

# Nomad Void

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# Savellawell

With Reignited Flames

# Copyright

SAVEHAVEN: WITH REIGNITED FLAMES  
NOMAD VOID

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## Circumstances

With the Magister's thoughts isolated from the outside world, a black iron fence in his peripheral vision is the only thing guiding and keeping him from wandering off.

He snaps out having almost bumped into a student of his academy, who crosses his path in a jog as she enters an enclosed space, heading towards wide four-storeyed building inside.

THE MAGISTER

---

“A dormitory?”

He quickly finds the building's address on a plate next to gates.

THE MAGISTER

---

“That's Aeri's dormitory. She skipped classes for the remainder of the last week, but now that it's the beginning of the week... I should probably check on her.”

With a new objective in mind, he takes a turn and walks through the gates.

As he makes his way closer to doors, he can't help but notice the eyes of a few academy students drawn to him. It does appear Magistern aren't frequent visitors here. It becomes obvious the moment he crosses the doorstep.

Inside, he is greeted by a lone student, whose long black hair is neatly done in a ponytail with only a clean cut bang in the front. Clad in a short coat and a skirt of the standard academy's white-black colours, she has two pistol-like weapons holstered on a black belt, whilst holding a contraption shaped like a metal musket in her hands.

THE MAGISTER

---

Hell—

STUDENT ON DUTY

---

Male intruder. Die.

She does not hesitate backing her word by instantly pointing the contraption at him.

THE MAGISTER

---

W-wait! I'm a Magister.

After the Magister pulls his identification card from his bag, the girl's blue-green eyes inspect the document shown to her, whilst the Magister's eyes inspect hers. They seem to be of a slightly different colour, though he can't tell if it is a result of light playing tricks.

Having looked at the card for a few seconds, the girl withdraws the contraption and places it vertically on the floor as she stands at attention, fixing her eyes in their sockets, looking directly ahead.

STUDENT ON DUTY

---

My apologies, sir. Yansun Jong'yuk, 4th year, Gunslinger Kol. How can I be of assistance?

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. I am here to visit one of the students. There is no problem with that, correct?

YANSUN

---

A relationship between a student and a Magister is not prohibited as long as it does not break the laws of Inakray, sir.

THE MAGISTER

---

Please don't let people hear it.

YANSUN

---

Understood, sir. I will keep your relationship a secret.

THE MAGISTER

---

No, that's not what I meant. We are not in a relationship. I am just here for a talk.

YANSUN

---

Of course, sir. I will not inquire why you chose to visit a student at the dormitory instead of making an arrangement at the academy.

THE MAGISTER

---

That's because she hasn't shown up at the academy for a few days now.

YANSUN

---

This is a very believable explanation, sir.

Her dry tone conveys the opposite impression.

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. Can you tell me where I can find Aeri Uylonyuk?

YANSUN

---

Fourth floor, room seventeen.

THE MAGISTER

---

Thank you.

He then proceeds to ascend up the stairs past the girl.

YANSUN

---

Good luck with your date, sir.

As if hit on the head by the weight of these words, he freezes mid-stairs for a second, not sure how and if to respond, eventually proceeding to his destination in silence.

Having arrived at the door, he stands there for a short while, his hand raised and ready to knock: with this visit not being planned in advance, he takes this time to think how to properly start a conversation.

After a knock, a response comes almost immediately.

AERI

---

It's open.

THE MAGISTER

---

It's me. Can I come in?

AERI

---

Yes, yes. Come in already.

The opened door reveals Aeri in unexpected attire: beige undergarments. She stands by a table under a window, pouring hot tea into a cup, her back facing the Magister.

AERI

---

What do you w—

She freezes for a few seconds when she turns to look at the visitor, her eyes widening and her hand blindly reaching behind. A ceramic kettle, which she has put down a moment ago, momentarily flies to the door as soon as her fingers get a grip on the handle.

The Magister barely manages to evade it, with the wall taking a hit in his stead as the kettle shatters and spatters the tea. He then hides to the side before finding out how many more throwable items there are in the room.

AERI

---

What are you thinking entering a girl's room?

THE MAGISTER

---

I knocked and even said it was me.

The room erupts in a cacophony of chaotic sounds: wooden doors and drawers opening and closing and fabric being unfolded and put on, accompanied by a series of angry footsteps around the room.

AERI

---

As if I was expecting it. What kind of Magister casually walks into a student dorm?

THE MAGISTER

---

The one that has something to discuss? And you know, people usually wear something like a pyjama at home.

AERI

---

Oh, so that's your fetish? Maybe you didn't like the colour, huh? I have other undergarments. Maybe you want to see me in one of those, pervert?

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. This doesn't seem like the right time to talk. I'll come back—

AERI

---

Stay right where you are!

This command makes him feel like a prisoner waiting for his executioner to make preparations.

After a minute the room becomes quiet.

AERI

---

Come in.

Cautiously, the Magister accepts the invite, which sounded more like a command. He peeps behind the frame before stepping into the room, in the middle of which Aeri stands with her arms folded and her face painted with extreme dissatisfaction. The sun behind the window shines through untidied strands of her hair, creating a fiery veil around her as they flow down her uniform instead of being tied up in a ponytail.

AERI

---

What do you want?

THE MAGISTER

---

I came to check on you, see if you are all right.

AERI

---

Huuh? Is that it? Are you really here not look at girls in their undergarments?

THE MAGISTER

---

Aeri, you haven't shown up at the academy for quite a few days now.

AERI

---

Oh, that. Right.

Her eyes that have been looking straight at him suddenly jump to the side.

AERI

---

I just needed a few days to calm down so that I don't smash her face into a wall the next time I see that bitch. I was going to return tomorrow.

THE MAGISTER

---

And that is it? You are not planning to fight her again?

AERI

---

No... not until I figure out a better plan.

The Magister pretends he didn't hear the last part.

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. On that note, I know you said that witches at the Vanguard Academy aren't quite friendly towards each other, but is the competition that bad that students would try to get others expelled?

AERI

---

Sorry, I forgot where I put my notes with all the students that got expelled.

She feels a little bit awkward seeing the Magister's face almost begging her to give a serious answer.

AERI

---

No. What she did crosses the line.

THE MAGISTER

---

Could Harin really have been working on something that important that Kiara could see as a threat?

AERI

---

Kiara? So you know the bitch's name?

THE MAGISTER

---

I wouldn't— yes. I've looked into her profile.

AERI

---

Oh? And what did you find there?



