wizards, was shocked at this display. *I knew they would react poorly, and a counterstrike was an obvious idea. But this woman’s power and abilities are... are indeed beyond anything a wizard or witch could do.*

“Now, we devils have several things going for us in comparison to you wizards and witches. For one thing, all of us, even the youngest students, can use wandless magic. It’s not a big deal to us,” Rias continued, smirking a bit at letting that bomb drop right off the bat. “Beyond that, we usually have a far greater amount of magical power than you all, and many of

our families have familial-related abilities, unlike your so-called purebloods who only have inbreeding going for them.”

Was Rias being deliberately confrontational? Yes. But it was probably better to pull off the entire Band-Aid rather than half of it and make certain that her listeners understood Rias’s opinion on that particular bit of WW idiocy.

“My family’s magical lineage gives me the abilities you just saw, the Power of Destruction and the ability to create teleportation circles. The Power of Destruction can be likened to a ravaging beam of energy that cannot be stopped by any shield known to wizardkind and few enough among my own people.” *And that is my ability with it. Not my brother’s, whose skill with the Power of Destruction is part of what makes him a monster.* “Would anyone like me to continue my demonstration of what those powers can do when combined?”

*Silence really is golden, Rias reflected a second later. It means these fools are listening right now. Good. I have brought an appropriate amount of stick so far.*

She let that silence linger for a moment, sweeping the room with her gaze. Now, she didn’t see blustering, demanding women and men of people of power. Instead, Rias saw frightened, worried old men and women who had suddenly realized that they were not on the top of the magical food chain. But that did not make her any more or less furious at the deaths their unthinking reaction to that fear had caused already. *Best to grind the point in now and prevent further trouble down the line.* “The Wizarding World did not know of my people. And until recently, the same could be said for my own folk when it came to yours.”

That salvaged some of their egos, at least. There was no reason to bring up the fact that Sirzechs had at least known, which meant that at least a few of the Maou and their equivalent did. “Nor are we Devils the only ones out there. Mittelt, Koneko?”

The seemingly young girl came forward, as did Koneko. A second later, more screams and shocked exclamations abounded as both of them showed their inhuman natures.

Looking around the room, Rias smiled. Despite all the myriad ways in which Magic could fool the senses, there was no doubting the evidence of their minds, and the implications of that were truly horrifying.

She waited until the shouts and cries of ‘dammit, the anti-portkey ward is still up’ and the occasional ‘holy Merlin, cat girls are real’ to subside before looking over at Hermione. “Hermione, I believe you had an article for the newspaper back in Lighthouse Lane? If you could copy and distribute it?”

Rias almost asked the bushy-haired girl to collect their wands at the same time but decided that would be a step too far. *Wizards and witches alike, they are all too protective of their little sticks. Such a pity Harry had already begun to wean himself off that before we got together. I would have loved to make fun of him for that.* “If you wish to read that article later

for a bit more background, that is fine. For now, you just need to know that we Devils and Fallen have our own societies and that the Christian Church and its allies know about us as well.”

Hermione nodded, moving forward and pulling out the article she had written, unfolding and copying it to pass around the Wumpus. *How did Rias know I had the article on me, just in case?*

Rias meanwhile placed a hand on Koneko’s head, gently ruffling her ears, using that action to help keep a lid on her own anger. That, and the confused, almost concussed expression on many of the old people facing her helped. She looked toward and bowed her head towards the Asian-looking man sitting up near the back of the amphitheater. “The only group who knew about the youkai was the Onmyodo government, who agreed to keep them secret.”

Many a face twisted around to look at the Japanese Wumpie, who simply looked back calmly. He had no idea about the Factions or Rias Potter. But he did know about the youkai. In fact, his wife was half-Swanhilde. And he was a professional politician. He knew very well how little the Onmyodo government cared about the greater ICW and understood the term need to know. Indeed, given the Onmyodo government’s status as a ‘client state’ rather than a full member, his position within the Wumpus was seen as somewhat useless at home. While his voice here in this chamber was often ignored.

That they had decided to ally themselves with a new power was surprising, but he could fake knowing about that well enough. After all, it wouldn’t be the first time as he had held this position before and after World War 2.

“We the Onmyodo do indeed have an alliance with the Youkai Association. They are welcome in our territory and will be protected against **any** outsiders. The nekomata that young Koneko represents are a valuable and respected part of the Youkai Association,” the elderly man intoned, standing and bowing from the waist towards Rias and Koneko, taking the opportunity to distance himself from his fellows. “And just like I refused to vote for a military intervention in Egypt to restore the Statute, I am more than willing to argue against any move to try and ‘control’ the youkai as you Europeans do the giants, mermen, and centaur populations. To be blunt, should any vote go through, the Onmyodo government will leave the ICW. Our friendship with the Association is worth more to us than continuing to walk in locked step with the rest of you.”

*Especially if you have suddenly begun a war with these Factions that Mrs. Potter has mentioned. I have no wish to see what other Devils or Fallen can do. I wonder if my fellows realize she must be just as young for her people as Potter is for ours, and at no point has she stated she is some kind of leader or warrior among them. The implications of that are frightening. I also have to wonder as to the depth of the agreements my government has made with Potter and this group of theirs. I knew he had our backing, but even so...*

While most might have thought the man had not translated the word well, those more intelligent among his listeners understood the double meaning of 'locked step', and that the man had just sent a dig at how he and the others who had objected to the attempt to take over Egypt had been ignored by the majority, dragged along into a mistake not of their own making. Rias had to smile at that. "Thank you."

She paused until all the Mugwumps were looking back at her, and Hermione had moved through the first row. "At any rate, as we all live on this Earth, it was perhaps inevitable that as we all interact with the non-magical world, our two civilizations' societies would eventually meet. They did when Harry Potter and I became acquainted. Needless to say, given the name I now answer to, that acquaintance has been most fruitful."

*And it will be fruitful in the truest sense of the word as soon as we all get time to see to it,* Rias thought firmly the thought causing her to lose much of her anger as she gently urged Koneko back to a position by the stairs. *I made myself a promise there, and I mean to keep it.*

Shaking that thought away with a mental sigh, Rias went on. "And during our interactions, it was proven that while you wizards have a far vaster repertoire than any member of the Three Factions, we stand mostly above you. Further, while there is a limit to how strong you all can become in terms of your basic magical reserves, we can grow to such strength that no wizard could ever reach. Even Harry, vanquisher of your Dark Lord, would not have been able to match powers with the strongest of our race's members when he and I first met. Finesse and experience can take you a long way, but even so."

"Yet we made peace. In interacting with one another, we learned, and we all grew. When Harry and I wed, we created our own power base, reaching out first to the Japanese. After that, we became embroiled in fixing the issues in Ireland. Which we did."

Rias breathed in, moving forward to stand in front of the dais where the Chief Mugwump regularly sat, facing his fellows as Hermione finished, passing her to stand beside the others in the doorway. "Between Harry and I, we have brought together many different sorcerous styles, blending them together. Because of that, we were almost able to stop Akhenaten and Nefertiti's plans for Egypt, something you could not have done. We eventually achieved peace even there by offering the nonmagicals in Egypt aid and protection during the disaster that Akhenaten caused and dealing with the aftermath."

"A peace that your contemptible, foolish actions nearly shattered!" she roared, the noise filling the amphitheater like thunder. "If not for so many Aurors and Shinsengumi who had already been helping with us deciding not to follow this body's monstrously foolish orders, we would face an all out war now!"

The Shinsengumi lieutenant proved he hadn't been chosen by Husukai randomly at this point, stepping forward. His cool, collected words were a sharp counterpoint to Rias's fiery vitriol. He did not go into detail on the alliance the Onmyodo government had agreed to with

the Kuoh Clan, instead keeping his words concentrated on Egypt and why he and the other Aurors had decided to stand with the locals. His simple words and tone made it very clear that anyone with an ounce of sense should have realized that would happen, as the bonds between people who fought together against a common goal were very hard to break, as well as pointing out how much the nonmagicals had been able to do on their own when they knew about what the enemy could do.

When he finished, Rias spoke up again, amused to note that a lot of the anger and shock among her listeners had begun to fade. That was a good sign, really. But she wasn't done. "Before this, we had been willing to let the Wizarding World continue as you always had. Continue in ignorance because, for you people, it truly is like bliss to you." The sneer in her voice and on her face made all the Mugwumps flinch even more than her shout moments before had, yet none of them had enough anger or hatred in them to object. "Now that you have tried your strong-arm approach, we will have peace by the sword. A sword we, the Kuoh Group, will be wielding. Not you."

"Wh, what does that mean? A, are you truly hear to conquer us then?!" the Chief Mugwump stammered, trying to bluster and failing miserably after the dozens of hammer blows his world view had taken. "E, even if you take the Ivory Tower, my fellow wizard and witches will never..."

"They will when you tell them what has happened. When you call your Ministers or what-have-you here, and I tell them in turn what kind of powers you have angered in their name!" Rias interrupted, internally wondering if Ivory Tower was the official name of the ICW headquarters. *Which came first, I wonder, the name or the saying that goes with it?*

Regardless, she had no desire to get into a back conversation here. This trip was for her to lay down the law, nothing more. The time for give-and-take had passed the moment the ICW decided to initiate an assault on Alexandria and the civilians therein. "I am not here to debate. I am here to make certain that no further violence will occur, and if I have to do so by holding a sword to your collective throats, so be it."

"B, but what about the Statute?" The man who had been acting as Chief Mugwump stammered. "We, we need to..."

"The Statute is but a name given to the concept of keeping magic from becoming known to the wider world. We also believe that would be a bad idea." Rias waited a second before going on. "However, not only did you go about it in an uncaring and FUCKING idiotic manner," Rias's training in public speaking worked to her advantage, her use of a curse doing almost as much as raising her voice would have without needing to resort to that tactic again. "We are in a position to actually talk, deal with the Egyptians as people, and come to an understanding, an agreement that will have them accede to the idea of keeping magic a secret from the rest of the world. Which we will." *Oh yes, I have plans...*



“B, but they’re just muggles, who cares if--” Began one of the Mugwumps, only to be interrupted and not by Rias.

Koneko had been standing quietly by the entryway into the stairs leading down to the floor below the roof since her little moment of revelation. Now she shot forward, her fist flashing out only to stop an inch from the speaker’s face. She had moved faster than any of the Mugwumps could move and now stood there, her fingers pinched around the man’s nose. “**Shut up.** Idiocy gives me a headache.” She growled.

“We will treat the Egyptians as people because that is what they are, just as worthy of being treated kindly as any wizard or magical being,” Rias added. “And if that is not enough, the idea that they are fellow humans, then perhaps a bit more knowledge will. As fast as Koneko just moved, she moved far slower than a normal nonmagical bullet would from a rifle. As Officer Mikagawa said earlier, when your Hit Wizards invaded, they killed several hundred people, mostly defenders, who should not have died. But those defenders fought back, killing many of your Hit Wizards on their own. While we wait for the various Ministers to arrive, you will all be free to question the prisoners we have returned to you to understand how, even without my group and I, your plan was doomed to fail.”

“Or become the magical equivalent of what the Iberian Peninsula was for Napoleon,” Hermione interjected, holding up her pistol. “Something that becomes a sinkhole for the Wizarding World’s police forces, draining valuable manpower in a way that cannot be borne. If anyone wants more of a sample of what the nonmagicals are capable of, I have a small one right here, and we can go outside and test it.”

Rias allowed her eyes to harden even as she moved forward and gently pulled Koneko’s hand away from the man, her two-fingered grip on the man’s nose not loosening until a few seconds after Rias started to pull Koneko away. This pulled the man off of his chair for a second with a whimper. As the two girls moved away, he rubbed his nose, wincing at the pain, but it wasn’t enough to make him miss Rias’s next words.

“Regardless of how well the Egyptians might have done on their own, we **did** intervene. I said we have allied with the Egyptians, and that is the truth. If my clearing your misconceptions about being the only magical society on Earth did not show how big a mistake you made, then this will: if it comes to it, then I formally state that the Kuoh Group will stand with the Egyptians against the Wizarding World. And with us will come **all** of our allies. I do not wish to fight a war, but if we do, I mean to win it... quickly and thoroughly.”

The cold, almost deadly way she said the last three words caused a shudder to run around the room, and there were a few moments of silence before the first person spoke up.

This proved to be the Onmyodo Mugwump. Seeing a sinking ship for what it was, even if he still wondered why his government had agreed to ally with this woman and the Potters, he decided to continue what he had done earlier on in Rias’s presentation/series of threats. “My

own government will do the same. We will not anger these new mystical groups we know little to nothing about by backing a decision I argued against. Further, if the Kuoh Group is indeed centered in Nippon, then my government might have already reached agreements with them. As such I will not argue against such without calling home and gaining more knowledge.”

“Nor will we,” the Indian Mugwump announced, standing, a smile of anticipation flickering across his face. “And I will go one step further and state that the Jaaduee Ganga Aur Hindoo Kush Ka Sahayog (Cooperative Magical Ganges and Hindu Kush) will openly ally with the Clan of Potter and Gremory at this time.”

The use of Rias’s original last name as a separate entity was not lost on anyone, and the other Mugwumps instantly jumped to the observation that the Indian magical communities might have known and willingly kept the secret of the other various magical societies that lived beyond their purview from the rest of the ICW. That caused some angry glares towards the Indian man. But the man, who looked like a far less tanned and far wrinklier version of Ramagupta, ignored them with aplomb.

From where he sat, Roberto winced a bit. He would honestly like to say the same thing but knew he could not guarantee Portugal’s Ministro dos Assuntos Bruxos (Minister of Wizarding Affairs) would follow his suggestion. *And isn’t the difference between how my Japanese and Indian counterparts went about this interesting. It feels as if not only did my Indian colleague know about the devils and such, but they knew of Potter’s group and had already moved to ally with them. Fascinating. Fukutak, I can assume, is just going with the flow to a certain degree, as he isn’t nearly as enthusiastic about what is happening.*

*And yet, that hardly matters, does it? No, the fact of the matter is that Harry has created what amounts to a series of alliances with foreign powers. Something that, as a simple citizen, he should not have done. But it is done now, and without him, the Irish problem would still be going on, and we would be in shock at the death of everyone within Egypt’s borders, magical and nonmagical alike. And then there are all the reports we’ve been getting for days about natural disasters washing over into the Wizarding World. How long until we can’t keep the secret whatever happens? We are truly facing a worldwide crisis, and we didn’t..*

Roberto’s thoughts slowed as the term he had just thought tried to take his mind down a different path than he had intended. There was something about that term, a memory niggling at him, telling him that the phrase worldwide crisis had lawful weight to it. Something he had read when the first reports about Ireland reached him and the terrorism in Greece began, maybe? *What am I trying to remember?*

Before he could figure that out, Rias coughed gently, interrupting his musing and the other Mugwump’s glares at the Indian representative, bringing everyone’s attention to her. She stood there, smiling as her wings flapped behind her, the power of destruction dancing in one hand she didn’t need to add further to her numerous threats again. “Now, I think we should start with my husband’s home nation. If you could send for Minister Shackbolt.”

While her choice of words sounded like her question, her tone made it clear Rias was giving an order, but the British Mugwump still tried both to say something to maybe halt Rias's railroading them and to cover up the sudden snickers coming from the very scary looking tattooed redhead. "A, and what about your husband? What would he think about you threatening us in this manner? His fellow wizards and witches. And, and getting him involved in politics like this."

*Not so 'fellow' anymore*, Rias thought as she laughed gaily, a lot of her grim chill attitude disappearing as thoughts of her lover, **her** man, coming to her, wondering what he would say while knowing he would probably approve of a lot of what she had done even if she was doing things in ways he wouldn't. "If you think my husband would choose loyalty to a government he doesn't respect all that much over loyalty to his wife and friends, you really don't know Harry all that well."

Shaking her head, Rias went on. "Now, while we are waiting for our first guest, perhaps we can get down to talking numbers and reparations. Your **moronic** attack killed a lot of people and did untold damage to our standing with the common Egyptians, both of which demand reparations..."

OOOOOOO

While Rias was explaining the new realities of the world to the so-called leaders of the ICW, magic itself, raw, potent magic, was still flowing into the world at an untenable rate, thanks to Ophis. Indeed, now that she had revived Níðhöggr, Aži Dahāka, and Ladon, they too began to emit magic into the wider world, although at a far lower rate than Ophis herself. A world that, as Harry and the rest of them had long since realized, could not handle it. Like a man with a bad heart given a sudden infusion of adrenaline, the earth was suffering hugely, spasming and screaming to those who had the ears to hear.

The Church had recently come to the same conclusion thanks to Cardinal Furmos of the Cardinal Points. The peace talks between the Three Factions, which had been stymied for a time thanks to the events in Kuoh and the sudden inclusion of the Onmyouji government, were back on, with the church agreeing to nearly every point they had previously been balking at, including the idea of having it in Kuoh, rather than somewhere random where none of the factions could set up traps. This was excellent news for Maou Leviathan and Lucifer, the first because this had been Serafall's job for a while, and now she could see an end to it coming. And Sirzechs because his newest peerage member was already yapping in his ear about doing something to save Mother Gaia from the pain she was being put through.

And now, the ICW would begin to discover much the same thing. Say what you would about their general attitude (overbearingly bureaucratic, overly holier than thou, arrogantly officious, paranoid, etc.), but the Magical Congress of the United States of America produced the world's finest magical engineers, architects and scientists. And more than half of the

disasters befalling Earth because of the overflow of magic were occurring in areas where MACUSA, like the Church before them had holdings.

And better than the Church, in MACUSA, the leadership of MACUSA had come up through the ranks. And unlike their nonmagical counterparts, there were not nearly as many members of Congress. Indeed, there were only seven. Currently, they and the Magi-president were reading reports from one of MACUSA's chief field operatives while on a large TV screen, a newsreel on one of the latest disasters that dealt with the same area.

"Work is ongoing to evacuate the citizenry of Jamaica and Cuba. While the Cuban government has seemingly collapsed, the military of Cuba is still treating UN and US aid workers as invaders. Fighting continues throughout the country, ravaged by earthquakes and tsunamis, and military deaths are growing. Calls for calm have been ignored there, unlike in Jamaica, where the government is working closely with foreign officials," a harried woman reported, speaking and looking as if she could not quite believe what she was saying. "In the Pacific, work is ongoing to try and transport as many people from the famed Galapagos Islands as possible, but the ongoing near-tsunami waves and storms are continuing to hamper US efforts, while the government of Ecuador has ceased all attempts, concentrating their efforts on continuing to try and evacuate Guayaquil. In Peru, the Gerald R Ford is still providing power to..."

"Turn it off!" the president ordered, shaking his head and looking over at one of his fellows. "This report I'm reading on Peru is depressing enough. Michaels, were we able to get all of the magicals out from Magical Galapagos?"

"The civilians, yes." Michaels, the Congress member from the Greater Midwest, stated, sighing faintly. "But we lost a lot of the magical animals. We're going to have to be on the lookout for that: strange animals washing ashore or being found floating dead in the Pacific."

While Charles Darwin was astonished by the variety and nature of many of the animals he encountered on the Galapagos Archipelago, even back then, large portions of the islands had been hidden behind Notice-me-Not wards. Because the magical animals there were even more amazing and varied than the nonmagical ones. The Alicanto, Giglioli's Whale, Asian Unicorn, the Mapinguari, Shadhavar and more.

