

Frost was in Atlas for another purpose besides visiting the burial site of the Blue Dahlia. H10 was not a suitable place to keep a permanent portal into the Derma Layer due to the security risk it posed.

It seemed counterintuitive to have it transferred *beneath* the Nexus, but this was one of Caldera Industries' largest pre-War In Heaven strongholds. CogitO's presence also plagued Atlas in the form of the Silence debuff that plagued all those that had less than 50 RESIST, with the additional caveat of completely nullifying music.

"Remember those big whales, Frost? From H3?" Ber said as they were brought along the lane towards a central, grey structure resembling a sharpened spear. "They're the reason why musicians from H5 don't get anywhere near there. It cancels out the music."

"But this suppresses magic?" Frost questioned and was immediately answered by the man who steadily walked slightly ahead of them to the side.

"ImpulseWorks actually designed the Silent Resonance. Picture the heart of a whale impaled onto a stem of consciousness. Like their debilitating wails deep underneath, they can create a profound effect when on the surface. It crushes all. Including our voices. It prevents people from making cantations."

Little introduction was needed to know that he had seen things beyond their understanding. He looked ahead as if visualizing it, a hand running through the air like he wrote every experience down into an invisible book.

"I didn't realize how powerful their sonars were." Frost was in awe.

The man quickly wrote in the air again with a finger, whispering: "Sonar. A synonym for the sound~ Ahem. Excuse my brief bout of curiosity. We Keepers were once workers of the First Advent, so newfound knowledge is invaluable to us. I hear it is fine to divulge in closely kept secrets of the Nexus."

"At least you know your place." Cer was grateful that no added explanation was required. "See how easy it is when we're the faces of the Nexus?"

"Quiet." Res hushed.

*He was here before the Archivist's arrival, no doubt.*

*"There was a fifty-year period before she claimed it as her own."*

*So that's when the book burnings occurred.*

Atlas once housed the Eternal Library. Its vast knowledge was passed around, the incomprehensible scabbles of the fifty-six-letter alphabet meaning nothing to the pompous masses, but everything to those that groveled in their feet.

It was not knowledge of technology – though few were lucky enough to find something similar. Magic was instead inscribed into those pages. Knowledge beyond what should have been known. Secrets of those above spilled uncontrollably when the language was deciphered by emotions, rather than an understanding.

The Unlocked Keeper shallowly went over how the knowledge of the Advent opened the door to war on an untold scale.

“Beholders of today are firmly rooted with their gifts from the Advent. In comparison, those of the old were quickly eaten away and transformed into something hideous. Something so lost and consumed by the core concept of their gift.” He said, staring vacantly ahead as he recalled the tragic memories of those devoured by reality-defying, cognitive-born objects.

The Archivist further confirmed that this was why it was important for a Beholder to find their one perfect book. A mismatch ran the risk of utterly breaking them.

*“Even now the Beholders are slowly being eaten away from it. Have you noticed it as well?”*

Frost noticed this as far back as her first meeting with Carpalis. In fact, it was Carpalis that revealed this truth to her. Each Beholder lived in unimaginable agony stemming directly from the technology they carried, having stagnated them like they had lost their light.

*Absolutely. So long as they keep meeting the demands for Nex then they can keep what’s left of themselves.*

Little else was known about the fifty-year dark age aside from war. Weirdly enough, he knew more of the five years leading towards it than the forty-five years after.

And after those that emerged from the gauntlet were the Beholders born by the Archivist’s aid. Eventually, everything thereafter resulted in the War in Heaven one hundred and fifty years later in 200 PA.

“Elysia is a big world. It almost makes you wonder why none of the Beholders have tried to enter the Expanse.”

Res murmured something beneath her breath as soon as he mentioned the landmasses afar. One of the reasons why she relied on her CognitO Filter was precisely because of what she had seen out there with her own two eyes.

And yet she could never articulate what it was aside from it being the equivalent of staring into the abyss.

“Probably the reason why Demons are so ready to die.” She said offhandedly with a long sigh.

“Or why the Elves and most magical races are on the distant continents.” The man added cheerfully.

“Like the Magicalis. Those weird... beautiful creatures.” Frost could only describe them as such, remembering the giant entity that danced ritualistically around Galia’s servants, and the fluff balls that resided within the Nexus. “Our sights today are towards what lies beneath.”

Frost reminded as the man plucked a charm. At once, the scream of the whale – the Silent Resonance – became palpable. The power of the Blood Letters allowed them to place the burden of agony and injury to someone or in this case, something, other than them.

It was a method that required the total bloodletting of both creatures in equal amounts before the blood needed to be exchanged. Furthermore, those with lower Soul Ranks could not curse a being with a higher Soul Rank.

However, if the cursed being died then so did the connected individual. What it also did was slightly increase the stats of the benefiting person. So the more charms one had, the stronger they became at the extreme risk of dying if just one person did. As long as they could bleed, then they were fine.

“In each other we trust. We bloodlet to remove the impurities to become clean.” He said bringing them towards the base of the colossal spire. “We’re here. Our time was short but pleasant. Head in. The entrance is a Spatial Distortion.”

*I kind of hate the idea of a Spatial Distortion existing right below the Nexus.*

*“You say that as you’re about to open one into the Derma Layer. The theater of the War in Hell will be right beneath the Nexus.”*

*When you put it like that... Well, I can close it up at any time anyway.*

*“By opening it up elsewhere.”*

*Haaah. Alright. You win. I haven’t done it yet, but we’re about to find out what makes this Caldera Industries stronghold so special. Depending on what we find I might end up moving the portal somewhere else.*

Suddenly, another Keeper passed by them.

Following him was a man from a foreign kingdom, dressed in purple garbs befitting royalty. He sat atop a horse-drawn carriage as his knights trailed behind, wearing highly reflective, plated armor that clanked with each step.

They had finished from a council between various nations held by the Exalted of the Nexus. They were, after all, the ones responsible for foreign interaction and relations often between multiple different kingdoms.

Atlas was the only neutral place in Elysia where such talks between rules could take place under the promise of total protection.

Cer scoffed at them, nudging Frost’s arm as she pointed at them with a sly grin.

“Look at what they need to mimic a fraction of our stats. Normal people require so much metal just to protect themselves. Blessed can get away with less equipment. But us? We just need the skin of our teeth.”

*All thanks to P-Factor Augmentation. It’s exactly why we’re able to take swords to our necks like they’re nothing. The source of the unfairness of stats. That kind of armor on earth was top of the line in the medieval era. Here? It’s like bringing a coffin along with you.*

It was the first time she had seen the official military force of another nation.

And she could hardly believe just how primitive they were in comparison. Not because of their technological difference. But rather, because of how utterly mundane their stats were – stats that were considered ‘normal’ across the board in Elysia.

It again put the might of the Moons into perspective; how the quarrels of normal people were just far too insignificant to interfere with in comparison to the Corrupted.