Something that has been on his mind since after the day Aeri clashed with Kiara.

----

The first thing the Magister did the next morning was visit the book case with students' profiles. The insignia on Kiara's right arm suggested she was a sixth year student, narrowing the Magister's search to one shelf. The very first folder he took had a label that read *Ashen Kol*.

---

#### THE MAGISTER

'Ashen Kol'? These children sure aren't optimists.

One by one he opened the files, looking only at photos inside. The photo he found in the fourth folder depicted a familiar face.

---

#### THE MAGISTER

That's her. Kiara Kostenabe.

He skipped the front page, hoping to find insights in the extended reference page, but from what he could read there she appeared to be an exemplary student, excelling at all disciplines and being the best at a few. It prompted him to go back and study the front page in detail where he had overlooked the line stating her motivation right under her name.

---

#### THE MAGISTER

This is— What happened, Kiara?

----

---

#### THE MAGISTER

From the looks of it, she is one of the top students at the academy. Hence I asked about Harin.

---

#### AERI

Harin is two years behind her. So to be a threat to a sixth year? Hardly see it possible. Though, she managed to surprise people even before we entered the Dedication years. She is the top student amongst fourth years. We don't share everything we work on with each other—not because we don't trust each other, but to stimulate individual thinking—so she might have been cooking

something. But if we didn't know about it, beats me how that bitch could have. Though it's Harin we are talking about: she is careless, and I'm always telling her to be more discreet. But even if she *was* working on something, even if that bitch knew about it, what does it matter?

THE MAGISTER

---

I hope this will help me get to the bottom of this conflict.

AERI

---

What bottom? You already know what she did and why. Why would you want to dig into it?

THE MAGISTER

---

To help her before she makes any more mistakes.

AERI

---

Help her?

Aeri's face explodes in emotion, emanating a wave of negative energy.

AERI

---

She almost murdered my friends and even dragged a student of another academy into it, and you want to help her? What is wrong with you?

THE MAGISTER

---

I understand your feelings, and they are justified, but — Remember how we first met? You attacked Orena on false assumptions.

AERI

---

That was different. It was a mistake. I wasn't aware of the situation. But that bitch knew what she was doing. What was it that she said? 'Calculated and done in cold blood?'

THE MAGISTER

---

Mistakes that lie on the surface are easily correctable, other are rooted deeper and you first need to know where they are coming from.

AERI

---

Then good luck finding it on your own. I know you helped me, but this is asking for too much. I don't care for what reason she did it. All I care about is that she pays for it.

THE MAGISTER

---

Then all the more you should help me.

AERI

---

What kind of twisted logic is that?

THE MAGISTER

---

Can you think of any way of making her pay other than violence?

AERI

---

I can — ... No, I can't. And I don't need to. She can't understand the pain that she caused unless she feels it.

THE MAGISTER

---

But it's not Harin's pain that you want her to feel, it's yours. And this pain is not physical. If it is what you want, you should make her realise her wrongdoing, regret her actions. Bruises can be healed, but you cannot wash away the guilt as easily. And even if she earns the forgiveness, she will never fully forgive herself.

Aeri stays silent for a few seconds, her face a mixture of surprise and confusion.

AERI

---

Wow, that's wicked. I almost feel like beating the shite out of her would be a mercy compared to your idea.

THE MAGISTER

---

I didn't mean to make that impression. I was just —

AERI

---

It was a *joke*. I get what you mean. But... I'm just not in the right state of mind right now. Let's talk about this tomorrow, all right?

THE MAGISTER

---

Of course. I've come to check on you in the first place after all. So—

His eyes focus on the window behind Aeri, where upwards shooting lightning briefly appears.

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. It seems I do have to get used to this.

AERI

---

Huh? What are you talking about? Used to what?

In around five seconds a thunderclap follows.

THE MAGISTER

---

This.

Aeri turns around and comes to the window, looking into the distance as she tries to locate the source of the sound. Then lightning flashes again, mostly obscured by the academy building.

AERI

---

Oh, that's normal. Somebody must be testing a contraption or something.

Just as the sound of it reaches her ears, a diagonal stream of fire appears somewhere within the academy's walls.

AERI

---

Though sharing the testing ground with someone else is strange.

Again fire erupts, but this time in an explosion, as a bright projectile hits the walls of the upper floors of the main academy building.

AERI

---

Not to mention damaging the academy.

THE MAGISTER

---

I'll better go see what it is.

AERI

---

Do you have to get involved every time there is a conflict? It's probably just two students fighting.

THE MAGISTER

---

You're probably right. I left earlier, so other Magistern should still be there.

The chaotic show shows no signs of quelling. On the contrary, fire and lightning flash with increasing intensity.

THE MAGISTER

---

Somebody will intervene and resolve whatever is happening there...

Air blasts join the stage, creating visible expanding shockwaves.

THE MAGISTER

---

Eventually...

AERI

---

All right, all right, this is definitely something serious. I'll go with you.

After the Magister exits the room, Aeri picks her weapon from under her bed and follows him, tying her hair into a ponytail on the go.

\*\*\*\*

When both arrive at the academy's gates, they are met by a disastrous sight. Several academy students are lying unconscious before the main building's façade. The walls are damaged, bearing radial scorch marks, and a few windows are shattered. The fence has also taken some hits, its steel rods bent like flower petals in a few places and having convex indents in a few other.

There is but one girl who is still conscious. She sits on the ground near the gates, her hand wrapped around the left arm.

THE MAGISTER

---

Are you —

Burns and bruises falling into his sight through the damaged parts of the uniform render the half-finished question redundant.



THE MAGISTER

---

Hang in there. What has happened here?

VANGUARD STUDENT

---

These monsters... they suddenly appeared. They started attacking everyone and it turned into chaos.

THE MAGISTER

---

Monsters?

AERI

---

Just what in the coven's name is going on here?

Her attention is drawn to the sound of stone crushing in the wake of a powerful impact that can be heard on the opposite side of the main building of the academy.

She darts to a corner and peeps from behind it, confirming there are no threats down the path, and then disappears behind it.

THE MAGISTER

---

Just hang in there. I'll be back soon.

He follows Aeri into the corner and sees her at the end of an alley between a wall and the steel fence. He back against the wall, she is observing what is happening in the backyard, now with a little more caution. Before he can reach her, she dives into a corner again.

THE MAGISTER

---

Aeri—

After following her and taking a turn, Aeri rams into him, pushing him back. A blazing flame arrow then flies near the spot he occupied a moment ago, going through the steel fence and leaving a deformed hole in the black rods as it melts its way through.