But all of them were gone now. The last place in the known world where more than a dozen ancient magical creatures lived had been completely submerged by the various tsunamis that had hit the archipelago.

"Bah, we can just leave that! It'll fuel some more stories about lost Atlantis or whatever. It's a tragedy, but it is a much smaller problem than the utter destruction of Camino Sinuoso de los Magos (Winding Road of Wizards) in Mexico."

One of the other congressmen spoke up quickly. "I agree that dealing with the rubble and bodies left behind there is an ongoing issue. Over sixty-percent of our Obliviators are still

locked down there as we continue to excavate the area and get rid of the physical evidence. Yet we have had systems in place to do that, if not on this scale, since World War 2.”

Not every bomb that had been duds or simply gone missing not producing any explosion in that war had actually missed. Instead, they had fallen through the various local Notice-me-nots. And occasionally enough had done so in one hidden wizard-only section of a city to bring down the wards. The magical district of Warsaw had been annihilated, leaving other magical communities to try and hide the bodies there, just like MACUSA was doing down in Mexico today.

“More importantly, we still have no idea what began the disaster there. We know it was a burst of magic, over 90,000 on the Magical Wattage System, but where it came from or what was going on, we have no idea. Something that strong should be a concern to everyone here. And what about the evacuation of Guadalupe? I still think we should have offered more help to the non-magicals there. Our own little community was set right into their biggest city after all, unlike in the Galapagos. We could have easily helped people evacuate and then come up with a story later.”

“The bigger the story, the harder it is to keep in place.” The president stated the maxim rolling off his tongue easily, like he was speaking about a natural law like what comes up, must come down. “Let the nonmagicals deal with their own while we look after our citizens and any other magicals we can help. If a few thousand of the no-maj die, it’s a statistic. If the same number of wizards died, it’s a tragedy.”

The man who had brought the idea of helping the non-magicals up winced at that, while more than a few of the congressmen looked thoughtful. But none argued the point, and one of them, a former magical engineer, stated, “The incident in Mexico seems an outlier. Something more in keeping with what Potter had to deal with in Ireland for the Brits than anything else.”

There were some grumbles at that, but also more than a few wincing. MACUSA’s international profile had taken a major hit recently when somehow the fact they kept voodoo-markers on anyone passing through their territory came to light in the ICW. That kind of political and social faux pas was something they would be paying for in lots of little ways for a long while, and many in MACUSA wondered if perhaps Potter had somehow been involved in the secret getting out. He and his group had been in Hawaii shortly before Roberto Lyle had dragged the American Mugwump over the coals for that. Yet none of them could argue that he had dealt with whatever was going on in Ireland, something which the old-fashioned and hidebound Brits had been unable to do, even their vaunted Unspeakables.

“More importantly, if only in terms of scale, is the issue of the multiple natural disasters that have hit not only our nation but the whole world. Hurricane Alley is nearly unlivable, we’re facing storms of the century in Seattle and Maine, and there are so many earthquakes going on it’s like something out of that weird no-maj book, the bible thing.” The man’s joke at his own expense – he had been born and raised in MACUSA territory and very rarely had even met first-

gen magicals, let alone any no-maj, won a few chuckles, but he went on more seriously. "What's causing it? Do we have any idea?"

One of the others, a former wizardist (wizard scientist) shook his head firmly. He represented Magical California, which included most of New Mexico, all of Oregon, portions of Washington and Nevada. "I spoke to our liaison with the non-magical community in California earlier today. We all know they're America's experts on earthquakes. There was no hint of anything like any of this. According to the no-maj, it's as if the tectonic plate movements have suddenly accelerated their movements by a thousand without anything there to cause it. Which doesn't even mention the other phenomenon."

The Southern Congressman scowled in irritation. "I just got done a very annoying conversation with some of our wizardists. According to them, the background magical index of the world is shifting noticeably. It's been doing so for a few years, but they never realized..."

From there, the man began to explain what he had been told, which was pretty much the same things that the Cardinal Points had learned. Although the nomenclature was different, it meant the same thing: magic was flowing into the world, and the physical plane of Earth simply couldn't handle it any longer. But unlike the Church, MACUSA had no idea what was causing it. For nearly an hour, they discussed this, going back and forth, shock and fear making these powerful men very short with one another and somewhat angry that this was happening at all, as well as sad at the loss of life. While they might seem cold to the deaths of the nonmagicals, they weren't blind to the fact they were human, and such losses were horrible.

After more than an hour, a man came in, carrying a report for the president. Reading it quickly, he sighed. "Well, at least that's one problem dealt with. The Clean-up crews are all done in Mexico. The damage to the city looks as if it was from an out-of-control fire now, and the no maj have been Obliviated when necessary. Whatever really happened, the last bits of Camino Sinuoso de los Magos have been dealt with, too, so no one will ever know there was a magical community there. The few survivors are also housed now in the Appalachians."

"Hmmm... you know, we all agreed that whatever happened in Mexico was a separate issue from BMI issue. What if it wasn't?" One of the congressmen murmured. The others all looked at him, and he shrugged. "We all read the reports that the Brits shared with the ICW on Ireland. And Egypt, too. What if the disaster in Mexico was something else like that? Some ancient magical device finally getting enough power to activate?"

"Or perhaps caused by the same people behind what occurred in Egypt, that ancient pharaoh and his queen..." the president murmured, thinking hard. "Indeed, could they be behind everything? Could this overwhelming amount of magic flowing through the world be part of some twisted scheme of this new, if ancient, Dark Lord?"

“Potter’s representative, Granger, did say they weren’t certain what the end goal of those two was,” the representative for Magical California answered. “Perhaps some kind of secondary plan of theirs?”

“Where would the magic be coming from then?” the congressman for the South asked skeptically. “I agree that this has the hallmarks of a Dark Lord who thinks big, certainly, but it doesn’t explain where the raw magic itself is coming from. That is an ongoing issue... unless... could it be something like in Ireland rather than in Egypt? Another magical doorway to some other realm that was recently opened and is now letting magic pour into the world?”

“FUUUUCK...” grunted the president, trying to remember the whole report from Ireland. While there the major issues had been caused by the so-called Fae, if there was just a doorway somewhere, one the no-maj had uncovered or broken the lid on, well, that made a lot of sense. “That... fuck, with all this other old shit suddenly turning up, it’s possible. And I would wager that the Dark Lord Akhenaten and his wife are somehow at least taking advantage of it.”

“And if neither we nor the Greater ICW have found whatever it is, that means we lack the means to do so. It could be hidden from all scrying spells or even wizard sight. Which means it’s got to be out in the nonmagical world,” Michaels grumbled. “Without a starting point, it feels like we might be dealing with a needle in a haystack. One none of us have the right set of eyes to search for.”

“Then should we reach out to Potter, then? I mean, he’s the world’s leading expert on Dark Lord slaying, at least, and if whatever is causing the magic is out in the rest of the world, and he’s proven to be very good at moving through the nonmagical side of things,” The Magical California representative questioned. “He even helped solve that issue in Ireland somehow figuring something out the British Unspeakables couldn’t.”

All of them looked at one another, somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of looking to Potter for a solution on something this huge a scale. Not only was there the fact many wondered if he was behind their secret tracking program getting out to the ICW, but he was also foreign. British, to boot, a country that MACUSA looked down on for how backward the Wizengamot and their whole society was. But there was no denying that Potter was easily one of the most accomplished fighters in the Wizarding World. It was just, like the Mugwumps, the leaders of MACUSA did not like admitting this. Still, they were also aware of the fact that without him in Egypt, they would have been dealing with a disaster that would have burst the already straining Statute of Secrecy wide open.

*If only Potter wasn’t so damn young and so anti-authoritarian. Damn the Brits, anyway, thought more than one man there. And if that thought was colored by envy or annoyance, it varied wildly.*

But eventually, the grumbling period subsided, and the president nodded firmly. “At the very least, he will have some insight to share. I’ll contact our Mugwump in Austria. I think we all

need to work together to get a handle on whatever is going on here, and if that means following Potter's lead for a little bit or just giving him resources and helping him along, then so be it. If it is something magical, it falls on us to deal with it."

OOOOOOO

Ostensibly, Cao-Cao was out on a mixed recruitment/assassination mission. He was to either kill or recruit a group of the Fallen's chief troubleshooters, a group of humans that included several that Vali would have been furious to know Cao-Cao was trying to approach. That was what Ophis thought he was doing, at least. The dragon's naïveté and uncaring attitude to possibly being lied to about such things, even now that they knew they had been infiltrated and betrayed once already, was a major aid to his plans going forward. Cao-Cao knew Ophis wouldn't even bother to check up on if her 'servants' were doing what they should and probably wouldn't even care when he came back empty-handed. She was too busy hovering over Le Fay's shoulder, helping the girl as best she could in her experiments, or, worse, running herd on the Evil dragons she had resurrected, a thought that made Cao-Cao furious to think about.

Currently, Cao-Cao was deep in one of the nine Hells, the level called Malebolge, although there, Dante's understanding of the nine hells failed. For like the plain above, this too was a plain of fire. Ostensibly the plain of hell devoted to violent souls, pimps and seducers, this level of the interconnected realms of hell had been abandoned by the more forward-thinking, so-called progressive devils, the ones who embraced the idea of rejuvenating their race via the peerage system created by Lord Beelzebub, the New Devil Faction. As there was far more space in the nine realms of hell and the realms were all interconnected than the Fallen and Devils could ever use, Malebolge was practically lawless, becoming almost a mix between a lawless zone and a shanty town.

The vast majority of devils who lived here were devils who didn't want to move for one reason or another. They were too poor, they were too set in their ways, or had backed the Old Satan faction and resented the New Bloods and did not want to deal with them any more than they had to. But among this riffraff were those who lived behind heavily warded walls, hiding away from anyone and anything, trying to discover where they were or what was going on within.

It was in the largest and most ostentatious of these that Cao-Cao found himself. After being ushered through the mansion by Euclid Lucifuge, he found himself standing in a sitting room, staring at the man he had come to meet. Rizevim, the oldest living descendant of the original Lucifer.

Rizevim looked like a middle-aged man in his 40s with dark silver hair and hazel eyes, a thin, aristocratic face and high cheekbones along with a well-trimmed goatee, silver hair, and the accouterments and clothing of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century European noble. To Cao Cao he looked much



like his grandson, Vali, albeit with longer hair and a beard. Behind his back, Rizevim had multiple pairs of devil wings, twelve in total.

At first glance, Rizevim's expression might seem affable, gentrified almost. But something in him was just... **wrong**. The longer he looked at Rizevim, the more certain Cao Cao became certain of that. *Something inside this individual is warped, even beyond a normal example of devilkind. Even beyond Euclid and his near-obsession with Lucifer's wife. When it comes time to turn on him, I think I will take great delight in making certain that he does not live to see the next dawn. Worse, he is not only warped but powerful. If he was not, Euclid would not hold him in such regard, nor would the rest of the Old Devil Bloc.*

*It is intensely annoying that I have to work with such an individual. But for the greater good of mankind, for the final downfall of devils, angels, dragons and anything else nonhuman, I will, in no figurative way, shake hands with the very devil if I must. All the better to turn on him later.*

"Ah, Cao-Cao, your description matches the one my butler gave me of you. I had often wondered if Euclid had been exaggerating how tall you are." Rizevim began pleasantly before going on in a more mocking tone, directing his words to his servant. "Or perhaps the loss of his arm had hampered his ability to analyze what was going on around him."

The tone with which he brought up how Euclid had lost his arm to Ophis could have been used to describe a change in the weather or the pattern of old passing cloud, it was so uncaring. Yet Euclid did not react at all, simply bowing his head in response before moving around the room to stand behind his lord, watching their guest with suspicion.

Then, Lucifer's eyes narrowed, and he pointed at Cao-Cao. "But I must say that little bit of grandstanding that Ophis gave? That was intensely frustrating. Making one of my followers bow to her like that, quite beyond the pale, truly. Worse yet, I haven't had any contact with the rest of the Old Satan Bloc since, not Shalba, Creuserey or that whore Katerea. All the youngsters seem to be thoroughly cowed by the creature despite her seeming guise as a little human girl."

The sneer on Lucifer's lips at those words seemed to redouble when he said the term creature and then again at the human girl. It was hard to tell which he found the most offensive or which Rizevim looked down on more, but the sneering disdain he had for both terms was very obvious. And the look that he gave Cao-Cao implied that he, as a human, was also a source of some disdain for the ancient Devil.

And Rizevim was ancient. He was one of the sons of the original Lucifer, the leader of both the Fallen and Devil factions during the War of Heaven before he fell. Rizevim was one of the few Devils still alive who had fought in that war, although he had not taken part in the later war between the New and Old Satan Blocs. From what Cao-Cao knew, he hadn't been interested at all in leading his side of the conflict. *Which just makes me wonder what he's after now.*

Taking a sip from the wine that a servant offered him, he watched her for a second as the servant disappeared into the shadows behind Euclid. Not fast enough to hide the bruises and burn marks on her perfect skin, though.

Cao-Cao didn't care about that, though. He cared more about the disrespect that Rizevim was showing him and humankind.

"I am certain that you are a past expert at being cowed by those stronger than you. Or is there another reason why you are meeting with me at all? But perhaps I am wrong, and you have been training these past few decades to challenge the current Lucifer, Rizevim. If so, then have I wasted my time coming here?"

Rizevim's debonair manner faded, and an aura burst around him, causing the servant to squeak and move backward, pressing herself against the far wall behind Euclid. Rizevim rose to his feet, magical energies crackling around his hands. "You, you dare... I have had servants tortured for dusting my tables wrong, and you dare to speak to me so, **human?**"

But Cao-Cao stood firm, staring back at the man, his entire body language screaming insouciance, yet also readiness for a fight. In his mind, the image of his sacred gear, the True Longinus, hovered, ready to be called forth should he need it. Indeed, Cao-Cao had learned a little trick with that recently. *I cannot believe that it took me so long to realize that when I call forth my weapon, I can impart any momentum I need to it! Then, when this attack is passed, simply call it back to me. I will never admit it to her, but Le Fay had a point there. Even if the term one-shot is kind of too gamer-like for me.* "You might not wish to treat my race as equal to that of devil-kind, but you will treat me with respect, or we will not treat with one another at all."

For several moments, the two men simply glared at one another, then Cao-Cao decided he had enough of the posturing, simply sighed and shook his head, backing away slightly. "I... apologize. I realize that is a sore subject for you. But if you did not need my help, and I did not need yours, neither of us would be talking to one another right now. The fact that we **are** meeting like this means that we can both look past such petty matters in order to attain our goals. Euclid has worked on bringing us together like this for months. Let us not waste his work."

For a moment, Rizevim looked as if he would take umbrage at that statement, no matter how diplomatically Cao-Cao had put it. But then he shrugged his shoulders. "True enough. You are the one who has a way into the prison of Cocytus, but you need a distraction. Whereas I need some of my former followers freed so I can resume the war against the New Devil faction."

In actuality, that really wasn't Rizevim's motivation at all, as Cao-Cao suspected. Indeed, Rizevim would have been unpleasantly surprised at how much of his actual thinking Cao-Cao could pick up.

While he had been tricked many times by Nefertiti and the man he knew as Simon, Cao-Cao was actually a very good judge of character. Only literal thousands of years of constant

undercover work had allowed the pair of metamorphs to hide their true intentions from him. Rizevim had the years but not the experience. Rizevim himself might think himself a great disassembler, but there is an old saying about how your friends show what type of person an individual is. *Rizevim has no friends. He has no aspirations to lead. He left the Old Satan Faction in the lurch and only deals with the survivors as a lord would supplicants, not equals, which is why Katerea was so willing to talk about him to me.*

*He seeks only to destroy, to kill and torture as he believes devils ought, as he has done to his own family. Whatever is in Cocytus he wants will be something to help him in doing so. Further, he will always look down on me and humankind and will not only be on the lookout for betrayal, not just as a matter of course, but to also betray me in turn. So be it.*

Rizevim grumbled a bit, sitting back down on his sofa and taking the wine glass that the servant had set down before retreating. He looked at it carefully, then nodded grudgingly, saying that none of the wine had spilled before taking a sip. "I find it the height of sophistry that the Fallen and the Devils continue to use the same prison as if we are still back in the war against heaven when we have turned on one another the moment God Fell. Of course, the reasons for being imprisoned there have shifted over time, but even so."

He looked up at the still-standing Cao-Cao, sneering a little at the man's unwillingness to sit down in his presence. "I also find it amusing that you need my help at all. Has your Hero Faction among the chaos brigade shrunk so badly that you lack manpower now? Or have more people within the Khaos Brigade realized how foolishly naïve the idea of banishing all other races from Earth is? I honestly wonder sometimes who or what put that idea in your mind. I really do. As if any amount of skill or planning would be enough to let a human, even one with one of the Longinus, stand against those like myself or the gods that are still around out there."

"Cao-Cao's teeth clenched for a second in very real anger, but he was able to control himself, knowing Rizevim could not let a moment go by without at least sending a verbal barb someone's way. "While I still have the manpower, I lack heavy hitters besides myself and Hercules at this point. The swordsman Arthur Pendragon was part of my Hero Faction along with his sister, despite a personal friendship with Vali. But Le Fay is apparently working on something that will actually give Ophis what she desires: a way back into the Dimensional Gap. As such, Ophis has her nearby, and where one sibling goes, the other will follow. Arthur flatly refuses to leave his sister's side at this point, removing my most powerful companion."

Something about that caused Rizevim to laugh, shaking his head and looking over to his butler. "I wonder, could we have a sin of incest going on there? This Arthur fellow coveting his sister? I am well aware of that particular sin, as are you, aren't you, Euclid?"

Euclid blushed but did not look away. Instead, an almost manic look of longing mixed with hatred came over his handsome face as he thought of his sister, Grayfia. As if he wanted her, yet also hated Grayfia at the same time, which matched with what Cao-Cao had discerned

up to this point. Euclid venerated his sister, yet that veneration had shifted into hatred and a desire to dominate her when Grayfia had turned her colors in the war in the Devil's civil war.

*Ah, so Euclid too is broken inside. I had suspected, but this is proof. Devils. Ugh.* Shuddering slightly, Cao-Cao shook his head and decided to hit back a bit in honor of his friend. "In any event, I would not be able to provide enough heavy hitters to get the jailers within the prison to react unless I was to go to Vali. His own faction has taken a severe hit in terms of manpower as well, but Vali himself is still a heavy enough hitter that he could do that. But of course, you would know that, wouldn't you? I wonder how much of Vali's strength comes from his being a devil of the original Lucifer line, through you and his father, Divine Dividing, or his own training and upbringing among the Fallen after he fled from your tender mercies."

At this, Rizevim lunged to his feet, snarling and fury even more magic than before flaring up around his body. Yet underneath the anger at mentioning his son and how his grandson had run away from him and taken up with the Fallen, Cao-Cao could see some actual genuine hatred.

*He knows, doesn't he?* Cao-Cao observed, hiding his amusement with ease. *Rizevim knows that it is only a matter of time before Vali surpasses him. Before Vali decides he's strong enough to challenge his grandfather. And not a long time at all, either. I don't know much about Vali's upbringing among the Lucifer Clan beyond that it was brutal. And that was because of Rizevim and his belief that devils should be cruel and vicious to everyone around them, family or no.*

"Of course, he knows nothing of my plans. He too is wary of Ophis, but let us just say that Vali and I still have our own philosophical differences," Cao-Cao went on, seemingly unconcerned by the older man's display of anger. "Regardless, are we agreed on the plan we came up with through your go-between here? You will provide Euclid and a few of your other stronger fighters to draw away the prison guards. I get past the magical defenses on the prison and free a list of prisoners that you will supply me, along with my own target."