AERI

---

You have a death wish? You're not a witch: one hit and you're dead. Stay out of— just stay behind something.

THE MAGISTER

---

So what's going on?

AERI

---

As if I'd know! I have just got here. All I can see are flashes and explosions from invocations. I don't know who is fighting whom, but I assume it's students fighting...

She cautiously peeps around the corner again.

AERI

---

...them.

THE MAGISTER

---

Them?

Trailing her movements, he takes a look, his head above hers.

There are two students taking turns performing attacks: one behind a corner of an annexe attached to the opposite side of the main building, the other hiding behind the stairs leading to the inner square in the centre.

The former holds a contraption that looks like a large metal bow. After inserting a long cylindrical object into a larger one that sits in the middle of what looks like a metal bow string, she pulls it back, makes a step to the side, and releases the string. When the string straightens and the cylinder makes contact with the large metal part near the grip, flames erupt in the front, taking the shape of a spearhead that soars towards the opponent.

The girl behind the stairs peeps from behind it and ducks the same moment seeing the flame. The blazing projectile goes over her head creating a wave as it collides with the wall, kinetic energy pushing it across the stone surface in the direction of the Magister and Aeri. They can feel the residual heat drying the skin on their faces even as they dive back to avoid the blast.

THE MAGISTER

---

I don't understand what you mean.

AERI

---

Look closely. The one on the stairs.

The Magister squeezes his eyes, trying to get the details of a girl with sparse dark-brown hair. He finally catches the feature that Aeri implied when the girl turns around, placing a spherical object into a cannon-like barrel of her arcane contraption. Her face is distorted beyond recognition. A closer glance reveals that it's a face of the dead: the skin is dark, dehydrated, torn, and riddled with rotten-through holes.

THE MAGISTER

---

What is this? She looks like she's...

AERI

---

A corpse.

THE MAGISTER

---

Is this even possible? I thought the reanimation of the dead was just a rumour from the old times.

AERI

---

No. I mean, maybe. I don't know. It's one of the forbidden fields of research in witchcraft. So I guess it is possible.

The disfigured girl tenses, her weapon held tight. Neither she nor her opponent makes any moves, both waiting for the other to act. When they finally move, they do it in synchrony: a flame arrow thrusts forward with a spherical projectile, distorted by a thick pocket of air surrounding it, flying her way. The flame hit the girl on the stairs, knocking her out, and whilst the sphere's trajectory is off by a few centimetres, the impact shatters the corner, hitting the girl with debris. Then the second burst follows and blasts her away. She loses consciousness after hitting the fence.

AERI

---

Now's our chance. Stay behind me.

They jog to the stairs, where the disfigured girl lies. Aeri stops one step away, her weapon ready, with the Magister looking over her shoulder.

AERI

---

Well, for one, I didn't hallucinate. It *is* a corpse.

THE MAGISTER

---

I don't smell anything.

AERI

---

What? You mean figuratively?

THE MAGISTER

---

No, it doesn't smell. There should be stench of rot or decay.

AERI

---

You're right. I don't smell anything either.

THE MAGISTER

---

And look at the uniform: other than the damage caused by the fire, it's in perfect condition.

As he looks closer at the burnt out hole in the uniform, he notices the girl's chest expanding a little and then sinking back.

THE MAGISTER

---

Wait, her chest is moving. Is she breathing?

AERI

---

Breathing? A corpse does not need to breathe. Maybe this has something to do with how this reanimation works. It might have reactivated some of the vital body processes.

The Magister then attempts to move past Aeri, but his movement is blocked by her arm.

AERI

---

What are you doing?

THE MAGISTER

---

I want to have a closer look. Maybe there's something else that we're not seeing.

AERI

---

We don't even know what it is exactly. It can wake up and attack any moment.

THE MAGISTER

---

We need to understand what is happening.

AERI

---

Since when did you become an expert in witchcraft? Leave this to the coven. The only thing we can do is help put down those things. I mean *I* can. *You* should leave. It's not safe for you.

THE MAGISTER

---

You can't expect me to walk away from this as if nothing happened.

AERI

---

What else *can* you do? You see this is not a fight between witches.

THE MAGISTER

---

What do *you* plan to do? Do you know the number of the enemies and what they are capable of? Do you know where they are concentrated, where to provide assistance first? Can you organise the students to bring—

AERI

---

All right, all right! You made your point. So what do you suggest?

THE MAGISTER

---

First off—

The Magister shrinks momentarily right after voluminous flames roll over their heads from the edge of the inner square, splitting into several streams as they squeeze through the gaps in stone railings, painting them black.



#### THE MAGISTER

---

First off, let's head to the inner square and see if we can find anyone there who can give us clues as to what is happening.

#### AERI

---

Do you instinctively rush into fires whenever you see them? Fine. Stay behind me, move only when I tell you.

Aeri ascends up the stairs. Her eyes level the floor, running forward through a green corridor between two square pavilions, encircled by chest-high trimmed bushes along the perimeter. Whilst the right side is smoking with a burnt-out conical trail slicing it through the centre, the left side is somehow intact.

#### AERI

---

Come. Quickly.

She takes two steps forward, letting the Magister walk behind her, and then hides behind the bushes beside him.

#### AERI

---

So what's the next move?

#### THE MAGISTER

---

Let me assess the situation.

Raising his body just enough that only his head shows above the green ledge, he observes the surroundings. The picture is similar to what they have witnessed near the gates and in the backyard but on a much larger scale, with at least a dozen students involved and another dozen lying around unconscious.

There are two people opposing each other in the open hallway with a balcony on the fourth floor at the far end of the square. The doors under the balcony serve as a cover for a pair of students, who target an enemy hiding behind a tree in the far right pavilion. Two more adversaries are facing each other on the opposite sides of a pavilion on the left.

The latter two draw his attention as both of them look similar to the monstrosity lying near the stairs. With a closer look, they appear almost identical not only to

her but to each other, which is hard to confirm at the moment given the situation.

An oddity catches his eye when he sees another disfigured girl hiding behind a pillar in the middle of the passage that runs along the right side of the square. With something that looks like a folded metal umbrella without a canopy, at first she appears preparing for an attack, but whenever her body attempts to make a move out of cover, she momentarily freezes midway and sticks back to the pillar.

Just as she attempts to make a step outside yet again, a powerful water blast hits the pillar behind her, scarring its surface. Another blast widens it to a concave with cracks spreading from it like a web. A third blast makes the girl tumble as the upper part of the pillar gets shattered to pieces.

Whilst she is getting up on her feet, her adversary, a blonde girl in a stark blue uniform, takes the aim to finish the job. She pulls the trigger, but from a large hollow barrel only a stream of air appears. It reaches the girl, causing her only to hit the ground again after she barely straightened up.

The blonde girl then takes one of blue-coloured capsules placed in a row on her belt, opens a box on the left side of her contraption, and replaces one of five identical capsules inside. When she closes the box and raises the weapon, her target has already vanished behind a corner of a pavilion, appearing in the direct sight of Aeri, who does not hesitate for a second before aiming at her.

THE MAGISTER

Aeri, no! Wait!

The Magister grabs her by the sleeve just as her weapon starts crackling with electricity.

AERI

What are you doing?

THE MAGISTER

Let me talk to her.

AERI

---

What? Have you gone mad?

THE MAGISTER

---

Just trust me. There is something wrong here.

She turns her head to look at the creature that now seems to cower in fear, crouched on the ground with her hands wrapped around her head in the anticipation of an attack from Aeri. Before she can decide how to handle the request of the Magister, she is forced to shift her attention seeing the blonde girl closing the distance as her silhouette blinks behind the pillars.

AERI

---

Damn it!

As her left hand frees the other, taking the hold of the grip, she dives into her bag for a spherical metal contraption that flies towards the blonde girl the moment she appears ahead in the corner. With a clang it finds the blonde's forehead, bouncing upwards.

BLONDE GIRL

---

Ouch!

AERI

---

Don't move, Lyuta.

LYUTA

---

Aeri? What is the meaning of this?

AERI

---

I said don't move!

Aeri moves her contraption closer to shoulder, demonstrating her readiness to act in response to seeing Lyuta make an attempt to raise her contraption.

LYUTA

---

Do you have something to do with this?

AERI

---

Don't be an idiot.

LYUTA

---

Then what is your game here?

AERI

---

I'm not the one calling the shots right now. He is.

Aeri slightly tosses her head towards the Magister, keeping her eyes glued to Lyuta.

LYUTA

---

And who would that be?

THE MAGISTER

---

I'm Magister Rensin.

LYUTA

---

And what do *you* have to do with this?

THE MAGISTER

---

I am trying to help resolve whatever is happening here.

LYUTA

---

You? I have never heard of Magisters getting involved in witch business. And how exactly do you plan on 'helping'?

THE MAGISTER

---

First off, I am going to talk to her.

He makes his reference clear walking from behind Aeri towards the disfigured girl on the ground.

AERI

---

Wait! What are you—

Ignoring Aeri's concerns, he approaches the girl and gets on one knee, drawing her attention with a gentle touch to her hand.

THE MAGISTER

---

Hey, it's all right.

Cautiously, she lowers her hands and raises her head to look at the person in front of her.

THE MAGISTER

---

Can you hear me? Do you understand what I'm saying?

The girl slightly nods in response.

THE MAGISTER

---

Are you a student of the academy?

She answers his question again with a nod.

LYUTA

---

You can't be serious. This is ridiculous!

AERI

---

Shut up! Let him do his job.

THE MAGISTER

---

What happened to you? Do you know why you look like this?

At first, she just looks at him with confusion. Then, when she tries to utter something, it comes out as a distorted guttural sound, from which mostly vowels can be discerned. She wraps her palm around the neck, trying to check if something is wrong with her throat. With yet another attempt to communicate resulting in the same indiscernible noise, she covers her mouth and coughs a few times. As she takes the hand off her mouth and looks at her palm, shock and horror manifest on her face. She whimpers in terror, rubbing one hand against the other as if trying to clean it. Her attempts making no change, she even resorts to scratching the skin with her nails.

THE MAGISTER

---

Stop! Calm down.



The Magister grabs both of her arms to prevent her from inflicting further self-harm.

THE MAGISTER

---

We will figure out what has happened to you. It's going to be all right. Just calm down.

His assurances seem to have little effect as she still tries to break free of his grasp.

LYUTA

---

What's happening to it?

Seeing how Lyuta's attitude tones down a bit, with confusion replacing aggression, Aeri lowers her weapon and comes closer to the two on the ground.

AERI

---

To *her*. If it didn't shine down on you, she wasn't even aware she looks like this.

THE MAGISTER

---

Do you have any idea what it could be? Maybe some kind of curse?

LYUTA

---

A curse? What are you talking about?

AERI

---

There is no such thing as a curse.

THE MAGISTER

---

Then what could it be?

AERI

---

My guess is as good as yours. They don't teach us how to turn people into monsters, or make them look like them. But I'm just a fourth-year, maybe a senior student knows more.

Aeri then redirects her eyes to a senior standing to the right of the Magister.

LYUTA

---

This must be some complex invocation. Maybe a ritual.

AERI

---

Something I *don't* know?

LYUTA

---

Sure. Just point me to anything other than her. Can you?

AERI

---

Is it so hard to admit you don't know something?

LYUTA

---

No, seriously. Just show me something, anything.

AERI

---

A senior is just as clueless. So it's up to the coven to figure it out. But first this mess needs to be sorted. So what's the plan?

THE MAGISTER

---

Obviously, we need to stop the fighting.

AERI

---

We barely managed to reason with Lyuta. Do you want the three of us—

Shifting her gaze, Aeri looks at the terrified girl, who despite all the talking still hasn't fully come to her senses.

AERI

---

Make that two. The two of us won't be able to take down everyone. We can't explain to them what is happening, so we can only side with unaffected students to—

THE MAGISTER

---

No. We don't know who is behind this or why. Harming the affected students might even be a part of this ritual you've mentioned.

LYUTA

---

This is not how rituals work. Her looking like this *is* the result of a ritual invocation.

AERI

---

You don't even know if it *is* a ritual. And even if it is, how do you know there is no underlying ritual taking place?

LYUTA

---

One ritual on top of another? Where did you even get that idea? You wouldn't even know how to perform one ritual invocation.

AERI

---

I doubt you would either. But I know the theory, so it's not impossible. The rituals might not even be directly connected and whoever is behind this just needs one death.

LYUTA

---

Why would they go so far instead of killing someone themselves?

THE MAGISTER

---

Can you two postpone this discussion until we get the situation under control?

AERI

---

Right, sorry. Fighting the affected students is out of the question, so what would you have us do?