Still grinding his teeth angrily, Rizevim pointed to his butler, who came forward and very, very stiffly handed Cao-Cao a piece of parchment on which several names were written. "Descriptions will follow over the next few days via Euclid. And I will go into the prison with you. I do not, obviously, trust you."

Cao-Cao made it look as if that angered him for a moment, but after a few seconds of posturing, let it pass with a huff. "That is acceptable." Cao-Cao took the list, tucked it in his pocket, then bowed formally to the lord of the manor before stepping around the sofa and heading towards the door, Euclid moving quickly ahead of him to open it almost automatically.

But even as he did, Cao-Cao couldn't stop himself from getting one last dig in, still frustrated and furious at the reality of how small his faction within the Khaos Brigade had become and how his dream of an Earth free of supernatural Influence was impossible. "Vali is

still training every day you know. I am no longer certain I could take him even with the full power of the True Longinus. It would be fascinating to see who is stronger between you, and I have to wonder how much longer it will be before that match happens, whatever you do to try to stop it.”

“Get out!” Rizevim bellowed, coming around the sofa, magic once more flowing around his body, coalescing into an attack. “Get out!”

Cao-Cao left then, closing the door behind him and heading back the way he’d come through the mansion, whistling at the sound of wood splintering behind him and magical discharge, followed by the steps of Euclid rushing after him to escort him off the property. *Finally, something went right for a change.*

Euclid hastily returned to his master, finding him, leaning back on his sofa, the servant who had been serving him and Cao-Cao wine unconscious on the floor, her body marked with new bruises and magical burns. “Master, Cao-Cao is gone. He teleported out of Malebolge well beyond our wards, and I saw them take effect the moment he passed through them. He will have no further idea of where your mansion is than anyone else and soon will forget that it is even on Malebolge.”

“Good. That blasted human worked me up a bit, ugh.” Rizevim grunted, speaking as if he had just been a little irritated, not to the point of taking his anger out on one of his servants.

Euclid nodded, but he felt he had to bring up a point. “Do you think Cao-Cao will turn on us before or after we leave Cocytus?” That he would be a given, but it would not do to have that betrayal stop them from achieving his master’s goals.

“Perhaps, perhaps not. It doesn’t matter. So long as he truly knows a way through the wards around the prison without bringing all the current Maou down on our heads, I will be satisfied. After all, the list I gave him is fake. There are only two goals within Cocytus worth my time, and neither has anything to do with the so-called Malebranche that Shalba and Creuserey go on about,” Rizevim smirked, an unholy light suddenly burning in his eyes, a need for destruction and death that was literally inhuman. “Grandmother Lilith still has her uses, after all, and I alone know she is there at all. Gaining her freedom will be as easy as using her will be afterward. And the key. The key to the vault that God closed with his life and power. With that, with that, I will finally have the destruction and death I crave.”

Rizevim began to laugh then, as Euclid bowed in agreement. Neither noticed how the unconscious servant’s breathing had evened out. Or how one eye, its pupil’s suddenly catlike, had opened, locking on the back of Rizevim’s head before closing once more.

**OOOOOO**

While Rias was busy talking numbers and further grinding the Wumpus’s position into their collective heads and Cao-Cao made a deal with the original devil’s son, the final two

sleepers awoke at last in Danan. Asia and Harry woke up almost together, although Asia was feeling quite disoriented, wondering where she was and what had happened. Similarly, Harry woke up feeling somewhat as if he was hung over and like his body hadn't moved in a long while. But other than that, almost back to normal.

Opening his eyes, Harry found Asia splayed out on the bed beside him to one side, the blanket tossed off the other side as if someone had recently left the bed and hadn't bothered to return and make it up again. *Yubelluna or Yasaka I suppose. They both were involved in the miracle Asia tried to create, I think... yeah, yeah, I remember that...*

Sudden worry hit him then, as the last thing he remembered seeing was the rings of Dawn Healing shattering from around Asia's fingers. Harry nearly sat up, but not realizing that Asia was already awake, he stilled, instead activating his mage sight as he looked at Asia, trying to discern what he could.

Instantly, Harry got an impression of weakness of spirit or perhaps the soul. Harry was uncertain which fit better, but it certainly wasn't a purely physical thing, even if he could tell it had carried over into Asia's body. Yet despite that, Asia's aura gleamed, vibrant with energy, almost as bright as Lily's soul, and Harry wondered for a moment if that was because Asia was part demigod now. *The adoption rituals certainly made her a Potter, whatever that means now, and certainly doesn't mean a normal human. I wonder... I can tell something is different beyond that weakness. The infirmity will pass, I think, but that change... what could it mean?* While he had all the skills needed to see what was going on with Asia, like Akeno and Rias, he had never had to deal with someone soul-wounded before.

As he tried to struggle with what he was seeing, Asia stirred, looking up at him, a faint, warm smile on her face for a second. Then, her mind seemed to come back fully online, and she began to cry. This was not the cry of someone happy to be alive, either. No, these were the long, drawn-out sobs of someone who had just remembered something horrible.

Harry hastily pulled her into a hug, stroking her hair. "Easy, lovey. We've both been through an ordeal."

"Not enough!" Asia wailed, and Harry smiled wanly, knowing where his oldest daughter's mind had gone and feeling both proud and sad at the same time. "We weren't strong enough. How many, how many couldn't we save?"

Harry just hugged her for a moment, shaking his head slowly, remembering that he had something of this same conversation with Asia before, after the battle against Kokabiel and his legion. "Lovey, I've said it before, and I will keep saying it every time you need to hear it. You can't save everyone. No one can. Not even God can save everyone in Asia. You can only save those you can. And you saved thousands, maybe millions of lives with Dawn Healing, my dear. Far more than the rest of us could ever have done. Don't denigrate that! Don't ignore the effort we, you, me, Yube and Yasaka, put in by saying it wasn't enough."

Asia pouted, trying to look away, but Harry took his chin in his hand and turned her eyes to look up at him as he went on a bit more sternly but still just as compassionately. "We tried our best, we magically exhausted ourselves to an incredible degree. So much so that we both might have died, and you... you wounded yourself in a way I can't quite figure out. Remember, my magic, and yours are tied directly to our souls. Unlike other wizards, if we push magical exhaustion too far, we can die. We mortals can only do what we can, not an inch more."

For several minutes, Asia sniffled, her features shifting into a thoughtful look as she stared at Harry's chest. Then, as her sniffles began to subside, she looked back up at Harry, one eyebrow rising. "M, mortal? Are you sure that we Potters really count as that anymore, Father?"

"Well, perhaps not so much any longer," Harry admitted with a wan chuckle, pleased at the bit of humor there as Asia seemed to gather herself, still sad at how little, in her own mind, she had done to combat Akhenaten's evil, but listening to Harry and slowly moving past it. "But even with our greater power, there is only so much we can do. And you, lovey, you pushed yourself well beyond whatever anyone else could have asked you to do."

Harry explained the weakness he sensed in her, and Asia looked down at herself, turning a bit in Harry's arms to hold out her hand above them. For a moment, Harry wanted to stop her, knowing instinctively what Asia was trying to do and wondering what would come of it. *If our very souls were drained, then straining herself might be a very bad idea.*

He watched as Asia tried to concentrate on something for a few seconds before she shook her head, allowing her hand to fall back into her lap. Turning back towards him, she leaned deeper into Harry's side, putting her arms around his waist, only now making Harry realize that both of them were dressed in their pajamas.

Any thankfulness for the lack of embarrassment there fled as Asia spoke. "Dawn Healing is gone. I cannot feel it within me any longer."

*Is that what I could sense in her, that change on the soul-level? Damn, I, I suppose it makes sense. After all, while the Sacred Gears are tied to their wielders on that level. Ddraig and Issei are 'living' proof that regardless of that, the user and the Sacred Gear are separate. Further, if that wasn't the case, no Sacred Gear could have past users at all,* Harry thought before saying this aloud to Asia, slowly stroking her hair. "I'm sorry, lovey."

For a few moments, Asia looked completely lost, but then she squared her shoulders, and that sense of loss faded. It was as if she was facing something she couldn't do anything about and refused to let it get to her. "If Dawn Healing is gone, then it is gone. I will weep for its passing but will not allow it to stop me. I will simply have to find other ways to heal, other ways to help people."

"A doctor then, or perhaps Medi-witch? Harry encouraged her, smiling faintly and ruffling her hair again, proud of her attitude. "I suppose I could try to headhunt Madame Pomphrey to come and teach you."

Asia giggled at that, shaking her head with a laugh and, surprising Harry, had the strength to tease him in turn. "I am certain your former Headmistress has just felt a sudden desire to kill the nearest pot because of that sentence, Father."

Harry laughed at that, then gestured for Asia to the side of the bed. "Come on, let's see if there's anyone else here, and then get some food. I don't know about you, but I'm hungry."

Outside, Harry was surprised to find Kunou all on her own. None of the adults were there, nor Lily, something that made him somewhat concerned. Kunou was swimming around in the river, keeping away from where the rapids that would carry her down the river, instead staying in a small calm zone. As he watched, she ducked her upper body into the water, her tail wagging in the air whenever it appeared above the water.

Asia giggled lightly beside him, the last of her sadness leaving her for the moment. Harry wasn't so naïve as to think it wouldn't come back soon, but it was beyond the nature of the young blonde girl not to be cheered up by the sight of the little kitsune having fun.

"Gotcha!" Kunou reared her head back up out of the water, giggling excitedly as she held a large fish in her arms. It looked like a largish catfish mixed with something else and almost seemed to be smiling even as it wiggled in the young girl's grip.

Kunou took a single sniff of the air, turned, dropped the fish back into the water with a splash, and leaped out onto the nearest rock, then up into Harry's arms. "Tou-san, you're awake!"

Smiling widely at that, as it had taken Kunou a while to get used to the idea of Harry being her father, Harry gathered her into his arms, hugging the young kitsune back just as tightly, rubbing his cheek against hers and surreptitiously using a drying charm on her even as his own clothes got a little wet. "Hey lovey, have you been alone here long?"

Kunou nuzzled into his neck and didn't seem to have heard the question for a bit, making Harry repeat it as he turned and made his way back into the main house again and then down into the kitchen. After a little bit, Kunou pulled back, frowning thoughtfully, her eyes widening a bit as she looked up at the sky. "Woo, it looks like it's past midday! I hadn't noticed. Er... I've been alone most of the day, dad. We were woken up really early this morning, first by Yube waking up, and then later, we got a fairy from Tir Na Nog saying that they had to move two golems ready to go through to Egypt, so Lily left to bring them all through to Alexandria."

"You're going to have to tell me what's been going on in Egypt since Asia and I knocked ourselves out with that massive enchantment of ours. But I'm surprised that Yube didn't want to stay with you," Harry said mildly. Actually, he was a little annoyed. Yes, this island was the very definition of safe from any actual enemy on many different levels. But that didn't mean there weren't any natural dangers a young girl could run into. He knew that it wasn't likely either, but still.



“Yube-san didn’t want to go, but I told her she should. Yube could be a lot more help there than staying here with me after all, and I’m a big girl,” Kunou said, pushing away from Harry or rather trying to, but Harry refused to let her go for a bit, and she quickly snuggled back enough into his arms. He had been sleeping the sleep of the dead for several weeks by her time, after all. “And Lily said that she would be checking in with some of the kids there, introducing them to the golems, and then coming back with some Egyptian food. They have some really spicy stuff!”

Harry chuckled quietly at that, then asked if Yube had at least cooked some meals for her, which Kunou answered in the affirmative. Harry set her down but was not surprised when she scrambled back up his leg and onto his shoulders, perching there. Once she was comfortable, Harry began to make up a meal for himself and the two girls from the stuff that Yubelluna had left behind, plying Kunou with questions about what was going on in Egypt since he and Asia had exerted themselves so much.

The answer was quite a lot. Thankfully, Lily had kept Kunou in the loop for a lot of it, even the stuff that Kunou herself hadn’t seen when she came through with Lily and Yasaka. And the two girls had spent a good portion of the early morning explaining to Yube what was going on, so it wasn’t all that difficult going over the same thing again.

“...So, the dwarves are able to make a few golems every few days here in Danan time since they decided to strip out the weapons. The golems’re still strong, and they’re the latest models, the ones with voices and everything else. We figure since they’re such a kick with the kids over there, that maybe having a lot more of those types around to help keep the peace will...” Kunou paused trying to think of the word she wanted, then shrugged. “They’ll just take over stuff for the other types of golems, and they’ll be allowed to move out into the wilder areas beyond the area called the Potter Triangle.”

While Kunou giggled a bit at the name with Asia, Harry nodded at that, and made a point of the need to think up something nice for the dwarves in the future. While they had been sort of obligated to back up Harry and Luna and their efforts in Egypt, after the conflict portion of that disaster was over, they hadn’t needed to continue to put forth their aid in this manner. That they did spoke well of them, but Harry knew that King Stonebreaker would need to be repaid in some fashion. *He’s not the only one that is true for. The Indian Aurors that have seemingly come forth in numbers thanks to Ramagupta, the Shinsengumi and their government, Luna, Sona, and Yasaka. The list goes on.*

After the trio had an extremely hearty breakfast, with Asia and Harry practically gobbling up everything in sight, finishing off in one sitting the three meals' worth of prepared food Yubelluna had left behind, Harry asked Kunou if she wanted to come with them through to Egypt, and she eagerly agreed. Harry didn’t want to leave her behind again, and he figured that Egypt was about as safe as it was possible to get at this point. The trio trooped up the mountain

to the fal stone set into the rim of the caldera there, and Harry touched the stone, frowning in surprise. "I thought you said that Lily said the time difference was one-to-one?"

"Yep! She said she'd want to keep it that way for a bit because she thought you and Asia would hopefully wake up soon." Kunou chirped, unable to sense what had surprised Harry.

"It isn't. It's set at 1 to 5. One hour over there for every five here," Harry answered. "A part of me is happy that Lily's been able to manipulate the enchantment to such a degree, but another part of me is wondering why she did so." In fact, it almost made him think he should leave Kunou behind as well as Asia, but he didn't, figuring that whatever Lily was doing, it was due to a broader issue rather than an immediate danger.

The trio appeared in the hotel room where the fal stone was. At first glance, no one was around, but then a weak voice called out from one of the bedrooms. "Asia!"

While it was a shout, it was from a throat that had already screamed itself hoarse and could barely be heard out in the main room. But all three of the newcomers heard it still and turned in that direction, staring through the open door into the bedroom to see Kala trying to push herself out of the bed, her body twitching and shaking in a way that Harry recognized. *She's been hit by the Crucio curse! What the hell?*

Harry knew that for members of the three factions, in the main, the three Unforgivables were the only way wizards could really fight on anything like an equal footing. All three Unforgivables targeted the soul, which bypassed much of the greater magical resistance that Devils, Fallen and Angels naturally had. It was only as they grew stronger, mid-to-high tier range devils or their equivalent, that they developed a resistance to attacks on the soul. Kala, for all the skill at blacksmithing and runes she had developed since becoming part of the clan, was still only a two-wing-pair Fallen.

Just as Harry realized what Kala was dealing with, something else grabbed at his senses. Not just grabbed but **latched** onto his senses like a hook on a fish, and he stumbled between one step in the next, his head whipping around to stare out the patio door and beyond towards where he knew the river Nile was. *Wh, what in the bloody heck!?*

Not noticing Harry's sudden halt, Asia pulled ahead, racing towards Kala, followed by Kunou. Harry stood there, motionless, trying to fight against the tug of something, the blessing in the Nile pulsing, throbbing, as if someone had flashed a lightbulb in his eyes, grabbing at his entire being and demanding his attention, **demanding** he go to it, to **finish** something. What it was, Harry couldn't tell, not from here, but it was almost filling his magical senses, and it took all his willpower not to immediately turn in that direction, to obey the compulsion.

But Harry was extremely stubborn and was able to, eventually, push through whatever that feeling was, shunting it aside so he could concentrate on the here and now. *That is going to get irritating quickly, but the more it tugs at me, the more I want to ignore it to concentrate on things I know are more important.*

When she reached the bed, Asia tried to say something, but Kala grabbed her and pulled her into a hug, a weak one, but a very heartfelt one despite that. Asia clung back to her, feeling the older woman shaking in her arms, wishing, despite her earlier thoughts on this score, that she still had Dawn Healing. "You're all right!" Kala whispered. "Thank Father!"

As Asia tried to babble questions about her own injuries, Kala pushed Asia slowly away to get a better look at her. Like Harry had earlier that day, she could see that Asia was still a bit sickly, much weaker in body than she should be. But in comparison to the way Asia had been before Lily took all the sick people to Danan, Asia was the bloom of good health. It looked as if she had lost a large chunk of her endurance and might never get it back, and her body was far frailer than Kala would like to see, almost ethereal in a way. But otherwise, Asia would recover in time as best as someone who had been soul-injured could.

*Thank you, Father, for letting Cú be right that she would recover!* Kala had no doubt that Asia was changed from the experience, and that Dawn Healing was probably gone, but apparently her Potter blood had seen her through the damage done to her soul.

Having shaken off the siren call of whatever was going on with the Nile, Harry entered the bedroom, reaching over Asia and placing a hand gently on Kala's shoulder. "Lay back, love. I've been Crucio'd myself a time or two, and I know there's no real cure for it but time and rest. I know you're happy to see Asia, but you can see her just as well laying down."

Kala flushed a bit at the love and concern she saw there. Despite the time they'd spent together, she still wasn't so used to seeing that amount of love rather than lust in a man's gaze. She didn't argue, letting Harry push her back down on the bed as Asia fussed over her, trying to figure out what was wrong. Harry quickly explained, causing Asia to subside, but she didn't leave the older woman's sight, nor did Kala seem in any great hurry to release her own grip over Asia's shoulders.

As she settled down, Asia surprised Harry by frowning and turning a bit to look in the direction he had been looking earlier, the direction of the Nile. "You feel that too?"

"I feel as if I am being called in that direction, Father. I do not know what it is," Asia answered, pulling away slightly from Kala before looking back down at her and burrowing back in, resolutely not looking in the direction of the Nile. "But whatever it is, there are more important matters, regardless of what that tugging is about."

"I agree. I'm proud you are able to push through it. It took me by surprise a few moments ago," Harry answered.

Kala spoke up then, nuzzling into Asia's hair for a second. "Lily felt it, too. Almost strong enough to make her go a little crazy, apparently. Yasaka and Rias went to examine the river, and Yasaka's sage senses were able to tell her that there was something deific going on. The blessing on the river has been empowered tremendously, according to her, and something new has been added in as well. What that could be, we don't know."

“Interesting, but as Asia pointed out, there are more important things going on. Namely, your injury. What happened?” Harry asked as his other hand rested on Asia’s shoulder gently pulling her back, only for Asia not to move, instead shifting around Kala to the other side of the bed and crawling onto the bed beside her, hugging her tightly.