THE MAGISTER

---

If we could just grab everyone's attention for a few seconds, it might be enough to stop this.

AERI

---

*If* they listen to us. You've seen how much effort it took just to convince this one.

LYUTA

---

This is called being cautious. A hot-head like you wouldn't know what that means.

THE MAGISTER

---

They might not listen to *you*, but I think they'll listen to *me*.

AERI

---

Or you'll just make a new target.

THE MAGISTER

---

The situation is chaotic, but I believe they are still in their sane mind.

AERI

---

Maybe so, but how do you want to get their attention? *Everyone's* attention.

THE MAGISTER

---

Anything in your witch arsenal you could put to use?

LYUTA

---

Like what? Freeze time?

AERI

---

Freeze... I could freeze everyone in their places were there enough water.

THE MAGISTER

---

Water...

The Magister peeps behind the bushes, focusing on the square's centre.

THE MAGISTER

---

What about the fountain?

Aeri inspects the fountain and then the surroundings, taking a note of the combatants' distribution.

AERI

---

No. Even if we blast it somehow, there is not enough pressure to fill the area with water fast. And it definitely won't reach the upper floor.

Aeri's eyes briefly fall onto Lyuta's contraption.

AERI

---

What about you?

#### LYUTA

---

I can adjust my invocations to cover everything in water in a small area, but it can only burst on impact. Those two on the fourth floor are close to walls and pillars. I can probably hit the balcony from below to disperse water onto the two fighting one of those— the affected student within the pavilion. The last one too: I can hit the tree she is hiding behind. But that's about it.

#### AERI

---

I can take care of the two around the other pavilion. There are also at least two on the side passage above us, but I can't see shite from here.

#### THE MAGISTER

---

We don't need to stop everyone. Just enough to briefly disrupt the commotion and get attention.

#### AERI

---

If you say so. But remember, the ice will only restrain them briefly. They'll quickly break free. So whatever you want to grab their attention for should be just as brief.

She comes to a corner, muscles tense, her knees bent. Before setting out, she turns around and gives Lyuta a nod with a nod given to her in response. Deep breath in, she pushes herself outside.

#### AERI

---

Seruze voporu minie horodo zamisut tepora...

First stride, her left foot creates a pivot point, redirecting momentum in a sharp turn towards the fountain in the centre. Lyuta makes her first shot, hitting a wall behind a student in the far left corner on the fourth floor. Her clothes all soaked, the affected student gets confused for a second, trying to pinpoint the direction the hit has come from, whilst Lyuta dives back and prepares to make the next shot.

Two strides, three, four; Aeri pitches a sphere that lands at the feet of a disfigured student behind a row of green bushes. The girl's reaction is decisive and quick: she makes a break towards a staircase between two walls to her left.



The sphere bursts before she can escape, water splashing her from behind, but she doesn't stop. Another water blob produced by Lyuta's contraption cuts through the air, heading upwards and hitting the opposite side of the passage on the fourth floor, drenching the target.

Five, six, seven. A transformed student shows from behind the opposite side of a pavilion, hearing her opponent running away. She takes her aim, ready to fire, but ducks the next moment as a sphere appears in her peripheral vision.

Volumes of water rain down on her as the sphere bursts open right above her. Lyuta follows with the third shot: it hits the wide balcony from below creating a shower. Although it barely splashes two students hiding behind the door frame below, a large puddle forms, spilling wide enough to reach their feet.

Eight, nine. Aeri locks eyes on the last student in her vicinity, who hides under a tree inside a pavilion to the right. She reaches into her bag for a third sphere, but Aeri's loud approach alerts the girl of the incoming danger, and seeing Aeri fixated on her, she shifts her focus away from the two behind the door frame. There are now only two things between Aeri and her destination: one step and a weapon directed at her.

Ten. Lyuta's shot shatters the top of the tree into splinters, spreading them in the surroundings mixed into the splashing water.

#### AERI

...furuso tonova!

A frost wave hits the entire square. Frozen water turns every student inside it into motionless statues whilst locking those behind the doors in their places as their feet get stuck in the ice.

Not wasting a moment, the Magister hastily walks to the centre.

#### THE MAGISTER

Everyone, stop! There are no monsters here. You are fighting your fellow students affected by some kind of witchcraft to make a distraction.

Ice cracking and falling onto the ground in chunks echo throughout the square along with unhappy groans. One by one students start breaking free of the cold shackles.

A student with a deformed face under the tree makes the first move, pointing her contraption towards the two people near the fountain as soon as her hands regain the mobility. Aeri responds in an instant, drawing her weapon, but the Magister stops her before she touches the trigger.

Seeing this, the girl loosens a bit and looks around, taking notes of how everyone else around the square behaves.

#### STUDENT ON THE FOURTH FLOOR

And who are you?

#### THE MAGISTER

I am a Magister.

#### STUDENT ON THE THIRD FLOOR

A Magister? Or maybe *you* are the distraction.

#### STUDENT BEHIND THE DOORS

And why would anyone believe anything you say? How would you know what is happening?

#### AERI

Because unlike you, idiots, he can use his brain. If they were enemies, they would have already used this opportunity to scorch your arses.

Aeri's short speech seems to have resonated with them. From exchanging attacks they move on to exchanging glances, cautiously examining one another.

After a few seconds of silence, a mumble comes from an affected student that Aeri forced to run earlier. Her communication attempts seem to be directed at her opponent, another affected one behind the bushes.

She responds. Though the words cannot be discerned, the tonal pattern suggests she is posing a question as if to confirm something.

With some hesitation, both then come out and walk towards one another. They glance over each other. Another word in an inquisitive tone with a similar sound returned. Their expressions then change, as if they acknowledged each other, followed by an unexpected change in attitude with them yelling in turns, increasing the angriness with each sentence. It ends with one of them landing a fist on the head of the other. Rubbing an aching spot on her head, she says something in an apologetic tone.

THE MAGISTER

---

Is it just me or...

AERI

---

Nope. Didn't understand a thing either.

With the same hesitation, the rest of the students come forth and gather around the centre.

STUDENT

---

So what's the deal? Who is behind this and how are you involved?

THE MAGISTER

---

My understanding of the situation is very limited. All we have managed to deduce is that some of the students have been affected by... um...

AERI

---

It must be an illusion. They are fine both physically and mentally as you can see, but they look different and can't properly talk.

STUDENT

---

So this is just a distraction? For what purpose?

THE MAGISTER

---

Actually, the part about this being a distraction was made up.

STUDENT

---

What? You can't be serious.

THE MAGISTER

---

I had to make it more convincing. The situation called for it. I didn't mean to deceive anyone.

Aeri's eyes narrow on her frowning face as her gaze drops to the floor.

AERI

---

Though you might have landed a blind shot.

THE MAGISTER

---

Didn't you say it was a ritual?

AERI

---

I said there *could* be an underlying ritual, but it was a wild guess. A distraction is just as likely.

THE MAGISTER

---

Right. I guess it's of no use dwelling on the source of this commotion. We need to put a stop to it first.

AERI

---

You have a plan? There shouldn't be many students around this late, but the academy is still huge. We can go from one place to the other till dark.

THE MAGISTER

---

There is no need. We will split to do it faster. Once you manage to explain the situation to other students, then those can do the same, like a chain reaction.

AERI

---

Like a chain reaction?

Whilst Lyuta's ears are focused on the discussion, her eye catches a lone student walking on the square's perimeter. She emerges from the side stairs and heads to the exit the Magister and Aeri came from, casually walking as if nothing has happened.

LYUTA

---

Where does she think she's going?

Breaking off from the crowd, Lyuta heads to the exit on the course to intercept her.

LYUTA

---

Hey!

As if not even hearing the call, the girl continues down her path uninterrupted.

LYUTA

---

Hey, you! I'm talking to you. Do you even hear me?

With Lyuta almost catching to her, she finally stops near the stairs. Her untidied long hair the colour of ash reveals dark-red eyes as she turns to look in Lyuta's direction.

LONE STUDENT

---

Uhm, yes?

LYUTA

---

Where are you going? Don't you see what is happening?

LONE STUDENT

---

I kinda did, hehe. But I'm no good at fightin', ya know. I just don' wanna be a burden.

In response to the girl's unusual speech, Lyuta involuntarily frowns, her facial muscles pulling an edge of her mouth partly showing her teeth.

LYUTA

---

What are you, a freshman or something?

LONE STUDENT

---

In a way.

With a sigh, she is about to say something, but the words get stuck in her throat as her eyes fall on the girl's left sleeve, where six triangles fill a hexagonal patch.

LYUTA

---

In *what* way? And how are you walking around without your contraption?

LONE STUDENT

Oh, that thingy, hehe...

This response raises a flag that makes Lyuta go on alert. Even more so when the girl shows a grin.

LONE STUDENT

It's right in front o' ya.

The girl's face gets distorted as if a lens appeared between Lyuta and her. It instantly widens, distorting the space even more, giving Lyuta no time to process what it is. The next moment it creates a blast wave, sending her flying towards the crowd around the Magister where she collides with one of the students.

AERI

What the deacon?

As everyone turns their attention towards the other side of the square, the girl dashes away, prompting some of them, including Aeri, to set off in pursuit.

It doesn't take long till the first bump in the road shows up: two girls in front of Aeri are abruptly kicked back by rapid expansions of air.

Aeri instinctively stops, assessing the situation, but the sound of the girl's footsteps fading as she puts more distance between them pushes Aeri to resume the pursuit. With the potential danger lying ahead, she runs through the burnt path in a pavilion and vaults over the railings at the edge of the square. After the landing, she sees the target disappear behind a corner, catching her making a gesture as her fist opens into a palm.

As she runs forward, Aeri notices the straight lines of the corner bulge, changing the curves as she moves closer to it. Keeping an eye on the distorted space, she adjusts her path to keep her distance from it.

The girl casts a glance back, locking the eyes with her pursuer for a moment. Aeri catches her making the same gesture again. Knowing what to look for, she almost instantly identifies a distortion that appears in the air and swiftly avoids it.

AERI

---

“It didn’t do anything as I passed it by, and those two were hit when she was already down there, which means they must have collided with it, so what if...”

The girl takes another look back, frowning as she sees no change in the distance between her and Aeri. With her next step, she creates a pivot with her right heel, displacing the soil as she makes a spin. Her hand draws an arc, and an array of distortions appear in an uneven line. Her left foot lands and she continues the run without losing momentum.

The moment the girl shows her back, Aeri pitches a sphere. The collision causes the distortions to burst in a chain, the explosive force hitting the girl in the back. She is propelled a dozen metres ahead, tumbling several times until hitting the fence.

In a spurt, Aeri closes the distance, electricity crackling within Arc Emitter as she squeezes the trigger.

The girl’s arms shaking, she makes an effort to lift her body from the ground with Aeri already standing above her, the barrel of her contraption pointing downwards.

AERI

---

Don’t even think—

Finishing her warning becomes unnecessary as the girl’s attempt to rise fails after which she seemingly loses consciousness.

AERI

---

“She passed out? No. I shouldn’t let my guard down. She might be feinting it.”

In about a minute, the Magister and a few other students catch up.

THE MAGISTER

---

What happened? Who is she?

AERI

---

I can tell you who she is *not*: a Vanguard student. From what I can tell, she is a Sorceress witch. And I bet my arse the commotion is her doing.

AFFECTED STUDENT

---

Eek!

Everyone turns back to the scream of one of the affected students behind. She frantically slaps a bag that hangs on her shoulder, trying to put out a fire that appears to have burst from within.

At the same time, a charm strapped to the waist of her friend catches fire as well. She promptly tears it off and casts it aside.

Seeing how her friend still struggles with her burning bag, she grabs it and dumps its contents onto the ground, dropping the bag after emptying it. A few items along with the bag get flattened under her feet as she stomps them to extinguish the flames with the owner's futile attempts to prevent it.

AFFECTED STUDENT

---

Ueeeeehheeee! I really liked this cute charm. Now where am I going to get another one?

ANOTER AFFECTED STUDENT

---

Hey, you're back to normal.

The girl on the ground brings her hands up, inspecting them from the palms to the back.

AFFECTED STUDENT

---

Yeah... Ah! You too!

The other girl then takes a look at her skin in a similar manner.

ANOTER AFFECTED STUDENT

---

You're right. Oh, the voice too. I can clearly speak now, to tell you what an idiot you are.

AFFECTED STUDENT

---

I already said I was sorry. What were I to think? I turn away for a second, there was you, and then there was a monster.



ANOTHER AFFECTED STUDENT

You were to *think*! Instead you started attacking me.

AERI

If these two are back to normal, the others around the academy should be as well. That takes care of one problem. So what now?

The Magister turns to look at the unconscious guest on the ground.

THE MAGISTER

I hope we'll find out once she comes to her senses.