Kala’s arms wound around the other girl as she explained, causing Harry to stand stock still for a moment, his face twitching as he tried hard not to explode in anger at the very idea of what had happened. The knowledge that Rias had already launched a... well, Harry couldn’t call it an invasion really, more like a decapitation strike, more like removing the king in chess, allowed him to push through it, but still. “Wizards and witches, I swear, the older they get, the more they lose their common sense! I can almost understand the Wumpus taking council from their fears, given how much the Statute of Secrecy is thought of as a natural law or religion among wizards. But even so, to not even consult with the people on the ground, to not even talk to us beforehand? That was gross stupidity on a level that probably undid all of the good work you and the rest of been doing since the actual fighting ended.”

“But aren’t you a wizard too, Tou-san? Does that mean when you start to get older, we’ll have to watch out for you being stupid?” Kunou asked innocently, a pure kitsune smirk on her face. She hadn’t followed everything that Kala had explained, but she had followed enough of it to know what had happened and was eager to lighten the mood.

“Hush, you don’t get to pull the logic card on me, young lady,” Harry said, ruffling her ears and making the young kitsune chitter happily, the sound causing Harry to lose much of his anger. Turning back, he asked Kalawarner if the locals and the magical side of things were still using the same command center and if she knew where Lily was.

She did. Lily had come in from Danan right on the heels of Kala being dropped off in the hotel by Yasaka. At that point, the locals were still sifting through the damages and wreckage made by the Hit Wizard assault. Knowing she wouldn’t have much to contribute on a large-scale to that effort, Kala had convinced Lily to check in with the orphanage, which had been just half a block away from the farthest edge of the fight against the Hit Wizards. Given the number of wounded and the number of houses destroyed in an area of the city that had already been mainly repaired from the earlier fighting, the orphanage had become the center of the displaced families for now. Lily had agreed, and she and the two golems with her had left, heading in that direction. Kala gave Harry some instructions, and with Asia deciding to stay with Kala, Harry and Kunou left, and the young fox girl once more perched on Harry’s shoulder.

Upon exiting the room and heading towards the elevator, Harry found two dwarves on duty at the elevator entrance, well within striking range of anyone trying to exit the elevator, with large shields and single-bladed axes gleaming to his mage sight. Both stiffened at his appearance but recognized Harry instantly, thumping their fists against their chests in salute. “Thank you for defending Kala, gentlemen. I don’t suppose you have a means of contacting someone at the command center?”

“We do, High King.” One of the dwarves handed Harry an actual handheld radio rather than any magical communication device, and Harry’s eyebrows rose.

Seeing his confusion, Kunou giggled into his ear. “The dwarves love technology and stuff like that. It doesn’t surprise me that they’re using regular radios now that they can instead of the leprechauns and their pins.”

“Aye, well...” One of the dwarves muttered while his fellow looked up at the ceiling, whistling cheerily, acting as if he hadn’t heard what Kunou had said. “There’s something to that. There’s also the fact that all the leprechauns in the city are already in use elsewhere. It might not be as fascinating as cars or planes, but the artistry that goes into even these simple radios is amazing!”

Chuckling at that and deciding that maybe getting the dwarves in touch with technical teachers or engineering professors might be interesting, Harry brought the radio up to his mouth. “Command center, this is Harry Potter. I’m back.”

There was a lot of noise on the other end of the radio, cheering and shouting, but Sala’s voice overrode it all, coming through clearly. “Praise Allah! You have been missed, Harry! You’re at the hotel, correct? I’ll get a jeep over to you instantly.”

“I’ve been told Lily is at the orphanage, so I was going to head there first,” Harry demurred. “And I would wager that I could get to your command center faster over the rooftops anyway.”

Harry also had an ulterior motive, if it could be called that, to check on the kids at the orphanage. The fact of the matter was, despite how long the Wizarding World had been around, so too had firstborn boys and girls born into non-magical families, born with that mystical energy with no genetic way of explaining where it came from. But one thing had been known since Grindelwald’s war, and that was that having a heavy concentration of magic nearby, be it spell residue left after a major battle, living near a heavily warded area, or within the zone of a major enchantment as it went off, could somehow create the ability within children of a certain age or younger, and particularly in babies. *Everything that happened here in Egypt, from the so-called Harvest to the final Culling, makes everything that occurred during the war against Grindelwald seem small and insignificant in comparison.*

“True enough, but then you wouldn’t be seen by nearly as many. And I think you **need** to be seen, Harry. Have you been told about the latest... Issue?” When Harry answered in the affirmative, Sala went on. “I think it might be good for people in the city to see you and us all being friendly. “And dare I ask if young Asia is with you? Seeing her might be even more important.”

“Asia is well, but I’m afraid she isn’t with me. She doesn’t want to leave Kala’s side just yet. And frankly I think she would find the entire idea of being put on display like that terrifying.

I find it mildly annoying myself, but I can see your point,” Harry grumbled a bit. “Meet me at the orphanage, then.”

“Excellent. I know that a few of my own sons are helping out there, and I believe my wife also might’ve stopped in. Since I haven’t spoken to her since introducing you to her at the tail end of the initial fight here in Alexandria, it might be good to stop in and remind her I’m still alive,” Sala answered.

Harry had to laugh at that, even as he pondered the idiocy of what he had been told by Kala again. *Seriously, did those old bastards have any idea about the numbers here? Even if they had just been fighting the local non-magicals, they would have been facing a losing proposition against a non-magical army that knew most of their tricks and was able to react in time to get organized to face the attack. Whoever decided on a brute force method like that should have their head examined. Which I assume Rias is already seeing, too, bless her.*

The thought was both a proud and complacent one. When it came to politics and business, Harry knew that Rias was head and shoulders above himself even after he had begun to reluctantly learn how politics was played since meeting the redhead. There was a big difference between being an extremely reluctant political figure like Harry and one who had been literally raised from the cradle to examine politics and her own place in them as Rias had.

Harry was surprised to see there were still a lot of people around, even this late at night. Most of them were soldiers, moving around the area on guard or taking pictures and marking down information on maps. Several of them turned to Harry, quickly bringing up their guns before pausing as they recognized either Harry himself or the little fox girl on his shoulder. News of his arrival hadn’t spread that far yet, but it began to do so now.

He waved at them amiably, moving on quickly, having no desire to get involved in sporadic discussions with strangers at the moment, wanting to find Lily first. That, and it was taking a large amount of his concentration to ignore the demand for his attention coming from the river, which had not gone away. It was still there, insistently pulling at his mind and senses in a way he had never dealt with before.

However, as he walked, it became easier to, if not ignore it, then at least think past it, and eventually, Harry and Kunou found themselves at the orphanage. There, they found one of the advanced golem types on guard outside the entrance.

Its eyes locked on Harry, examining him before it brought one large, oversized fist into contact with its equally oversized chest. “User Potter recognized! Welcome, High King.”

“Now, is that part of your programming? Or is that an actual response on your part?” Harry asked, cocking his head to one side as Kunou did the same above him, looking at the golem with interest. It wasn’t the first time Harry had seen this model, but it was the first time he’d been able to interact with one.

“It is both. You are in our databanks as a registered user, and we recognize you as the high King of where we were initially created,” the golem answered, surprising Harry a little bit with how verbose it was.

Not that that was a bad thing. In fact, Harry was quietly pleased. *Magic is a fascinating thing, and if we have brought life into being in some measure, then not only are the implications of that staggering, but it is going to be amazing to discover.*

“Well, what can you tell me of what has been going on here?” Harry asked, pausing before entering the orphanage itself.

“Since the trouble with the wizards, there have been four attempts by individuals unknown to the children attempting to convince the matriarch and patriarch of the orphanage to let them leave with specific children. As they were unknown, they were repelled. There was an attempt on this unit, which the children have named Gearhead, to do it damage. They failed. Further attempts by two young men initially here to help the families displaced in the fighting around the magical quarter to get into the area of the orphanage reserved for preteen girls were thwarted by one of my fellows. We were not gentle in our ejection of any of the individuals.” Gearhead answered, sounding strangely proud of his new name.

Harry smiled at that, laid a hand on his shoulder, and said glibly, “As well you shouldn’t. Protection of the innocent should always take priority.”

Gearhead couldn’t further straighten his(?) shoulders, but his eyes gleamed with even brighter energy for a moment as Harry entered the building. “Affirmative.”

Since the kids had mostly been woken up by the sounds of the battle elsewhere in the city, very few of the original kids in the orphanage had gone back to sleep, and most were outside. The kids were either playing games, talking quietly or, if they were teens, helping out elsewhere in the orphanage with younger children. In the center of the area, one of the other golems stood, raising a child up on one hand, while others climbed all over its lower legs and up its body as if the entire golem was a jungle gym of some kind. It was quite amusing to look at, admittedly.

Harry was utterly unsurprised to see that one of the girls climbing the amalgamation was his daughter. “Lily,” he called, gaining both his daughter’s attention and the attention of the adults around the area, who turned and stared, with more than one of them curtsying or going to his knee as a few of the soldiers Harry had met earlier had.

“Daddy! You’re awake! About time!” Lily shouted, leaping down from the golem, landing and rolling as she did, coming up and racing towards Harry before leaping up into his arms.

Harry caught her, hugging her tightly for a few seconds, before putting her on his shoulder opposite Kunou as she babbled, introducing the golem in the center of the area as Calibretto, and then pointing out several of the kids, including two she introduced as, “And

that's Mihal and Nadal, Sala's kids. Their Mother's in the kitchen helping the cooks whip up breakfast. She says that since the sun's already up, there's no point in letting the kids try to go back to sleep. Best to get them up and doing, she says."

"Sounds like a wise woman, your mother," Harry said, smiling at both young teens, shaking their hands. He vaguely recognized them from the brood that Sala had introduced him to directly after the initial round of fighting had ended in Alexandria, but that seemed almost like a lifetime ago. Both of them looked back at him, awe in their faces, but eagerly shaking his hand, some of the awe fading, replaced by bright smiles.

With both young girls now perched on his shoulders, Harry met with the orphanage managers, making sure, as Rias had, that the children and the displaced families were all being looked after and then looking over the kids, examining the children with mage sight. He came away smiling faintly. *Well, that at least will make my later sales pitch easier.*

The mayor had apparently been concerned about the orphanage's enlarged duties too, as he had sent over for workers to integrate the orphanage into a wider program to make certain that families who had lost their homes and whose homes and yet to be repaired were getting enough food and shelter going forward. Harry hoped that the same was going on elsewhere, at least in the area called the Potter Triangle, as even with magic, it would probably take a while to fully repair the damages done to even that area, let alone Egypt as a whole.

As they exited that meeting and made their way towards the entrance that would take them back outside, where Harry would meet Sala and whoever else he had brought along, Harry asked Lily if she had felt the tug towards the river. Reminded of that incident, Lily shivered a bit. "I did. I didn't like it. It's so loud, it kind of drowns out everything else, and I really don't... it's a bit too big and too loud and..."

"I understand, love. But we will have to do something about it one way or the other, know that I am here. After talking to Sala, but sometime soon, certainly."

Lily pouted at the idea, clinging to her father's head from one side for a moment before sighing and nodding. She and Kunou both waved at Gearhead as they exited, the golem waving back, and Harry was not surprised to find one of the local jeeps waiting for him, with Sala sitting in the back. "I thought you were going to make certain your wife knew you're still alive before we did anything else?"

Sala laughed as he hopped out, letting Harry and the others hop back in before he followed, putting both girls between the two men with the ease of someone with his own children. "I did that while you were having your meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Gwanzi and the mayor's little helpers. I was even able to steal a bit of her food, too," he said, patting his stomach, causing both little girls to laugh while the Jeep began to move.

"Where is Yasaka and the rest? And how are relations between the magicals and the non-magicals after Hit Wizard assault?"



“That didn’t hurt our current relations as you might think. When we finally understood the main cause was a changeover in who was leading the Wizarding World’s government, a lot of the initial anger faded,” Sala chuckled darkly. “This is Egypt, my friend. We are used to transitions of power being very rocky indeed and policy changing with the party in power. There is still a lot of anger against magic and the magical world in general. We will certainly demand reparations for that assault just as we will for not having done enough to stop Nefertiti and Akhenaten in the first place. But it didn’t add overmuch to the outright hatred that many are feeling towards you magicals.” He paused, then shook his head sadly. “That hatred was already rising to a boiling point well before that.”

Wincing, Harry let Sala talk, explaining more about the troubles they’d run into on that score, the various flareups, and the underlying feelings towards wizards. “Thankfully, none of that really is splashing onto you and young Asia or, at this point, your wife. Everyone who was revived by you and Asia knows they owe their life to someone, as do the people who heard your voice or saw your water spear shatter the nearest pillar. Communications are still an issue in some places further south and west along the Nile, but regardless of that, both of you are the source of a lot of awe and respect, even veneration, both inside and outside the Potter Triangle.”

Sala wouldn’t call it worship at this point, although it very much had been something of the sort directly before and after Asia’s Miracle. Sala could easily remember how he had prayed to Allah to give the young girl the strength to do what she was trying, to bring back the dead throughout Egypt. That it worked even to the degree it had, bringing back millions of individuals on top of Harry’s work destroying the pillars? Sala would be unsurprised if someone told him that there were people who were actually fully prepared to worship Harry, even here in Alexandria.

On the other hand, he was also extremely grateful to see the look of consternation and worry on Harry’s expression now. It was very evident that, unlike the two who had set all this in motion, the idea of being worshipped by people did not appeal to Harry at all. *What is that phrase that my eldest is always quoting from fantasy novels? Those who want power are always the last ones who should have it? If so, perhaps the opposite is also true.*

Looking around them as they traveled through the city, Harry examined the faces of the people. And when he saw them look their way, Harry saw the same things. The shock of recognition, the delight, the awe, respect veering into adoration even some outright worship. It was like being the Boy Who Lived again, only magnified a dozen times. It made him uncomfortable, but at the same time, he could not, unlike when he was the Boy Who Lived, argue that he hadn’t done something to earn this. Between them, Yasaka, Yubelluna, Harry and Asia had created a **Miracle**, a deific Blessing on a scale that had rarely been seen in the world, even in the age of the gods. Even the original Blessing on the Nile, which Harry had found so amazing and fascinating, paled in comparison to what Asia and Dawn Healing had contrived.

*Speaking of which...* “I don’t suppose you would be willing to assign a squad or maybe even a full company of your soldiers to guard Asia, would you? I’m kind of concerned that the moment Asia steps out of the hotel, she’s going to be mobbed.”

Lily growled at the idea while Sala chuckled wanly. “I would not worry overmuch about the mob hurting her, but perhaps crowding her a little too much could be a concern.” He glanced at Lily and Harry as both of them twitched when the Jeep passed through an intersection with a road that led directly to the Nile, frowning a little at that before going on. “But I can certainly assign a company to watch over her. And perhaps one of the golems, too.”

“I’ve already asked the dwarves, and I doubt that Kala will let Asia out of her side despite how tired she is. The golem is a good idea as backup, though,” Harry nodded, thanking the man.

For the next hour, Harry and Lily both ignored the pull from the Nile as Sala took them to various places around the city. He didn’t introduce Harry to the mayor or any of the other notables. They would be gathering at the command center, and that would be the last stop on this little trip. Rather, Harry was simply being introduced to various normal people, people who had stepped forward to take charge or to help organize the multiple projects going on within the city. At each stop, Harry saw the same looks in the people’s eyes, the same veneration and respect.

Luna was at one such place, the airport, where she was in the very unusual position of mediator in an argument between the dwarves and some locals about some of the planes. The dwarves were adamant that if they helped repair one, they should get one in return, while the locals were just as adamant that they shouldn’t.

After Harry had stepped in and helped sort out that little argument, Luna pulled him aside, looking up at him expectantly, a small smile on her face of both commiseration and triumph. Harry looked at that smile and sighed. “You know, a Ravenclaw like you shouldn’t be so smug about being proven right. You should be used to it by now.”

“I am, but that doesn’t make it any less fun every time, my Captain~,” the queen of the Summer Court Fae answered teasingly before becoming serious, showing him a newspaper, the front page of which had two headlines, each of them showing disasters that had occurred in the past few days elsewhere in the world. “And the storm is still building, Harry Potter. Only the finest of captains can see us through.”

At that, Harry remembered the euphemism that she had used after explaining what she saw of the future to Harry, Rias and the rest of them in the Land Rover in London. Harry looked away from her for a few seconds, staring out towards where the dawn was just beginning to send the first rays of light over the horizon in the distance. He stayed silent for several seconds, listening to the dwarves and the locals chatter excitedly about which transport plane was closest to completion while Lily and Kunou engaged Luna in a conversation about Tir Na Nog and Newt, who was apparently planning out the new Fae capital city there.

Finally, he sighed, straightened his shoulders, and turned back to Luna, catching her eyes for a second to nod. *So be it. If fate has thrust me into this position, then I can no longer fight it. But I am to lead these people, I will captain this ship my way. Not that of a god, not that of an infallible heroic figure, but as Harry Potter. No matter how powerful I become, that will not change.*

As Luna grinned at him, Harry gently tapped Lily and Kunou on the shoulder to get them moving back towards the Jeep, staring at Sala, who had stayed in the Jeep to talk quietly on the radio to someone. He nodded at Harry, ending his conversation as the little family got back into the vehicle. "Tell me, has Rias spoken to you and the rest of the high command here in Egypt about the future?"

"She hinted about some things," Sala nodded. "Nothing specific, though."

"Well, I have a proposal, and I'd like to get your impression about it."

Moments later, the laugh of utter delight that Sala released as the Jeep continued to travel through Alexandria almost did as much to bolster the morale of those who heard it as seeing Harry Potter back did.

For the rest of the morning, Harry and Sala drove around Alexandria. During this time, he was also able to meet up with Akeno, Yubelluna, Yasaka and the others, who took time out of their own duties to meet with the Potter patriarch. The only exception was Tonks, who was out on a mission well down past even Cairo, hunting down an Auror who had apparently just walked into a bank and taken their gold reserves. Unable to get through to the Floo and with Portkeys impossible, he had done a runner the old-fashioned way, and Tonks and a few leprechauns had been assigned to hunt him down.

Needless to say, his moments with Akeno, Yasaka and Yube were both fulsome and extremely private. So ecstatic was she to see him up and about that, Akeno nearly pushed him down right there in public. Thankfully, she was restrained by both Harry himself and Kiba, who she was with at the time. After several long moments of making out though, she had calmed down enough to realize that now was not the time for more.

Yube was more discreet with her own greeting but just as fulsome when the two of them got a bit of privacy, so much so Harry's lips were bruised to the point it took their lips a few seconds to heal. Between kisses, she reminded Harry pointedly of the promise that he had made her before all this began before asking about Asia and his general health. That the two of them would be going on a date, and possibly taking a step forward in their relationship after everything here with the ICW and Egypt were cleared up.

For her part, Yasaka simply joined the pair of fathers in their trip around Alexandria as it was the most natural thing in the world, putting her daughter in her lap and talking to Sala about his own daughters, his fears and concerns, while her hand gripped Harry's. Of his ladies, the Kitsune Sage seemed to have taken his convalescence the most easily, knowing that Harry

had simply been magically exhausted to an insane degree rather than being soul-hurt as Asia had.

Of course, Harry didn't meet with just his prospective wives. He met with all the other magicals: Husukai, Proudfoot, Kiba, Sona and so forth. He also had a request to make of Tiamat, who agreed, and Lily and Akeno returned to the hotel, leaving Harry to continue on his way with Sala.