Strolling through a long hallway alongside aide Eraban, the Magister is fixated on the documents in his hands, tearing his eyes away from them only once in a while to avoid collisions with people.

AIDE ERABAN

What's on your mind?

THE MAGISTER

I have my doubts presenting this as evidence.

AIDE ERABAN

Why? It looks very convincing from my perspective.

THE MAGISTER

It does, from the perspective of people not familiar with witchcraft.

AIDE ERABAN

You mean to say you have an insight into this from a witch's perspective?

THE MAGISTER

No. None of us, Magistern, has. And that is exactly my concern: it does look convincing, but there is no solid proof she was behind it. I have even asked Aeri, one of the students, if this can be somehow verified, but she said that the only way to know for sure is to see someone perform an invocation.

AIDE ERABAN

---

A student from another academy appears amidst a commotion in the Vanguard Academy and assaults a Vanguard student when confronted. This can't be a coincidence.

THE MAGISTER

---

Even more so, there might be more to it than it seems from the outside?

AIDE ERABAN

---

Why do you think so?

The Magister's mind flashes with the faces of Kiara and Yumi.

THE MAGISTER

---

Just a feeling.

AIDE ERABAN

---

We haven't even heard her defence yet, so there's that.

As they enter a room where a hearing is held, five of six people turn their attention to them. The only one who doesn't pay any mind is the grey-haired trespasser. Sitting next to a man on the right, she is immersed into the process of drawing, switching the tools such as compasses and rulers and taking a pen to add annotations to it once in a while.

Upon their entry, Eraban stops for a moment, his gaze directed towards the girl and her academy's Magister.

THE MAGISTER

---

Something's the matter?

AIDE ERABAN

---

No, nothing. Just a familiar face.

After taking their places and exchanging introductions, the Magister is then given word.

#### THE MAGISTER

---

The Magistertum of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven hereby presents an accusation against the aspiring witch of the Academy of the Sorceress League Vira Sagaydachi.

On 12.06.157 U.C., Vira Sagaydachi was encountered on the territory of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven. Upon contact with an aspiring witch of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven, Lyuta Patonori, she immediately attacked her, resulting in light injuries.

Prior to that, an unknown invocation affected several aspiring witches of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven altering their appearance to make them appear as reanimated dead. The sudden alteration of their appearance resulted in hostility from unaffected aspiring witches with five aspiring witches being incapacitated and suffering moderate injuries and eleven more suffering light injuries. Not only did Vira appear during the resulting commotion, the effects of the invocation disappeared right after Vira got incapacitated by a pursuing aspiring witch of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven, Aeri Uylonyuk, which indicates that Vira is also responsible for the commotion and its aftermath.

Based on this, the Magistertum of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven presents the following accusation against Vira Sagaydachi:

One, trespassing the territory of another academy with malicious intent.

Two, third degree assault on an aspiring witch of another academy.

Three, application of non-offensive invocation with malicious intent.

After attentively listening to the Magister's speech, a bald man by the table in the centre turns his head to the opposite side of the room, giving a nod to the man next to Vira.

#### SORCERESS MAGISTER

---

The Magistertum of the Academy of the Sorceress League does not have a Statement of Innocence and therefore acknowledges the accusations presented by the Magistertum of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven.

THE MAGISTER

---

What? Again? Is negligence of your duties a common thing at the Sorceress Academy?

SORCERESS MAGISTER

---

Please, Magister. I understand your assumption given the performance of my colleague in the other case, or rather the lack thereof, but my ward simply refused to form a statement.

THE MAGISTER

---

You can't seriously expect me to believe this.

Vira's pencil stops its run, leaving a gap in a rectangular shape, as she redirects her eyes to the Magister. She then puts it down and straightens, folding her arms.

VIRA

---

Believe it or not, 'tis what it is, ol' man. Guilty of everything.

THE MAGISTER

---

Why would you admit to it? Did they force you into it somehow?

VIRA

---

'They' who? Nobody ain't forced me to do anything.

THE MAGISTER

---

Then why? With these charges you are facing an expulsion.

VIRA

---

Oh, I think I already am. You know, I've been skipping classes for 'bout... half-a-year.

After hearing this revelation, the Magister finds himself at a loss, not even knowing what to appeal to.

It seems that the Sorceress Magister wasn't aware of it either as can be judged by his reaction when he turns to look at his ward with surprise.

VIRA

---

But it doesn't matter anyways. Even if they've already expelled me, they'll have to let me back in if they want this.

Vira grabs her unfinished work on the table, showing it to the Magister with a stretched arm. The reaction to this is just silence, and her reaction to everyone's silence is a sour face.

VIRA

---

I know I ain't best artist, but this isn't the reaction I expected after showing you Vanguard's most guarded secret.

THE MAGISTER

---

Vanguard's most guarded secret? What even is that?

VIRA

---

Huh? What d'you meant what is that? Oh. Ye. Ain't no way they'd let you near it. This is the blueprint of an extraction chamber. Well...

She briefly turns the sheet of paper to look at the blueprint.

VIRA

---

...a part of it. I didn't have time to finish it, but 'tis enough to send the message, ya know.

THE MAGISTER

---

An extraction chamber? How would you even have it? The facility is guarded by the Vanguard coven witches themselves. It's off-limits even to Magistern, but we would at least know if there was a trespassing attempt.

VIRA

---

Didn't you say it wasn't coincidence I appeared during that 'commotion'? What d'you think I was doing 'ere?

THE MAGISTER

---

So it *was* a distraction. But even if so, even if it somehow allowed you to sneak into it, I highly doubt you could have studied and memorised the schematics of an extraction chamber, unless the blueprint was somehow lying around.

VIRA

---

Ha-ha-ha-ha! I didn't sneak in, I simply *walked* in. D'you think I can only make 'em look like worm food? I can make anyone look like anyone. All it took was to wait for one student to walk outta chamber and walk back in in her stead.

'Sorry, I forgot something in there. I'll be back in a second.' They didn't even notice I didn't even have that arcane thingy. So much for guarding the most guarded secret, ha-ha-ha! But I need no blueprint, just a touch, and poof: it all ends up 'ere.

She taps on her temple with an index finger.

VIRA

---

Well, until I get it onto paper.

THE MAGISTER

---

That doesn't make sense. If you wanted to avoid punishment, you could have secretly relayed the message to the Sorceress League.