He even met with the two young exorcists and the Aza'imi, even Dulio, whose condition had not gotten much better, his soul being very, very slow to heal itself from the wound it had been dealt. As for Irina and Xenovia, Harry was honestly astonished the pair of them had lived through everything and very happy they had. Saving them from the harvest would be a major feather in their cap with the church, and frankly, while Harry had a problem with them originally, both girls had grown since then, and he was pleased that they had survived at all. Xenovia's overall attitude and shell-shocked look worried him the most out of all the Aza'imi, easily recognizing post-traumatic stress disorder in the young girl. He had seen several times during the war against Voldemort, both among Death Eater victims and his own allies.

But there was nothing he could do for her right now. Thankfully, she seemed to have followed Irina's lead in clinging to Issei recently. Both exorcists and the few surviving Aza'imi had also thrown themselves into helping with the reconstruction efforts as best they could alongside Issei. The young self-proclaimed harem king had changed for the better in a major way since Harry had first met him and his two perverted friends back in Kuoh Academy and might well be on his way to fulfilling that dream if the two exorcists decided to leave the church, as Xenovia hinted, she might in her brief meeting with Harry. She didn't outright ask for asylum, but it definitely sounded like that was on the cards.

As Harry went, he continued to ignore the call of the Nile despite the increasingly loud clarion call coming from whatever was going on there. But he did ask Yasaka about it, having been told by Lily about her own experiences with whatever it was.

Sadly, Yasaka was no help, simply telling him the same thing that Lily did with more detail. That it was a Blessing, that it was possibly part of the original blessing on the Nile, and that it was powerful. "It's also a Blessing. I feel as if that needs to be repeated, Harry-han. While I understand why you are ignoring it, for now, a blessing **cannot** be something evil or harmful. It is against the very nature of that type of deific magic."

"I know, but something about it, something about it bothers me. I can already tell that the original Blessing has changed, and whatever is going on isn't meant to be happening. Let me meet with the interim government here, calm things down a bit, and then myself, Asia and Lily will deal with it."

Yasaka's eyebrows rose at that, and she crossed one magnificent leg over the other, leaning back in the seat of the large Humvee-like truck that they had shifted to when they left

Alexandria. With the inclusion of Yasaka, there hadn't been enough room for two adults and two kids in the back of the Jeep, so they had found a roofless Humvee to switch into, the back two rows of which had been situated so that they faced one another. This left Mikal, Sala's boy and a soldier named Esa up front, while Sala sat with Harry, the Kunou and Yasaka.

Not that that was as important to Harry right now as the glimpse of creamy thigh that he had just gotten from Yasaka's movement. She still wore a light yukata as she would back in Japan, and while moving and walking around, she was the picture of Japanese elegance. But elegant Japanese ladies wearing yukatas did not cross their legs like that, and Harry had to fight his eyes to get them back to looking up at her face.

Smirking a little bit at Harry's sudden shift of attention, Yasaka continued her tone first teasing, then thoughtful. "You'll have more than enough time for thoughts like that later on, Harry. But for now, do you think you will need Asia and Lily there?"

Harry opened his mouth, then closed it, thinking about why he had mentioned his two daughters. *My two blood daughters, anyway.* He also considered Koneko a daughter as well, but for some reason Harry knew she didn't need to be there for this. *And why did the phrase blood daughters come to my mind just now?* He wanted to ask Yasaka suddenly if she thought that demigods could have the equivalent of a human's instinctual knowledge of something when their minds could not really process what was going on. Like even babies knew water was wet, and loud noises were bad. *Is this something similar?*

But he didn't. Now wasn't the time for that, just as it wasn't time for Harry to concentrate on how much he wanted to have Yasaka in his lap rather than watch Kunou sit in hers. "It felt right for some reason," he said instead, frowning further internally as he followed that line of thought - the line about his daughters of blood, not his desire for Yasaka - to its natural conclusion. *After all, in a way, you could say we are our own little pantheon, aren't we?*

At around midmorning, Sala left the others. Having met with the military officers in the other two large cities along with Harry to discuss the proposal he wanted to put forth, Sala returned to Alexandria to make arrangements. Harry, with his own driver in the form of Sala's oldest son, Chala, began to branch out through Rias's portals, heading to various towns and villages, Damietta, Damanhur and even beyond.

Wherever Harry went, his presence bolstered spirits. Part of this was the memory of his words during the disaster, the artificial sun he had created in particular doing a lot to help keep people within its radiance going. Part of it was knowing he had been involved in Asia's Miracle, something millions owed their lives to. But Harry's aura also did a lot, uplifting spirits and cutting into the fermenting anger the locals had begun to feel towards the mystical world in general. It was still there, but wherever Harry passed through, it lessened.

Harry's last formal meeting before heading back to Alexandria was with Rama in Cairo. Rama had gone out to the former capital – there were already talks of moving the capital of

Egypt to Alexandria, given how few people had survived there - eighteen minutes before Harry had come through the portal. Working on a lack of sleep and a Pepper up potion, Rama had been sent to explain what had gone on in Alexandria to Nasseem and the command team there, backed by several of his own people. They had gone expecting trouble from several of the Aurors assigned to Cairo.

These were mostly men and women from the United Kingdom who had been expressing anti-muggle sentiments both before and after their assignment there. Luckily, Rama had been able to sit on them, so no further trouble occurred there.

Of slightly more trouble was Nasseem's response to the news of the ICW assault. As Rias had thought since assigning the man there, he was both troublesome to deal with and exceedingly competent. Nasseem could not be simply removed from his assumed position. He had attempted to make trouble from their end, pointing out how much of the disaster in Egypt was the fault of the magicals, trying to stir up more anti-magical sentiment, using it to bolster his own position as one of the few in the interim government that would speak out against the wizards so he could push to take over in the future.

However, this backfired badly because he had not been specific enough in his denunciations, and many of his people believed he was also attacking Harry and Asia. Despite the fact that they hadn't been involved in the reconstruction efforts, the two Potters were well known to everyone who had lived through the disaster caused by Akhenaten and Nefertiti, and many knew they had one or the other to thank for living through the ordeal. Indeed, Asia had something of a following among the people of Egypt. Several Coptics had attempted to storm his office building, intent on lynching the man for denigrating the great miracle of Saint Asia.

When Harry had first heard that title, he had groaned aloud, knowing precisely how embarrassed and horrified Asia would be to be called a saint by anyone. Although personally, Harry felt that label actually fit Asia quite well.

Rama and the reinforcements with him were then put in the strange position of needing to defend the mayor from the people he had so infuriated despite his attempts to undermine the relationship between the magicals and the rest of the local population. Hastily recanting what he had said and a renewed vow to work with the wizards and other magicals to help rebuild Egypt had helped smooth out matters. Nevertheless, that conversation proved to be one of the most interesting he had that morning.

Looking around the small café they were sitting in at the moment, Harry was grateful that the first thing that Rama had done upon sitting down was to cast an obfuscation spell that would keep anyone nearby from what they were actually talking about. Because what Rama had told him was fraught with both possibilities and implications, most of which the common man, wizard or nonmagical, would be unable to really understand. "You are certain that Shiva said that any meeting between us could not happen on Earth?"

Rama nodded, repeating the last bit of his meeting with Shiva Parvati and Ganesha: there had been a reason why the entire Hindu pantheon retreated from Earth into their own pocket dimensions and rarely appeared on Earth except in far more constrained semblance or avatars. Those could be quite active, admittedly, but they were but a single portion of the picture that was a God in his entirety. That, and they feared any direct confrontation with Ophis would destroy the Earth even if they won.

Harry thought about that and the implications of reaching out to Shiva, one of the most powerful Gods still in existence on Earth (for a given value of 'on' obviously) from Danan. *I don't like it, but I suppose that given our past interactions, Shiva hasn't shown me any reason to distrust him or his family personally. In fact, Shiva has helped us subtly several times.* "Very well. I will meet with your gods before I head to the ICW Tower and, heh, relieve Rias of bringing the diplomatic hammer down on those geriatrics." His lips quirked then, shrugging his shoulders somewhat apologetically. "That means your message is still only third on my list of priorities right now, but it's on there regardless."

"Hah, well, with everything that we've been juggling, I suppose that is the best I am going to get." Rama chuckled a little at that before accepting Harry's request that he be at the hotel to join the rest of Egypt's leadership later that day.

Luna would also be there to represent the Fae, along with one of the dwarves. Similarly, Yasaka would represent the Youkai Association. Yubelluna was also there as Harry's right-hand woman when it came to law and politics when Rias was not around. Rias was better at politics, but Yube was better at law.

By the time Harry and his small band returned to Alexandria, Harry was well satisfied, thinking he had done his part to help diffuse any anti-magical sentiment among the locals. Instead of there being a nebulous anger and hatred against magic in general for what it had allowed to happen, that anger now was turned squarely against the two magic users who had caused the disaster here in Egypt. A catastrophe that everyone now knew they had Harry and his group to thank for stopping it from being far, far worse.

Entering the hotel, Harry met Yubelluna and Lily by the doorway leading into the hotel's ballroom, smiling in approval at that choice as Lily told him that she and Tiamat had done what Harry had asked them to. "You should see the place Tiamat chose from the air sometime, Daddy. It's not as amazing looking as the Island was, but it's really big and cool!" Lily exclaimed, waving her arms excitedly. Akeno would also have been there, but with everyone else going to the meeting, it fell on her, Sona and Momo's shoulders to keep the magical side of the relief and reconstruction efforts going.

"Thank you for that, Lovey. And I will see it soon enough," Harry answered, ruffling her hair before glancing through the window in the door into the ballroom. Looking around, he estimated there were at least two hundred people already waiting for them scattered around the ballroom. Political leaders, military leaders, engineers, Shinsengumi, Aurors, aides and

officials were all there, including a few dwarves. He could see Luna, too, with two Fae playing around with her hair and clothing, changing its colors and making it shine bright or dim, drawing the attention of many around them.

Besides the soldiers, Harry doubted any of the locals had an idea of what this meeting might be about but was hopeful they could perhaps personally enrich themselves with whatever it was. *All of them must think I'm going to make a speech. And I am, but not just a speech. Visuals are important, after all.*

However, he did not see Asia anywhere and cocked an eyebrow at the bandrui and his daughter. "Is Asia still up with Kala?"

"Nope. The dwarves on duty at our suite said that the two of them left earlier. Asia said they were going to find a church somewhere, but that Kala insisted they wait until one of the golems arrived to protect them along with a... platoon, I think it was called?" Lily looked up at Yubelluna, who nodded and went on. "With a platoon of soldiers."

"...Well, I suppose as long as Asia and Kala have some bodyguards with them, I'm not going to try to limit their movements or anything," he said, somewhat leery given how Kala was suffering from Cruciatus exposure but unwilling to try and limit Asia's movement or anything like that. *Especially if they have a golem with them.* "I'm surprised that Kala was feeling well enough to move around, though."

"The dwarf I spoke to said Kalawarner didn't look particularly well, but she had a death grip on Princess Asia as if the only way to remove her from the 'princess's' side would be to cut her arm off," Yube intoned drolly.

Rolling his eyes at Asia also being called a princess like he knew Lily had been occasionally, Harry smiled at that, before looking around. Seeing that they were alone beside the two golems on security duty and the guards out in the lobby who were turned the other way, he leaned in for a quick kiss to Yubelluna. "For luck," he whispered, doing the same to Yasaka.

Taking Lily and Kunou's hands, Yasaka moved to the back of the crowd as Harry and Yube moved through the ballroom towards where a stage was built into the floor at the far end. The hotel people had helpfully set up a microphone there, although with magic, which wasn't really needed, nor would it really help after a bit. More importantly, though, to one side of that microphone sat a fal stone from the hotel room.

Using a Sonorous on himself, Harry hopped up onto the stage as Yube paused, turning to look at the audience. "Could I have your attention, please?"

The hundreds of small side conversations going on faded, and everyone in the ballroom turned towards Harry. Some of them were approving. Sala and Abraxas had apparently spoken at some point during the day about Harry's proposal, and both of them approved of it in the



main, even if some of the implications were a little disturbing. Others were frowning and pensive but respectful. Still others were angry, or wary, or watching with avarice in their eyes, wondering what Harry was going to say and how they could turn it to their personal advantage. But they were all listening, and that was good enough to start with. *I doubt I will be able to please everyone. But I'm not here to please everyone; I'm just here to, hopefully, please the majority.*

"My name is Harry Potter. I know most of you have heard of me, and some might have heard my voice, but not all of you have actually met me in person, so it bears repeating." The small joke caused a slight lessening of tension in the room as Harry watched Yasaka close the doors to the ballroom. "I was instrumental in mitigating the damage done to your nation by the machinations of the ancient Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife, Nefertiti. I am sorry we could not do more. Even those of us who use magic cannot simply wave our hands and make events go the way we want to or gather all the knowledge necessary to strike our enemies when they are so hidden from us. We are fallible, magical and nonmagical alike. We tried, we tried our hardest, both to discover what was going on, then to fight the creatures that our enemies summoned out of the past and against their powerful generals, constrained spirits of ancient times brought out to make war upon your nation. Spirits that your ancestors once called gods."

There was a lot of feet shuffling at that. While the sight of Wadjet, Sobek and the others had spread as rumors always did, not even Rias had outright stated that the creatures leading the monsters had been some of the very gods that Egypt had worshiped in the ancient past. To learn that the gods their ancestors had worshipped had been turned against the people of Egypt was a blow to every Egyptian's morale. To say nothing about learning they were actually real in the first place.

"After, we tried to make it right. My daughter nearly gave up her life and soul to try to make it right. And my wife Rias has helped as much as she can with the reconstruction efforts, as have all of the magicals who look to us or were allied with us in this war. But there lies a major issue between us, one that perhaps not all of you who work beyond Alexandria are aware of. For the wizards and witches, for the other non-magical societies out there, hiding the existence of magic from the world is seen as **incredibly** important. I have no doubt that all of you are intelligent enough to understand why. And why because of the events here in Egypt, because of how closely we have worked, because of the sheer scale of events here, we are caught in a cleft point. The secrecy of magic needs to be kept. How would the rest of the world react, knowing about magic now?"

Here, Harry paused, allowing the men and women in front of him to exchange glances. Most of the Egyptians had been thinking about the Statute of Secrecy from their own point of view, how it could be seen as one of the causes of the disaster or at least how badly it had gone, as well as last night's attack from the ICW in Alexandria. But now that Harry was pointing it out, while on the surface the idea of magic being known to the wider world was a fascinating one, it would undoubtedly cause a lot of chaos, confusion, and perhaps even outright war.

More than one of the people remarked that several governments would simply not like the idea of another political body controlling territory within their sovereign nation, let alone the concept of magic. And even, as it was rumored, the church and Mecca knew of magic, there would still be a lot of backlash from fundamentalists. War, conflict and violence of all sorts.

And yet, none of the men or women in this audience were willing to submit to simply forgetting what had happened to be lied to inside their own heads as to why family and friends had died, why their nation had lost more than half its population in a single horrible moment. Now, they stared up at Harry almost challengingly, wondering if perhaps they had been wrong. If possibly Harry, too, was thinking about simply wiping their memories.

At that point, Harry spoke up once more, nipping that idea in the bud. "The ICW was wrong in how it went about trying to simply take over here. The Wumpus did not understand the scale of the problem; they didn't realize how many nonmagical people there are in Egypt even now, and they did not take into account your own thoughts on the matter. I will not say that last would have mattered overmuch, but the first two certainly bit them in the ass last night, as did the fact my clan and their own local Aurors refused to follow that order. We stood with you last night. We will again."

Relief spread at those words, and Harry continued on unhurriedly, laying a hand on the fal stone. "But there are other ways to keep what is happening here a secret. The method I am thinking of is far more convoluted and far more difficult, and it will need all of you and everyone else who is currently living in Egypt and have been impacted by Akhenaten's madness on board with the idea. And nothing so huge, so world-changing can be asked of you without giving something in return."

Now Harry not only had their attention but their interest, many of the faces in the audience reminded Harry of a meme that Koneko had once shown him. "What I will offer is twofold. One, any child or adult within Egypt who starts to exhibit the random abilities that are a hallmark of magical powers in the young will have access to the education necessary to help them control their powers for free for the next three generations. As my Shinsengumi fellows can tell you, I am in the process of building a new magical school where multiple different types of spells can be taught. That school will be open to any Egyptian child free of charge... up to and including potion classes for those who wish to investigate that topic but have no magic of their own."

That brought exclamations of shock from many people, but there were Aurors, Shinsengumi, and even a few squibs in the audience. They explained quickly to the rest of the crowd what Harry was talking about: that magic wasn't just hereditary. Instead, it sometimes showed up randomly in 'muggle' families. Here, Harry also told them he had noticed some of the youngest children in the orphanage showing small signs of magic: toys moving a bit on their own, their clothing being a bit too well-fitted, and even one person having hair that had

changed color. The adults had thought most of that was being caused by the house elves, but it wasn't.

He let them mule over that point for a few seconds before going on. "And the second, well... I believe that you all have probably heard the phrase that a picture is worth a thousand words..."

With that, Harry connected to the Undertaking through the Fal stone. A moment set the time difference from its former 1:5 to 1:3, and a second later, the fal stone began to glow, the glow rapidly covering the floor as he concentrated. The next second, the Undertaking activated at his will, pulling the entire crowd of people through to Danan.

The crowd appeared not on Tir Na Nog nor the small island. Harry had rejected the idea of using the island all for this from the start. That place would forever be just for the family, just for them and their friends. That was why he had asked Tiamat to transport one of the Fal stones from Tir Na Nog elsewhere, asking the multicolored Dragon to find a suitable landmass for colonization.

She had done so, setting the fal stone on what looked like a wide-open grassland of some kind, with a huge river flowing through it nearby, reminding Harry of the Nile River, although moving much, much faster. There were also mountains in the distance, as well as what looked like a huge forest of some kind. Not a jungle. Harry didn't think it was nearly warm enough for them to be near the equator, but it was certainly a forest full of fern, oak, elm and so forth from what he could see.

Many of the nonmagicals did not take to the sudden teleportation very well. They collapsed, cried out, grabbed their fellows, or shouted. But eventually, those reactions faded, and they joined the rest in staring all around them.

Sala and Abraxas, along with several of the other soldiers among the group, young men all, were already moving away from the rest of them, staring all around them, not in confusion or suspicion but interest. *I think telling Sala ahead of time and him telling the rest of the soldiers what was going to happen was a good move*, Harry reflected.

For their part, Lily and Kunou smiled happily at one another and raced off towards the woods, going on all fours as they did, eager to explore this new area. Yasaka chattered happily behind them, transforming into her fox form and racing after the two kits, drawing many shocked eyes from those who had not seen her transform before.

Harry wanted to go with them. He was deeply interested in exploring Danan but knew that he would have to wait for a while. Months, if not more. *But eventually, oh yes, eventually, the ship that we got from Len the Shipwright will be put to use again.*

Now, he turned his attention to the Egyptians once more. "This is Danan," Harry said, his Sonorous-assisted voice overriding all the separate conversations that had sprouted up,

watching with a faint smile as Sala and Abraxas moved towards the river, a small mousy-looking fellow trotting behind them for some reason.

“Many of you might have heard of it in conjunction with where our reinforcements came from both during and immediately after the battles against Akhenaten’s army. It is an entirely new world, a world that has several interestingly positive enchantments woven into its very being. There is no disease here and no mosquitoes to carry such. But there is danger. As I said, it is a pristine world. The animals here will not know to fear humanity and will not avoid you. Yet it is an entire world, a world as large as birth, perhaps or larger. We have not explored it in its entirety, but there are certainly no large civilizations here beyond the fairies and the leprechauns and dwarves many of you have already met. And neither of their populations can spread as much as a human’s can.”

Many an eye turned to Luna, who smiled faintly and began to sing, “Tir Na Nog, naa, naa, come with me to Tir Na Nog!”

Snickering slightly at Luna’s attitude and knowing the words would probably mean very little to the Egyptians, Harry gestured around them and then up into the sky where Tiamat flew. Seeing them arrive, she dove down, transforming midair to land lightly on her feet in her human form. She flipped her hair and strode towards the crowd in what Tiamat probably thought would be a grand manner, but her walk was interrupted as Lily and Kunou came out of the forest behind her, leaping up onto Tiamat’s back and baring her to earth before hopping away, giggling as best their forms allowed.

The sight of that and the laughing soldiers who were staring around them in wonder did a lot to allay much of the initial shock and concern of being transported that the civilians had been feeling. The minds of the politicians were coming back online, and they understood, at least in part, what Harry was offering them. Access to this world for their agreement to allow Harry to use some kind of magic to keep the secret of the mystical world magic from the rest of the normal ones. Unsurprisingly, the mayor of Alexandria, Akun Abas, was the first to work through everything they were thinking, and he moved forward, coming closer to Harry as he did while the rest of the crowd began to spread out further. Still within hearing range, and none of them bar, two of the soldiers seemed to be interested at all in entering the forest, but they certainly looked more comfortable.

“You mean to allow us access to this world then? Just access or are we going to be able to... to use this world as a resource in our own, so to speak,” Abas asked.

“For example, find gold and mine it, then sell it back home?” Harry guessed, crossing his arms and frowning slightly. “There’s certainly no way I would be able to stop you without cutting off access between the two worlds entirely. And I am **not** willing to do that. I will retain control of that access, though. There is no nonmagical way of connecting from Earth to Danan, and I am the ferryman, ladies and gentlemen.”

He smirked slightly at his own joke, although the meaning and the connection to Manannán Mac Lir went over the Egyptian's heads. Yube at least liked it, smiling slightly as she moved to stand beside Harry once more. "Mind you, I am not offering this entirely free of conditions."

This won a snort from many of the politicians, all of whom understood that would have gone without saying. Only a few reacted negatively, with one among them shouting out how they should be given entry to this world free because of what happened in Egypt. "Access to this place is the least you can do in paying us back for what you allowed to happen to our nation thanks to monsters like you!"

"Would I be able to hold you accountable for every act of murder within Egypt? Could I hold you, sir, personally accountable for the actions of your government in the Six-Day War against Israel? To my mind, both statements are just as illogical and foolish as one another," Harry growled, and the man quickly backed down, causing Harry to reign in his anger and aura a bit, which he had begun to let out after touching the fal stone moments before.

"But yes, there will be conditions." Harry held up a hand and began to count on his fingers. "Point one, there are intelligent animals out here. Like in many childrens' books, animals with far more than normal intelligence exist here. Swanhilde, transformed fae who have taken a single animal form, original fae, dwarves, gryphons and others. All of them are protected. There will be no illegal hunting here as there is in Africa for elephant's tusks or what-have-you."

Of course, magical animals were a source of many things in the Wizarding World, most importantly, wand cores. But hunting them would be severely regulated in Danan if Harry allowed it at all.

A second finger joined the first. "Two, from the start, we will all, wizard, devil, whatever and nonmagicals work together to make certain that our impact on the local environments is kept to a minimum level as possible. There are a lot of tricks magic can do to get rid of smoke, trash and so forth. But it has its limitations. We will write up a formal agreement on that point if colonization begins at any point in strength."

A third finger rose while Harry glanced at the dwarven representative, a relative of some sort of King Bail Stonebreaker, who was watching the humans with cold eyes. "And speaking of colonization... Tiamat? How big is this landmass?"

"I do not know. I know that I flew for at least an hour once I hit the shoreline and had yet to see the end of it in any direction. Tiamat muttered, looking towards the forest where the two youngsters had disappeared. Her decidedly feminine yet deep, powerful voice caused many of the politicians who had yet to wrap their heads around the fact that a giant dragon had transformed into a woman to stare at her anew, but most had already seen her in action in some form back in Egypt. "I do not believe that it is a continent, but it could perhaps be slightly larger than Australia back on earth."

There were some rumblings of amazement at that, and more than one of the politicians or workers rubbed their hands at the very idea of what kind of natural resources an island that size could have. Many of the Alexandrians were also interested in simple exploration, but most of the Egyptians were more interested in what they could gain from Danan than simple space to grow.

That was fine by Harry. Most of these people were old, after all. No, when the rest of Egypt's current population became aware of what Harry was offering, it was the younger set, the teenagers and adventurous college-age people, the young families, who would be most interested in carving out their own cities in Danan. He envisioned the colonization of Danan becoming somewhat like the American Wild West, only with more technology and without violence if he had anything to say about it, which he would.

Which rather neatly brought Harry's mind back to why he had asked Tiamat about the size of this particular landmass.

"So, you can see that there is a lot of space for expansion. But I want this understood by you and through you, your constituents. Humanity is not alone on Danan. Dwarves, Fae, and even intelligent animals like the gryphons all have their own place here, all have the right to exist here, and their own beliefs. I want it set in stone from the outset that there will be no attempt to proselytize. You will not try, as the church and Islam have tried multiple times, to convert nonbelievers by the sword. You will not spread your faith in that manner. You will not take their lands, nor will there be any kind of xenophobia. You might dislike the idea of other intelligent races, but I will not allow that dislike to boil over into hostilities. Once we reach an agreement, you Egyptians access to Danan might be a right under that agreement, but it can and will be abrogated in the individual along with other consequences."

"We dwarves support High King Potter in this. You humans have much to offer, but we dwarves will not be pushed out of our mines, out of the mountains of Connacht or wherever we spread beyond the shores of Tir Na Nog." The dwarf stated firmly. "There is enough room for all, if we but keep the peace."

Harry nodded, waiting a few minutes to let the Egyptians mull over his conditions and the dwarf's words, letting his hand fall to his side. After a few moments, he raised his other hand in a fist, holding up a single finger from it. His eyes locked on Luna as she turned to watch him, the two Fae with her doing likewise. *Time to truly step up into that captain role you said I needed to take, Luna.*

"And in return, you will not just be allowed to retain your memories of the tragedy Akhenaten wrought on your nation. You will also gain me and mine in your corner. Whenever an issue arises between the people of Egypt and the Wizarding World, or even other magical societies on earth, we will act as your go-between. We will help to defend you and yours, not just teach any young you might have who themselves might have magic. If any kind of disaster or attack is launched against you, we will stand with your army to defend you from it regardless

of the source. We will help your nation spread into Danan and colonize it. We will continue to help Egypt rebuild, and in return, we will gain access to your resources. Your works of hand and mind will be ours to call upon at need.”

For some of his listeners, the words he was saying sounded almost like an alliance between equals. But others understood his tone and what he was really implying. If Harry, as an individual, was willing to go to bat for them against other magicals, then it was almost like they were under his protection. As if Harry would become the center of the government like back in the Middle Ages, a manor lord to their lands.

Abas frowned pensively, scratching his chin as he thought about what Harry had said and the implications therein. “You sound as if you are asking us to become... Become a part of your fiefdom, Harry Potter, not just in alliance with you but under you. We would need to accept your position in many matters as our de facto head of state.”

For just a moment, a part of Harry, the same part of Harry that had hated the Boy Who Lived moniker, which hated the fact he needed to step forward and take a leadership role in the war against Voldemort, quailed. That part demanded he correct the mayor, demanded that he step back from that precipice. That all Harry really wanted to ever be was a father, teacher and husband.

But he couldn't. He'd come too far, and Harry knew that if the Egyptians agreed to his proposal like this, there was no way that the ICW would move against them again. They would be forced to treat him as an equal, as would, in time, the members of the Hindu pantheon who were not already allied with Shiva. It was also a way of further removing his cooperative, euphemistically called the Kuoh Group, from both the ICW and the Devil Faction. *A lot of birds, one gigantic stone. And if Sala was any indication, there is a large upswell among the Egyptians who would welcome it anyway, within reason.*

So, Harry shunted that thought of his mind aside, pushing it back down in his mindscape, and nodded firmly. “That is indeed what I am saying. I will not be your non-magical head of government. Whatever happens, after we decide on the appropriate story to tell the rest of the world, you all will need to put into place a government that will be able to work with foreign parties. I will not attempt to control your foreign policy or your domestic ones beyond a certain point, such as making certain that men and women continue to have access to higher education and basic human rights and where your nation interacts with magical societies either here in Danan or back home.”

Harry's voice hardened as he went on. “But in those areas, my word, and the word of my representatives like my wife or others, will be the final say. I will not tax you. I will not demand tribute of any kind, only what I have already said. That at times, me and my might need access to your textiles say, or your historians, or your engineers. They will be offered in turn. We will pay for them, but we will have access to them as first among equals.”

The wizard-turned-demigod let it lay there for a bit, watching as the politicians and men and women who had risen to positions of authority without any previous political power base spoke to one another, and one of them, a mullah, spoke up in turn. Harry somewhat recognized him as being among the ones who had supported Asia against the more reactionary mullah when she went about healing the wounded. "You are giving us a choice, Harry Potter. And yet, I do not believe that you need to do so."

The older man's eyes narrowed, and he moved forward, staring at Harry hard. "I do not know the first thing about magic, but even those of us who have no sense of such can tell that you are a **power**. Even now, as you stand there before us, trying to be amicable and kind, I can feel the power coming off you. That power is almost oppressive, practically demanding that we submit. But you do not."

"I might have such an aura, but I do not want submission. I do not want supplicants or even believers. To put it bluntly, if there was any other way of making certain that even with an oath in place, the Egyptian people would not be further taken advantage of by the magical world or that further violence would not erupt between you and the mystical societies on earth, I would take it. But this way, this way, I both defend you and make certain that you do not attempt to attack the ICW or any other group, in turn." Harry's voice went from whimsical to hard in an instant, and for the first time in the conversation, he let his aura out deliberately as he glared around at the Egyptians. "Do not lie to me and tell me that the idea of trying to get some of your own back from the magicals has not occurred to some of you. I know it has occurred to the people on the streets out there back in Egypt. I won't have that either."

After a second, he let up, reining in his aura once more. "I don't want the power I have now. I would much rather take my family and retreat back to our own private island, perhaps stay there for a few hundred years until my daughters are old enough to maybe be interested in boys, and I can no longer convince them otherwise."

That won a laugh from Sala and many of the other fathers and mothers in the crowd, with a loud cry of, "Now there's an idea, magical chastity belts!" Coming from one wag who spoke up in an effort to diffuse some of the tension.

It didn't work, but he'd tried, and Harry smiled towards where the voice had come from before finishing by saying, "But with great power comes great responsibility, and I will do my utmost to use that power honorably. If you accept my offer, we will enter a contract, a magically binding contract between the people of Egypt and me and mine." Harry had almost said his pantheon but refused to use such a term right now. "And we will both have duties and responsibilities to one another."

For several moments, the politicians looked back and forth between one another, then at Harry and finally, many of them turned to either Abas or the mullah who had been speaking a moment ago. Both men nodded thoughtfully as the mullah spoke up once more. "The sticking point for many of the people will be the idea of a spell covering the whole nation again. That is



not something that will be easy for any of the survivors to accept, even if we agree with everything else you have stated, Harry Potter. The groundwork for that will need to be done very, very carefully.”

The Alexandrian mayor agreed, shaking his head. “I hate to say it, but is there a limit to how long the Interdict can remain in place, keeping Egypt separate from the rest of the world?”

“Proudfoot?” Harry turned to where Proudfoot stood, having heard everything Harry had said, his face a mask of conflicting emotions and thoughts.

On the one hand, he was a true stickler for the rules, for the laws of the Wizarding World and Magical Britain in particular, of which the various communities of Egypt had been a part before all of this. Harry was basically saying that even the magical portions of Egypt would fall under here his purview now rather than the Wizengamot and Minister Shacklebolt back in the United Kingdom. He was also a major proponent of the Statute of Secrecy, but that part was honestly warring with the first, as well as the respect that not only Harry but Sala and many of the other nonmagicals he had worked with up to this point had won from the man.

He didn’t know what to think obviously, much like the politicians. This was too big for him to make a split-second decision on. But Proudfoot did answer Harry’s question regardless. “As far as I know, the interdict can simply stay in place for as long as we need it. It is simply part of a larger enchantment of Notice-Me-Not wards that defend the Wizarding World from being discovered by the nonmagicals, and apparently,” he smiled wintrily at Harry. “By other magical societies, too.”

“So, we have time. We’ll need it anyway to help rebuild Egypt. That will continue and is not part of the greater offer,” Harry answered firmly.

That mollified many of the politicians, and after a moment, a few of the younger ones, only being in their forties or fifties rather than sixties and seventies, asked Harry if they could have a guide to look around the forest for a time.

**OOOOOO**

Asia wasn’t certain how to feel about the need for the golem that had been assigned to watch over her and Kala to defend them, let alone how he was now moving ahead of them to part the crowd outside the nearest church to the hotel. On the one hand, it seemed remarkably arrogant, having such a formidable bodyguard and using him in such a manner, not to mention the platoon of soldiers that also accompanied them. The last thing that Asia wanted was to be set further on a pedestal by the locals.

And yet, well... that crowd was kind of big. As in, it covered more than a dozen blocks around the church. The priests within had needed to set up a speaker system to let their sermons be heard beyond the outside.

After the calamity that had struck Egypt, it came as no surprise to Asia that many among the Egyptians would want to take the time out of their day to pray, either for lost loved ones, for the future, or for simple stability. Always men reached out to God in their own way. Asia hoped that many would find the echo of His voice within themselves to continue on. Indeed, many of the people in the crowd were Muslim, as two of the Islamic houses of worship had been destroyed in the fighting and had yet to be repaired. In contrast, this church had gotten through everything that had happened without much damage except to one of its corners.

Not that Asia cared about the mixed nature of the worshippers. *What journey you follow to find your way to God does not matter so long as you can hear his voice, so long as you are able to choose.*

For a moment, she remembered the conversations she'd had previously with Irina and Xenovia and then again with that angry elderly gentleman when she had been going around using Dawn Healing to help the wounded. *I am God's creation, she thought now as she had then, a feeling of serenity and devotion filling her. I have never been His creature. And to be angry or horrified at how I have been forced to change as I live my life following His teachings or because of what I have lost is not within me. That would seem horrible recompense for all the good that I have seen in my life, for all the good I have done with this life He gave me.*

Eventually, the golem reached the entryway into the church, where he talked in a very low tone to the priest and mullah there. None of their voices reached Asia over the murmurings of the crowd, although she could occasionally hear a \*FIZZK\*, the discordant noise cutting through the merely human chatter easily. He had apparently taken a hit from something that had messed up one of the runes that gave him a voice which caused that voice to be interrupted occasionally.

The two holy men eventually nodded, and the Coptic priest leaned over to one side of the golem and waved his hand towards Asia, Kalawarner, and the soldiers with them.

When they did, Asia turned to the leader of the platoon, smiling gently. "If you could stay outside the crowd, please? With Ironsides near the door, I do not think we need to bring weapons into a place of worship."

The man-made to protest, but Kala shook her head, smiling at the man faintly and laying a hand on Asia's shoulder. "Best to go with it. Trust me, I tried to talk Asia out of coming out here like this for a while. Behind her cute exterior, Asia is incredibly stubborn about some things. Besides, I'll be with her too. Even in my weakened state, I'll still be able to protect her long enough for you to get inside if need be."

The look that the man gave the older woman was somewhat resigned, although when his eyes passed on from her to the crowd around them, it became much more worried. Still, he nodded, and the two of them moved forward through the pathway cleared for them by the golem.

As they did, Asia tried hard not to react to how many people reached out and touched her and how many people called her a saint or holy maiden. *I know I had that title when I was younger, but now it feels so... Heavy. And kind of sacrilegious, too, just like that whole Asia's Miracle thing.* Still, Asia said nothing, simply smiling at the crowd as she walked through the opening made by the golem, Kala beside her.

When they reached the golem, he leaned down towards them, trying to whisper something that not even the newest models of golems could do very well. Adding volume control to the runic array that gave them the ability to speak in the first place had not been a top priority among either the designers of the runes or the dwarves who put the golem together. "Mistress Kalawarner was a sticking point \*FZZZTT\*. She is known to be a fallen angel rather than an angel in truth. Her presence within high King Potters household and as your personal guardian gained her some clemency \*FZZZTT\*."

Kala's lips twitched at that, but she shrugged her shoulders. She'd entered churches before this, but it was true that most of the time, save in the case of run-down churches or those not on sanctified ground, her being a fallen angel hadn't actually been known.

"Thank you, Ironsides," Asia said, smiling and laying a gentle hand on the giant golem's large fist, amused anew at the name that someone had given this golem but cheerfully using it. *He seems to enjoy it quite a bit.* "If you could stay outside?"

The golem nodded, then very slowly shifted position so that it was sitting down, half blocking the doorway so that it could see both inside and out. "\*FZZZTT\* Is this acceptable?"

The churchmen and Asia both looked at one another, and then the churchmen nodded, gently ushering Asia and Kala in, seeming a little more hesitant when his eyes flicked over Kala, but not overmuch. "You're just in time for midday services."

"It's like we planned it or something," Kala said with a snort, causing Asia to smile and even the two holy men to smile behind their beards.

Before Asia and Kala could follow the man into the church, a shout from outside stopped them in their place. "Saint Asia! Saint Asia! How can you work with these magicals! How can they, how can even the Lord Potter be trusted! It was magic users who wrought so much death and so much carnage to our nation! And does not Allah say that magic is the work of Shaitan?!"

That type of question was soon taken up by others, both Muslims and Coptics within the crowd. Soon, those shouts were almost incoherent as they spoke over one another, explosions of hate and the undercurrent of rage that had, up until that morning when Harry returned, been growing exponentially both here in Alexandria and throughout the Potter Triangle. His return had done a great deal to mitigate that anger with those who met him or were within range of his aura, but it was still there.

“Even setting aside their idea of devils who have seemingly found the light once more, we were attacked last night! An attack from the people of wizards and witches! How can we trust magic that so clearly does not come from him in heaven?”

Kala scowled, but Asia didn't, instead looking over to Ironsides. “Could you please pick me up, Ironsides? Perhaps set me on one of your shoulders?”

Asia instantly regretted this question as the golem stood up and then very gently lifted her into the air. The feeling of being lifted was fine. Being so high was not. Asia had a brief second of fear before her feet were touching down on either side of Ironsides' head. His large hand kept a hold on her side for a moment until her hands came to rest on the top of his head, gripping the smooth curved metal there tightly.

When Asia went to speak, she realized the problem at once and floundered, blushing and looking around for a solution. This move began to calm the crowd down, and there were even some chuckles from the closest who could see her panicky movements, and they watched as the priest handed Ironsides a microphone to hand up to Asia.

When she spoke, Asia's tone was hesitant but full of conviction and was heard throughout the crowd thanks to the speakers set up there already. “I have never claimed to be a saint. And even though the church once called me a Holy Maiden, they did so because of the powers bestowed upon me by God. Powers that I no longer have.”