VIRA

---

Oh, I could've, but that's no fun. Consider it my lil vendetta against the coven. After all, it was them who set me up. So if they want to have the Vanguard's secret, they'll have to put up a lil fight.

THE MAGISTER

---

Set you up? How?

VIRA

---

For a murder. Ye. If you didn't know, I'm a murderer. I didn't spend half-a-year in the slums cause I didn't wanna attend classes, you know.

THE MAGISTER

---

Are you really a murderer?

VIRA

---

What does it matter? Why d'you care?

THE MAGISTER

---

Because it is within my authority to address the wrongdoings both committed by aspiring witches and those committed against them.

VIRA

---

Oh. So you're just like him. Never thought I'd see someone like that.

For a moment, her attitude changes, there is no trace of that mocking arrogance.

BALD MAGISTER

---

Forgive the interruption, Magister, but we have strayed from the topic. This no longer has anything to do with the current hearing. So unless you have any more questions pertaining to the task at hand, I suggest we wrap this up.

THE MAGISTER

---

I—

The Magister glances back at the young witch. The smirk on her face discourages him from questioning her any further.

THE MAGISTER

---

...don't have any more questions.

The two Magistern by the middle table turn to look at each other and exchange a few words.

AIDE ERABAN

---

What does she think she's doing?

A comment that seeped through Eraban's teeth catches the ear of the Magister, who sees usually unemotional face of the aide display barely contained dissatisfaction.

THE MAGISTER

---

You too think this is fishy?

AIDE ERABAN

---

Huh? Oh, y-yes. There must be something else going on.

THE MAGISTER

It's as if she wants to be punished. I don't like it one bit.

BALD MAGISTER

With the accusations presented and the opposite party refusing to present a Statement of Innocence, the aspiring witch of the Academy of the Sorceress League Vira Sagaydachi is hereby found guilty of the following as stated by the Magistertum of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven:

One, trespassing the territory of another academy with malicious intent.

Two, third degree assault on an aspiring witch of another academy.

Three, application of non-offensive invocation with malicious intent.

Additionally, as confessed by Vira herself, she trespassed the territory of the Academy of the Vanguard Coven with the intent of obtaining a Vanguard's Coven secret and therefore is found guilty of:

Four, illegal acquisition of another academy's asset.

Due to the nature of her wrongdoings, the verdict will be passed to both the Vanguard Coven and the Sorceress League, who will then make a decision regarding the measure of punishment.

Does anyone have any objections?

A quick glance from one side of the room to the other pictures a silent agreement.

BALD MAGISTER

Good. This hearing is hereby concluded.

As the Magister gathers his papers, a comment slips off his lips.

THE MAGISTER

I don't like it one bit and I hate that I can't do anything about it.

AIDE ERABAN

I am surprised you didn't use your extrajudicial authority.

THE MAGISTER

It's not a magic wand that I can wave around. First and foremost, it requires a cooperation from an aspiring witch. In Orena's case —



VIRA

---

Magistger...

With her escort behind her, Vira stops between the doors, not looking back as she talks.

VIRA

---

I appreciate you trying, but this is no longer something you can handle. Stay out of it.

THE MAGISTER

---

No longer?

Instead of answering, she just resumes walking.

With no clarity provided, perplexed, the Magister's mind falls into the state of retrospection, trying to find something that he might have missed, only for the fall to be interrupted by Eraban, who replaces Vira in the same spot.

AIDE ERABAN

---

Ah, right, I don't want to pressure you, but Administrator Chusaran asked for an update on Orena's case. Any progress? Unless you did it outside work hours, I didn't see any requests for visit to the Sorceress Academy.

THE MAGISTER

---

Oh. Correct, yes. That won't be necessary. I haven't asked her directly, but I believe I can persuade Aeri to reconcile.

AIDE ERABAN

---

After what happened to her friends?

THE MAGISTER

---

Yes. It was a terrible misunderstanding, and she understands that, but she needs just a bit more time to calm down. I'll include this into my report once I'm done with this case.

AIDE ERABAN

---

That's impressive. Administrator will be happy to hear that.

After vacating the room and navigating the halls of the academy for a few minutes, Eraban arrives at another room's door. A few knocks prompt a response.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

Come in.

Inside, a man in his early thirties sits at the desk by the window in the middle of the room. With a book in a hand, his other hand is pressed against his right cheek, a finger tapping on the temporal bone under a lock of blonde hair that reaches a little below his ears.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

How did it go?

AIDE ERABAN

---

The girl from the Sorceress Academy admitted to everything. The hearing concluded with a unilateral vote of condemnation. She appears to have trespassed the academy ground to acquire the blueprint of an extraction chamber.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

And she admitted to it? That sounds suspicious to me. I can only assume that prompted him— Did you say concluded?

AIDE ERABAN

---

Yes. As I said, it was a unilateral vote of condemnation.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

I'll need some more details about the hearing.

After listening to Eraban's retelling of the proceeding, the man changes in face with a concern written in his darkened expression as he closes the book, the frequency of his index finger motions dropping.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

"So he wasn't just handed the original code by mistake. He seems to be pretty aware of the extent and limitations of its content."

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

I see...

AIDE ERABAN

---

If this continues, he might draw some unwanted attention.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

Attention to what?

AIDE ERABAN

---

To some minor edits to the Code, of course. Wasn't it what made Magister Tepan a similar obstacle?

Administrator's finger freezes in place before the next tap, and his eyes shift to Eraban's face.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

What are you implying?

AIDE ERABAN

---

Simply that I can help you with certain tasks that, let's say, fall outside of my line of responsibilities.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

And what would the price be?

AIDE ERABAN

---

Oh, don't worry. I don't ask anything in particular. I simply aim for a better partnership. The best benefits come on their own from a fruitful partnership.

As if nothing happened, he then focuses back on the book as his finger resumes the repetitive motion, though with a bit slower rhythm.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

---

I see. You need not to concern yourself with this matter. I have it all covered.

AIDE ERABAN

---

Understood, Administrator.

Eraban makes his way to the door, stopping briefly with his hand pushing down the door handle.

AIDE ERABAN

Oh, by the way. If due to unforeseen circumstances, I won't be able to carry out my duties, I instructed some people to deliver certain information to the coven.

ADMINISTRATOR CHUSURAN

Threats aren't the best way to start a fruitful partnership, Eraban.

AIDE ERABAN

Of course. A fruitful partnership is established with trust. We are birds of a feather, so you can trust me to know what to expect from people like myself. Insurance is imperative in our line of activities.

His last words end with a mechanical clank of the door lock.