The respectful silence broke like a dam hit by a tsunami. Men, women and even children shouted in disbelief, in shock and shared grief at that. The noise became almost overwhelming as men and women of two different faiths wondered how a gift from the Almighty could be lost at all. After all, only Allah could create perfection, and could perfection ever truly be lost? Even the Coptics wondered how a power bestowed by the Almighty could prove to have a breaking point.

As the shouts and side conversations continued to spread, Asia started to speak again, her voice cutting through the crowd even as her face reddened in embarrassment. “A, the thing you all call Asia's Miracle, a, a name I've heard several times since returning from my recovery, I, I burnt Dawn Healing out through using the gift that God bestowed upon me, which allowed me to bring back as many of the dead as I possibly could.”

At those words, silence spread once more, her listeners gaining proof that the gift of Allah/God had been the price of so many coming back from the dead. Learning that the Saint that many in that crowd owed their life to, whom many held up as a shining example of Allah's will or God's grace, had paid the price for their lives was sobering and troubling at the same time. Many felt humbled that she had gone to such lengths for complete strangers, even setting aside the sheer number Asia had saved. Others still wondered how a gift from Allah could be so flawed as to have limitations.

In particular, many of the people who had been shouting their hatred towards the magic users stared at her, confronted once again with an unpleasant truth they had tried to ignore in their anger. That millions of people throughout Egypt would not be alive at this very moment were it not for magic. Yes, magic in the hands of Akhenaten and his depraved wife had been the cause of many of those deaths. But Asia's miracle had mitigated as much as it was humanly possible to do.

Her tone firming up and her embarrassment disappearing, Asia continued, taking the bull by the horns. "I wish I could have done more. I wish I could have given more. If draining my soul to death rather than simply death's door would have allowed me to bring back even one more person, I would have made that choice gladly."

This statement humbled those wondering if perhaps the flaw had been in Asia. Many had wondered if possibly her interaction with those who used sorcery, in the devils and fallen like Kala or Akeno, had somehow tainted Asia in a way that only Allah, in his wisdom, could detect. But Asia's words moved all but the most recalcitrant, creating yet another crack in the weakening hatred against magic in general that had been a growing problem before Harry and Asia came back.

"Magic is just a tool," Asia, greatly daring, took her hands off Ironside's head, holding them up, and though she wobbled, she stayed upright. Many around her chuckled upon seeing this gesture. "Much like your own hands, much like your own mind, it is what you do with it that matters. And just like you should consider the actions of someone in deciding they are good or bad, so too should you look at the mystical beings of this world. Wizards and witches, devils, fallen, youkai, those of us with Sacred Gears. All have the same choice which is the basis of the greatest gift that God has ever bestowed upon humanity. The gift of free will!"

Asia's voice rose, and she spoke now fervently, her hands hastily falling back to the top of Ironside's dome-like head while below, the priest looked on, smiling faintly, and the mullah frowned but did not interrupt. After all, unthinking obedience to the words of Allah was written in the Coran as one of the prime pillars of the Islamic Faith. "It was my choice, my will to push myself forward, that caused my Dawn Healing to break as it did. But it is in the words of God that I have always found strength and conviction I need to know that I was brought into this world to help others. Magic was but a tool towards that goal, and that goal has not changed since I woke up and discovered Dawn Healing was gone."

She paused then, shaking her head and suddenly feeling the full impact of being the center of so much attention. "I will pray you do not paint all wizards and witches with the same brush. I will pray that you do not look to his teachings and distort them to bolster your hate of those who are simply different. But again, I **cannot** tell you what to do. Like me, you have to choose, and you have the freedom to do so. I will simply pray to God that you find it in Him and in yourself to choose the path of goodness rather than hatred or the desire to lash out in fear."

Her little speech was over, and now feeling the Flush of embarrassment crawling up her face like an invading army, Asia quickly tapped Ironside's head, and he gently lifted her off his shoulders, setting her down. Once on her feet, Asia practically fled inside the church, her hands over her face now thoroughly mortified at having given such a public speech.

This won some laughter from the crowd, but it soon disappeared, as the shouts and denunciations had previously been replaced by a strained but thoughtful silence. More than a few of the shouters had fallen quiet on their own, while a few had been silenced by the fellows as Asia spoke. Listening to her words and hearing about the great sacrifice that she had made, many in the crowd of both faiths realized the truth of her words: painting all the magic users with the same hatred, with the same fear that the actions of Akhenaten and even the ICW had drawn, would be wrong, on the same level as what the ICW had attempted to do to them.

Not everyone would see it that way, of course. Not here, not elsewhere in Egypt as Asia's words spread. There would always be those who resented, who looked for someone to blame that they could lash out at. And then there would be the inevitable backlash against someone touting free will as Allah's greatest gift when the Coran taught otherwise. But in this time of turmoil, even that message would find fertile soil, and the respect and veneration for the Potter Clan would grow.

Inside, Asia and Kala were led towards the front of the church, where Asia knelt on the ground, with Kala beside her, her wings flowing from her back to cover both herself and Asia. The gray color of those wings drew some glares, but not many after Asia's little speech outside. On top of that, Kala could hear people whispering about how they had seen her fighting both during the initial outbreak of violence and then against the Hit Wizards the night before. With that, while the people could see that Kala might not be a real angel, she was certainly on the side of one in the form of Asia.

*At least in the eyes of these people, anyway. Whether or not Michael and the rest of Heaven would see me in that light, that's up for debate,* Kala thought before closing her eyes, letting the midday service wash over her. While beside her, Asia began to mouth along with the words. As she prayed, Kala was unaware that her wings had begun to shift color, becoming still lighter than before.

After all, just because one has fallen does not mean that someone could not rise again. Something Kala had been doing for months now...

**OOOOOO**

In Heaven, Michael sat upon the throne of God at the center of the Heaven System as he did almost every hour of every day. Since the system had been designed and built for God alone to be able to use, a simple archangel like Michael needed to constantly interact with the system in order to get practically anything out of it. Yet over the centuries since God's murder, Micheal

had gotten as good at using the system and sensing changes within it as anyone who was not God could be.

He now cocked his head thoughtfully to one side, smiling faintly at what he felt, a surge of belief-based power, un-diluted for once. Most of the time, when prayers were offered up to God, they were always colored in some form or another. Praying for something specific, demanding, and it was almost always demanding forgiveness for this or that.

But this stream of belief wasn't like that. It was simply a general thank you for our life, thank you for showing us the way type of prayer. The sheer amount of it was highly unusual as if several hundred thousand people had prayed all at once to just give thanks to God. It was wonderful to feel and made him happy, happier than he had been in many weeks now, as he could feel the pain that the Earth was in but did not know the cause of it.

Similarly, Michael could not discern where in the world this sudden spurt of belief was coming from. *Odd. I can feel the power of that faith entering the Heaven System, but I cannot discern where it is coming from. Even if it was coming from the Underworld, I would still be able to do so. And if it was coming from the Hindu pantheon's area, the Heaven System certainly would not be receiving any of it. Strange. Could it be hidden somewhere magically? Coming perhaps from the wizards?*

Michael let a chuckle escape him at that. *That would be very odd indeed. Yet also amusing. I might have to check in with the Church to see if they know anything about that or if they have finally figured out what is going on with the earth in general...*

**OOOOOOO**

Unaware that his oldest daughter might have well begun a minor religious movement, Harry spent some time with the heads of the interim government and their aides in Danan before sending them back through to Egypt to think about his proposal while he stayed behind. Luna had returned to Tir Na Nog, and Yasaka had requested that she and the two girls be sent back to Egypt, too. There was a good deal of work still going on throughout Egypt obviously, hence why Akeno and the others hadn't been there. Even Yubelluna had gone back through with Yasaka and the kids, leaving Harry alone. Even Tiamat had decided to take to wing as Harry had been talking to Yube, Yasaka and the girls.

Now standing alone in the middle of the grassy plain, Harry breathed in deeply, then reached inside his pocket for the small figure of Ganesha that Rama had given him. Ostensibly, it would allow him to communicate directly with Lord Shiva and his family or perhaps act as a beacon so that they could come to him. Rama hadn't known which. Regardless, Harry knew this was a big step to take, but it had been put off for far too long at this point.

Harry sent some of his magic into the item, and instantly, he felt it shift and change, the magic taking on the properties of the enchantments already within the item as he spoke formally.

“Lord Shiva. You wished to speak to me when I had the chance. I have the time and chance now.”

As Harry spoke, the magic he was funneling into the item began to fade out, but the magic within did not. Instead, someone else started to pour power into it through an already existing enchantment. The small figurine began to grow, the hands over its large stomach shifting, moving to either side.

Hastily, Harry put it down on the grass and began to back away, watching as it grew to the size of a man, the hands outstretched. Then, between those hands, a portal appeared, looking almost like one of the Gremory portals but taking quite a bit more time to create. Through that entryway, Harry could see the gardens that Rama had told him about, the same pagoda, the same stream, and even the same music filling the air for a time, keeping time with the thrumming of the energy as it pulsed through the figurine.

Then, Lord Shiva appeared.

Black hair fell to his shoulders, something that had seemingly changed since Rama had met the god in person. But the fact he had three Faces, one to either side of the main, was accurate. Two deep-set black eyes and an aquiline nose dominated those blue faces, with a closed third eye above the bindi in the center of his forehead. On his head was a crown of ivory, gold and silver, accompanied by a few loose bangles on his four arms, arms made of small balls of various metals and stones. His clothing remained the simple tiger's coat Rama had reported, winding around at his waist and covering one shoulder.

Yet more than the physical, Harry was struck by the feeling the deity gave off, even to Harry with all his mental defenses and his own aura. It was powerful, immensely so, beyond human or human understanding if not in raw power than in direction, so to speak. Yet Shiva gave off a feeling of playfulness at the moment, as well as underlying brutal power. That aspect was almost hidden from Harry as if it was but one side of a multifaceted crystal, Harry's view of it blocked by the facet currently facing him.

Besides Shiva, Parvati stood a warm smile on her face, part motherly, part flirt, all beauty. Her hair was far more vibrant than her husband's, falling from her head in waves of night, the color matching her eyes. Her skin wasn't blue like Shiva's but rather a vibrant tan. Like Rias or Akeno, Parvati's face was almost shaped like the very picture of feminine beauty, with a small chin, full lips, and dimples of all things. A green and white dhoti flowed around her, hugging her stomach and chest, showing off yet hiding her curves entirely in a way that Harry knew Yubelluna would have appreciated, liking that kind of clothing more than his other ladies. She moved with as much grace as Yasaka could in her most formal, and from her a visible corona shown, white and yellow like the sun.



As with her husband, Parvati also created a feeling, an impression on those who saw her of pure beauty, of desire. She gathered all eyes to her yet spurned all attention bar from her husband. The beautiful yet dutiful wife in deific form.

But Harry did not succumb to it as Rama almost had. He simply gazed at her, acknowledged her beauty, and moved on. Part of this was thanks to his status as a demigod, which gave him some resistance to such. The rest was because of two factors, the first being his Legilimency. After dealing with Akeno and Rias's auras back before he learned of their true natures, ignoring Parvati's beauty was far simpler. Then, there was his devotion to Rias and the other ladies in his life. Both Rias and Yasaka were immensely beautiful women, yet also devoted wives, the same kind of impression that Parvati gave off, to say nothing of Yubelluna, Akeno or Kala, visions of gorgeousness Parvati's domain gave her no equal to, they can scale when it came to Yubelluna in her role as bandrui and musician.

Parvati seemed to sense Harry's ability to ignore her aura and smiled faintly at him, remaining beside her husband as he stepped forward through the portal. The portal remained open and connected to Shiva's power, taking power from him even as he stepped through. Harry wondered about that but figured that since he didn't know where Danan was in relation to Earth in terms of dimensions, Shiva might lack the ability to find Earth once again if the road back was closed to them.

*Danan is not a pocket dimension. It exists in an entirely alternate dimension, across what Rias and the rest call the Dimensional Gap. Pocket dimensions do not. They are completely dependent on their home realm.*

"Hey. Harry Potter, my man!" Shiva shouted, his voice almost sounding like the ascetic artist voice Harry had once likened it to when he and Shiva talked mentally to Harry during the creation of Kuoh's wards. "Awesome place you got here, man! I can feel the energy here, the magic thrumming through the planet. It's like what Pṛthvī Mātā used to be when we were first around, you know, only I don't get the sense that the magic here will ever fade as it did back on Pṛthvī Mātā."

Something about the God's expression shifted, more sensed at first than seen, almost as if to Harry's deific senses, Shiva's face had become covered by a miasma for a second, one of the faces facing away from Harry shifting into the more prominent position, taking over from the previous one which turned back to where it had once been, like an actor removing one mask and replacing it with another. "The implications are fascinating, both in terms of the power here and in the fact that this place is, if I am not mistaken, in an entirely different dimension! But I'll have you know, Harry Potter, that every time you step through it or open the doorway, those with the sense to feel it can. We cannot detect where you step directly, but we can certainly feel the door opening."

*So, we have the facet of the scholar and the aspect of the God of aesthetes and artists. It doesn't take a genius to conclude that the underlying sense of danger comes from his face as Shiva, the*

*destroyer. I hope I don't get to see that face anytime soon when it's riled up.* Even as powerful as he was, even with the Undertaking here to fuel his power further, Harry very much did not want to fight someone like Shiva. *Not unless I have a lot of prep time and perhaps every adult member of my clan to back me up.*

"Be welcome to Danan Lord Shiva, Lady Parvati, for the time of this meeting," Harry said formally before going on more normally. "I hear that I have even more to thank you for than I did after we last spoke, Lord Shiva. Thank you for the warning you passed on to Rama. If not for him and his fellow Kshatriya, the ICW's attack on Alexandria would've been far worse, and relations with the Wizarding World would probably have been damaged beyond all hope of recovery."

"We did nothing but give him a strong hint. Whatever else happened was in the hands of Rama," Parvati intoned softly. She looked at Harry closely for a time, then moved to one side and, with a gesture, created a tea set of all things, a British tea set, holding the pot in one hand as the cups hovered around her. "If you could perhaps conjure up some chairs for us? Your nation has given the rest of the Pṛthvī Mātā a great many gifts over time, although it took quite a while for many to be seen as such. But teatime at least was always seen as a magnificent addition to the day."

Chuckling at that as Shiva boomed laughter and the facet in control of him changed, Harry reached down and gently raised a series of chairs and a table from the ground. They wouldn't win any art contests, and it took Harry another moment to get rid of the grass and the roots for a second before changing them all into stone, but they would serve for now. "Please, sit. I understand from Rama that this talk has more to do with dealing with Ophis and the problems she is causing than anything else?"

For just a moment, the facets controlling Lord Shiva fought for control, which was somewhat of a startling sight, seeing the various subtle yet very deep changes in his face shifting from one millisecond to the next. Meanwhile, Parvati sat calmly next to him, pouring three cups of tea that instantly began to steam, giving off an aroma that Harry could not describe. Eventually, Shiva settled on one, a softer expression than the others it'd been fighting with a moment ago, as he lifted the teacup to his lips, sipping appreciatively despite the steam still coming off of it. "As always, my wife, this is magnificent."

*So, the facet of a loving husband, then? It makes some sense as their marriage is a part of their legends, and he is known as the patron god of fathers in one of his smaller aspects,* Harry mused. He took a sip too, just a sip, as even despite his inhuman durability, that tea was a little too hot for his tastes. But it was very tasty, and he commented on it before looking politely at Shiva, waiting for him to speak.

Shiva set down the teacup, staring across the table at Harry, his face once more changing, this time shifting into a snarl of fury, the Destroyer coming to the fore. "Ophis is too strong. Even if you and I worked together we could not best her. Not in a conflict of raw strength. We could

perhaps trap her, she is not very intelligent, but even that would be difficult. Because she now has allies. Like you, we can feel their presence even if we cannot discern where precisely they are. She has brought back evil dragon gods. You have met Ddraig. I can still sense the touch of that Sacred Gear on you. These creatures are so evil that they could not be turned into Sacred Gears like he and Albion despite being as powerful. Rather, they were sealed away. Now several of them are freed, following Ophis.”

Harry’s eyes widened at the implications of that, tying that into the information he had gotten from Luna and the paper she had shown him. One of the things the newspaper that Luna had passed on to him when they first met that morning had mentioned in detail was a huge disaster in China of some kind while also mentioning another in Russia. “So, there is far more magic flowing into the world than there had been before. That’s not good. And you would say these dragons are, what, around the level of a super devil like Sirzechs or more powerful?”

“Somewhat more powerful, although perhaps the demon you mentioned could take on one of them. Yet if Ophis is able to force them to work together, the danger is tremendous. Because that kind of enforced unity is something we could never do, nor any kind of unity with the rest of my Pantheon,” Shiva admitted. “Indra will never work with me. He hates this aspect too much to see that the other aspects speak reason occasionally. Indra will work with humans and already works with the Church. Perhaps he would be willing to work with the Devils and Fallen. Yet Indra will never work with me, nor will Indra work with you any longer, because it is known among the Sanatana Dharma that you and I have had dealings in the past. Not the nature of those dealings, but enough to feed Indra’s paranoia.”

For several seconds, that facet seemed to fight another for control but eventually gave way. It was as if even being as civil as he had been a second ago had taken that facet quite a bit of energy and concentration and, with its peace said, could no longer stay in control. The scholar’s face was back, creating a tent over the teacup on the table, the steam coming up through his fingers. “But you have something that none of those other powers have, Harry Potter.”

“Adaptability, knowledge, and Danan,” Harry said, tapping a finger lightly against his teacup as he took another sip, the tea almost tasting like honey mixed with lavender, yet with a hint of something else. Every sip was different. Every sip was incredibly tasty, making any other drink pale in comparison. *Tea, literally the drink of the gods*, he thought sardonically. “My clan and I have brought together nearly half a dozen different magical schools. Given time, we might figure out a way to funnel some of the magic scourging the Earth into Danan. That idea has been percolating at the back of my mind even as we were dealing with our current troubles.”

“Troubles that you still cannot tell us about due to the ingenuity and power of your Interdict,” Shiva the scholar announced with a nod. “We had run into something similar with Rama, never fear. You need not tell us anything of that sort.”

“Although I feel myself moved to help,” Parvati admitted, interjecting into the conversation for a second, staring at Harry thoughtfully. “Is food part of the trouble you face?”

“It is. The Wizarding World can’t feed even a tithe of the population where we are, so some of my compatriots have taken to what I would call culling expeditions in order to gather enough foodstuffs. But even so, there are several million mouths to feed, and most of Eg... Where we are, the food has spoiled.”

Indeed, thanks to Rias and her transportation network, food, medical aid and shelter from the typical Egyptian heat was the only real trouble facing the entirety of Egypt. There were a lot of other problems facing this sector, but those three were the major ones outside of Alexandria, where all those issues had been mitigated to a large degree.

Parvati smiled then, but Shiva gently took her hand, the devoted husband's face back, as he squeezed it briefly. “Future problems now, my love. Current problems at the end of the conversation.”

At that Parvati turned her smile onto her husband, the expression becoming far warmer. She nodded and subsided once more.

Shiva turned back to Harry, the aesthete face coming back. “Yeah, man, that’s it exactly! You got so many people talking and not making war. It’s amazing! The colors when all of you work together, they’re amazing to look at. But you might need a little more help from us, you know, just if help finish off that little problem of gathering the magic from Pṛthvī Mātā and moving it into Danan, you know? It’s not going to be as easy as picking up a package.”

“I didn’t think it would be. Still, I think it’s possible. Me and mine have already done quite a bit that most would’ve thought impossible. But is allying with us against Ophis all you want to do?” Harry questioned shrewdly.

“My warlike nature wants to help you against Ophis and those who stand alongside her. If there is any kind of confrontation there, expect to call upon me for them. I would be most annoyed if you did not.” For a moment, it seemed as if the scholar would give way to the warrior facet, but his words seemed to soothe that facet down, the changes abruptly stopping and reversing in his face, which was almost more disturbing than if they had finished and then changed back afterward. “But more than that, we would like access to Danan. We can build pocket dimensions, obviously, but the damage to Pṛthvī Mātā has been done. Even after Ophis is dealt with in one way or another, the amount of magic in the world will have to fade to an even starker degree than it did before her arrival. So much so that it might not be able to sustain even the narrow connections we Sanatana Dharma have kept going since creating our pocket realms.”

Here, Shiva’s face shifted to his more aesthete’s face. “That will be a major wrench, man, but Pṛthvī Mātā’s the grandmama, you know?” Shiva waved his arms airily. “It’s gotta be done.”

The implications of that were not pleasant to think about, and Harry wondered how the Wizarding World would react to that. However, he also decided that preparing for that reaction would have to wait until after Ophis either sidelined in some fashion or simply pushed through

the Dimensional Gap to have it out with the Great Red as she so wanted. *I wonder how Le Fay is doing on that project? Sona mentioned that Kuroka told her and Rias that Le Fay was the one working on it, but Kuroka had no idea how far along she was.*

“That doesn’t sound good, but... Are we talking about just you and your family, Lord Shiva, or the rest of your pantheon? The last thing I want to do is to introduce your pantheon to Danan and have you bring along your various grievances, gripes, and conflicts with one another. Especially if they have any chance of spilling over into your mortal followers, who undoubtedly would also like access to Danan.”

“Eventually, they might. At the moment, that is not material. The Sanatana Dharma has no need of space nor resources, and non-magical India, although far smaller these days than in the past, has no need for it either. Nor do the rest of my pantheon need access to Danan. If it is just for my family and our allies, I can agree that we will be keeping the peace for certain. No matter how much my role as Destroyer would like otherwise. But that domain does not control me as much as Indra thinks it does,” Lord Shiva answered firmly, the scholar side ascendant once more.

“And can you give us any help in figuring out how to divert the magical energies of Earth into Danan? I have some thoughts there, but to cover the whole world and to somehow create an effect that will drain away the magic without having an impact on the natural world is going to be very hard.”

In response to that, Shiva held up a hand, and in that hand, there suddenly rested a large stone tablet, about an inch wider than Shiva’s hand around. He laid it on the table, leaning forward and tapping it as Harry also leaned forward. “These are a series of runes that we Hindu gods created to...”

What followed at that point was a very detailed discussion. Harry quickly set up an area in the portion of his mental realm set aside for memory to take it all in, amazed at the details on the runes he was being shown, two of which not even Rune Master Dutugamunu knew of. They weren’t the entire picture; these runes alone would not allow Harry and his people to create the draining effect they needed. But it did at least give them a corner of that puzzle. *And as horrible as it is to contemplate, I would wager one other corner can be found in the working Akhenaten and Nefertiti created, damn their dark souls.*

After that, the discussion started to peter out, and Harry and Shiva decided to end their talks for now. Continual access to Danan would come after Ophis was dealt with, which Lord Shiva was fine with, so long as Harry and his cooperative worked on the problem of removing the magical strain Earth was under at the same time as they tried to find the ‘stupidly powerful shapeshifting invader’ as Shiva put it.

As the two gods stood, Harry made the table and chairs flow back into the ground underneath them. As he was busy with that, Parvati moved forward, touching Harry’s chest lightly with two

fingers before he could ask what she was doing. He gasped then as something completely bypassed his mental defenses (a horrifying thought, really, but one he was too shocked to consider at the moment), embedding something that felt almost like a new spell in his head for a moment.

As Harry stumbled back, staring at her, the Sanatana Dharma's goddess of beauty smiled at him faintly, then turned away, heading towards the portal. "Merely a gift for the people of wherever you are currently. You will know what to do when you return."

Harry frowned a bit at that, not liking the way Parvati had gone about that. Looking over to Shiva for some help, he was disappointed as the god simply laughed, clapping one large hand on Harry's shoulder. Even now, despite the amount of arcane power he had gathered into himself, that blow still nearly sent Harry to his knees. "Don't look at me for an explanation there," the loving husband said, staring after his wife. "Women are laws unto themselves, mortal or not it matters not. Until we meet again Harry Potter, be well, and do give your own wives my greetings."

With that, Shiva followed after his wife, stepping forward through the portal, which closed almost instantly behind them, popping out of existence, the statue shrinking down to its original form, nearly disappearing in the grass where the portal had once been. Harry stepped forward gingerly, picking it up with one hand as the other rubbed his chest, feeling the potential Blessing in his mind. As he mentally examined it, Harry realized it wasn't an enchantment, as there was no actual power behind it. It simply sat there, inert in his mind, a small bit of Parvati's domain, not a connection or anything else. *Oh, thank goodness. That's like, like sending the image of a bomb instead of the actual bomb. If Parvati could just... bypass my mental defenses like that with something actually dangerous, well... that would be bloody fucking bad.*

Calming down, Harry examined the thing further, the physical realm disappearing to his senses for a second as his mental avatar appeared in his Occlumentic realm. Walking around the glowing web, Harry probed it a bit, frowning thoughtfully. He could almost liken it to a template on a word processor, an outline or form that he would have to fill in in order to create the blessing. What it was, Harry didn't know, but given what Parvati had said earlier and her various domains, he had a guess. *And if I'm right, well, I would not be surprised at all if the food issue in Egypt will suddenly no longer be a problem.*

Coming back to the physical realm, Harry saw that a large lion of some sort, it had a large barbed tail like a mantichore, but lacked other characteristics, had come out of the forest and was about to pounce on him. A glare accompanying his releasing his aura froze the creature in shock. "Bugger off."

A moment later, the creature unfroze and turned, barbed tail between its legs.

Shaking his head, Harry headed back to the fal stone, deciding to leave it where it was. *That critter wouldn't be very dangerous against someone armed with a gun and certainly didn't seem like an ambush predator. I think the colonists or settlers will be able to deal with it.*

With that, he decided to head back to Egypt, grateful that he had thought to change the Undertaking's timeframe to one hour on Earth equaling three hearing Danan. Thus, while it was late evening in Danan by the time he returned, it was still midafternoon when he returned to Egypt.

There, Harry fought with himself, the urge to just keep ignoring the pull from the Nile, which had grabbed his mind once more, simply because he hated the idea of giving into something that was trying to demand his attention by shouting into his mind. But after a second, Harry knew that was simply being childish. With a sigh, he created two Patroni, sending them off to find Asia and Lily. It was time to deal with whatever was going on with the Nile, and Harry wanted his two daughters with him, that instinct telling him that having them nearby where he could see them was a very good idea.

When they met up, Lily her arms crossed over her small chest, as she glared angrily at the river. "Are you sure we need to be here for this, Daddy?"

"Unfortunately, I am, puppy." Harry wrapped an arm around her shoulders and another one around Asia, who was also staring apprehensively at the river, not taking his own eyes off it either, feeling something... wrong? Not bad wrong, but not good wrong either from it now that he was so close. "Whatever is going on here was calling out to both of you, and I want you both where I can see you when I figure out why."

Kala and Yasaka stood nearby having accompanied the girls from where they had been along with Kunou. But this wasn't something that either of them could help with. As a bandrui, Yubelluna could access some of Harry's powers and use them in her role as druid priestess, but even she could not access a Blessing directly, certainly, not one that Harry had not initially created, rather simply taking over as he had the one on the river Nile.

Both girls nodded reluctantly and clasping one another's hands, they followed Harry as he went down to the river's edge. There, he knelt and hesitantly placed his hand on top of the water, letting it sink in as he closed his eyes. Around him, the physical realm faded into the background as Harry once more thrust his mind into the Nile and the Blessing therein.

And almost immediately, he could tell something was wrong. The Blessing was there, but instead of feeling like a bright band of goodness following the water from one end of Egypt to the next, the Blessing felt... bloated, almost. But not like a snake that had eaten too much, rather like a volcano about to erupt, finally given away to release the pressure within. *Alright, my initial assumption of something being wrong with the Blessing is a bit off. Whatever this is, it isn't really affecting the Blessing itself, more the texture of it... damn, words just don't really convey deific powers well, do they?*

After a few moments of probing around the edges of the Blessing, Harry took the plunge and connected to the Blessing directly. And almost regretted it.

**POWER.** Rippling, addicting, euphoric **power** flowed into Harry, a tornado force trying to push its way through into his being, unfettered. Shuddering, Harry gasped, blazing yellow and white energy pouring off him, paralyzing him, ecstasy and agony throbbing through his mind and body. Agony from the sheer amount of it, pleasure from the same thing, something Harry likened to Dark Curse Syndrome, a sickness that those who used Curses fell into, feeling pleasure from the use of the dark spells.

In a lesser way, the same thing occurred to both Asia and Lily, who cried out in shock, falling to their knees, neither having the knowledge of magic to realize what was happening or where the power was coming from. Behind them, Yube and Yasaka heard this and raced forward, but couldn't do anything, unable to get to grips with the power flowing into the two girls and Harry.

Instantly, Lily transformed into her phoenix werewolf form. The physical pain accompanying the deific energies faded, but she was still almost paralyzed with the sensation, her fur on end as she growled, pulling Asia into a hug that tried to protect her from the pain. But she couldn't, and Asia whimpered, grunted, and pushed through the pain on her own, gritting her teeth so hard blood began to drip from her mouth. Asia's soul, so recently healed from losing a part of it forever, shivered at the influx of deific power but did not break anew.

Through the haze the energy had woven through his mind, Harry realized what was happening. *This power... it's raw deific energy, not from a god, but the kind that would feed one, the energy of belief, of worship!* This was the same type of energy that had made up a decent chunk of what Akhenaten had wanted to harvest from the Egyptian population, along with their life force and souls. For a moment, he wondered where it came from, and why it was there, but the second was easy enough to answer, the discovery of that leading to the understanding of the first. The Nile had been the source of life for Egypt for its entire existence. *The Blessing, it must have acted like a, like a magnet, almost gathering up the faith of... of when Asia, me and my ladies created the miracle we did. Before and after...*

The gathered power of people who had prayed both before and during Asia's miracle. The people who had thanked Asia or Harry in their prayers since. Pure faith. An energy that no being but a god could access and tied already to Harry and his family because it had been their act that had created the upswell of prayers. Because Harry had taken control of the Nile and the Blessing within. And now, that energy, which had filled the Blessing in their absence, had only one way to go, the way it was meant to: into Harry and those who shared his blood. *As gods...*

Once more, a part of Harry tried to balk, tried to shy away from what he was feeling. The idea of being a God, of being able to gather worshipers to him, to take power from their belief, was appalling to him. Harry had never wanted to be a leader, let alone the center of a religion. Nor had he wanted that for his children. But then he realized it wouldn't matter, really. *I'm already a... well in the amount of power, I'm already on the god tier... drat it, Koneko.* Even through the



pain and the pleasure of the power ratcheting through him, Harry had to fight back a groan at the term that had come to him then. *It's, this power won't force me further into the mold of a real faith-fed deity. It... it just needs to be used.*

At that point, Harry became aware of his daughters going through the same feeling. He could barely hear Asia praying, finding that somewhat ironic, and Lily growling and yelping, anger at the pain she was in overriding her fear. And then, Harry pushed through the pain and pleasure in his mind from the power and slowly, like a man trying to squeeze a water hose, closed the connection, lessening the amount of energy coming through them. "It, it's alright girls. We, we can handle this..."

Asia gasped in relief as Lily just growled low in her throat, trying to rein in the anger that had overridden her fear and pain with difficulty. "Wh, what is it, Dad!? Where did that energy come from?"

"Faith, lovey. Faith-based power. It had nowhere to go, so it was sort of attracted to the Blessing in the River. It needs someplace to go, and it can only go into us because I'm the one that controls the river." Harry would probably need to explain more about that later, but right now, Asia was not in the right frame of mind to understand that she herself had been the focus of those prayers. "We, we need to take it in a little at a time."

"Grrrrrr.... But it's changing us, Daddy! It's trying to make us, make us bigger, trying to make us change!" Lily growled, trying to convey what she was feeling but not really having the words and having trouble controlling herself.

"It will, Lily, but not who you are. Think of it like..." Harry struggled to come up with an example that Lily would understand, that would let the little redhead push through what she was feeling. "Like you've become the Doctor's police box. Your character's the outer shell, right? That doesn't change. But you're just being made bigger on the inside."

Yube and Yasaka were close enough to hear this, and both spluttered, knowing that the explanation made no sense and yet also kind of did, since, thanks to Harry being a demigod at the time and the phoenix tears, Asia had been a low-tier demigod before this. Lily had likewise gone through several changes since coming to Kuoh, but this would certainly be the biggest one. She would no longer be mortal in any sense of the word, not even on the level she had been before as a phoenix werewolf.

But it worked for Lily and even Asia, who had been introduced to Doctor Who by the younger girl. Shocking Yasaka into a chitter of laughter, Lily instantly let out a laugh and began to go, "OOOowwwwaoooo..." while Asia just giggled at the imagery.

Kunou didn't care for any of that, simply rushing in and hugging the two girls, giving what comfort and support she could. Yasaka and Yube both followed, with Yubelluna moving to envelop Harry in a hug from behind as Yasaka gathered all three girls into her own hug.

Hearing that, Harry smiled and slowly eased off his grip on the power, letting it flow through the three of them at a much more controlled rate, knowing he had to let it happen, as his earlier allusion to a volcano was all too accurate. The reason why the Blessing on the Nile had so demanded his, Lily and Asia's attention was that the amount of faith-based energy within it was building to a crescendo that would shatter the confines of the deific enchantment and let wild magic power spill out into the physical realm. What that would mean Harry didn't know as it wasn't, technically, raw magical power like what Ophis was allowing to leak into the world. But the last thing the world, and Egypt in particular, needed was another random element breaking out like that.

But rather than letting the power of the gathered prayers fuel him and his daughters more, Harry knew precisely how to use that energy. As the deific energy filled him, Harry concentrated not just on controlling that flow but on the outline of the Blessing that Parvati had pushed into his mind.

As Yubelluna watched, Harry also pulled on Yube and, through her, her connection to nature. Not understanding what he was doing but trusting Harry, Yube gave of it easily and watched as his free hand came up from where it had been pressed into the ground. He gestured as if he was holding something in one hand and then dipping it down into the Nile, filling it.

To his side, Lily and Asia both saw that, almost as if it was real, a haze of some kind of energy net in one hand, with multicolored lights coming out of the river, filling the net. And then, as Harry brought that hand back to the ground, the energy net exploded, sending the new Blessing outward, not into the Nile, but around it on both banks.

All four onlookers there and many across all of Egypt who just happened to be near the Nile gasped as the cobblestones underneath their feet exploded, replaced by grass, with trees starting to bloom so suddenly, growing from seed to fully grown and loaded with fruit in a few seconds. Within ten yards or so on both sides of the Nile from one end to the other, a garden suddenly blossomed, fit to make the famed Garden of Eden seem small in comparison, ripe with fruit and vegetables fit to feed a nation.

"Wow, Daddy! I knew you and Yube could work some awesome green magic, but this is something else," Lily whispered, her eyes wide in delight and her werewolf form fading as the deific energy thrumming through them started to fade.

"Yes, well, I made a new friend right before this moment that is partly to blame for this. I'm going to have to think of a gift basket for her," Harry answered, taking the typical British understatement well past where it honestly should have given way.

Slowly, the energy flowing into the trio from the Nile faded out, leaving all three...MORE than they had been, but less than the true omnipotent deities that Akhenaten and his wife had hoped to become. But that was more than fine by Harry. As Yasaka began to fuss over Asia and Lily, he plunged his mind back into the blessing of the river, using his control of the river to let

his voice be heard all along the length of the river as he had during the Harvest. “Ladies and Gentlemen of Egypt,” Harry began, his voice reverberating oddly to those in his actual presence but thankfully not loud enough to cause either of the kitsune or Lily any pain.

“My name is Harry Potter. Many of you will have heard my voice before, and many of you will have known what we, those family members and loved ones with me, have done since we arrived in Egypt. How we tried to stop the disaster that Akhenaten launched at the throat of your people. We have done our best to help repair the damage done. Those of you within sight of the river Nile will now see another example of this. It is a gift given freely to you all. With this garden, although it will only last a short time, Egypt’s food problems are solved.”

Elsewhere in the city of Alexandria, people began to cheer, seeing the bright green forest growing up where the river Nile passed through the city. In Damanhur, a similar cheer arose, taken up all along the Nile. Even those people who lived on tributaries of the river where it became a delta shouted and roared in delight. Areas where there had previously been farms now simply stared at fields that looked like the very picture of harvest time. It was amazing, it was astonishing and awe-inspiring, and everyone staring at it now knew that Harry Potter truly was magic, in the truest sense of the word, and they loved him for it.

“But this in no way is simply the latest way of helping you get over the disaster that occurred here. It is not recompense for not stopping that disaster in the first place. It is not recompense for how magic has so badly wounded Egypt. Nor is it payment for your silence going forward.” Harry waited for the sheer exultation of his first statement to pass and the reality of his second to percolate through his listeners before continuing on. *Sorry for stealing some of your thunder, gentlemen and ladies, but this is just too good a moment to pass up.* A part of him hated thinking like that, but the rest, trained by Rias and Yasaka, knew that he had to strike while the iron was hot.

“I say silence, yes, because, although they went about it badly, the witches and wizards who attacked last night here in Alexandria had a point. The world is not ready to know about magic as a whole. The conflict here would seem like small change in comparison to the disaster that it could create. But whereas the international Confederacy of Wizards wanted to simply use the stick, to demand, to take over by force, I offer a deal. A deal that I gave to your leaders earlier today, a deal that will allow us all to go forward into the future together. When they share it with you, I ask you, young and old, men and women alike, to consider it. I urge you to take it. So that we, you, my clan, and the people of Egypt will stand together going forward. We have survived. We will continue to survive. Now is the time to think of the future and imagine how bright it can be working together!”

The answer was even more cheering, shouting, a roar of approval loud enough to shake the very heavens.

OOOOOO

And it was at that point that Rias stepped through the Floo with the leaders of the ICW, both the Wumpus and every single leader of an ICW-aligned nation, behind her...

### **End Chapter**

So... this isn't the full chapter. I have four other small, interconnected scenes, almost but not quite finished, that would have wrapped up Egypt and everything going on there before leading us directly into a bit of lemony quiet time and then setting up the next adventure, which might all be done in one chapter itself. But due to how much time I've already spent on this this month, I didn't want to take up another two days to get them done and added in. If I can come back before the end of the month, fine, I'll load it up as a separate chapter. But for now, folks, that's all. See you next month, as I have decided to push this story forward to its conclusion. At that point, I will then work on editing the last chapters of ATP and finish Making Waves.