

Chronicles of Eden – Act XII

Preview Chapter

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Chapter 1

To Challenge a Dark Queen

In the world of Eden, there existed four monsters beyond compare to all others, more dangerous and powerful than even the Darker Ones. Dark Queens they were called, with each possessing powers or strength far above what their lesser sisters could ever dream of having. One of these four were known as the Gemini; a being with two bodies but only one soul, and a never-ending thirst for causing anarchy wherever it could. Near-immortality as their gift, heartless without a doubt, merciless to all those they came across; these murdering twin sisters were the embodiment of pure evil and a blight upon dreams for peace in the world any may have.

For those who dared to contest them, their bravery would shine the brightest.

Within Green Haven's grand temple atop its towering tree, a crimson glare was cast against a few large windows from inside its meeting chamber, the wavering fiery light emanating from a sword that gave off a demonic aura all its own even in the presence of a Dark Queen. In the hands of Daniel Sorres the Hellfire's Edge seemed just as violent and menacing as when it was first wielded by the Hellfire Witch, Ember. Flames raced along its darkened steel and heated edge, the crimson runes adorning the blade glowed softly with unholy light, and the air around it distorted slightly as both the heat from the steel and its magical energy radiated profoundly from the weapon.

Standing behind him Clover and Felucia were rendered motionless, both staring in stunned silence as Daniel held the demonic weapon before them while its light bathed the hall with a warm glow. The two were pressed back against the windows while feeling the blade's energy pushing onto them, smothering them almost, while standing before Daniel two others were also silenced as they witnessed the human brandishing an enchanted weapon towards them. After a moment to take in the scene, the two girls blinked with their multicolored eyes before they started giggling together.

"What... the hell?" Jovian chuckled shaking her head.

"What is that?" Jacqueline said pointing to Daniel's sword. "Since when do you have a knife to fight with? And where did you even find that anyway?"

"Wait, wait," Jovian said holding a hand up. "Let me get this straight. *You* think you're going to stop *us*? And with that? Daniel, what manner of joke is this? I'm so confused yet very intrigued."

"Aww," Jacqueline cooed with a mocking leer. "You found yourself a little magic sword, didn't you? How cute. Look, it even makes fire and puffs of smoke."

"This is too rich," Jovian mused holding a hand to her head. "You managed to get your hands on an enchanted sword, figured out how to actually hold the thing properly with the non-sharp end, and now you think you can challenge the likes of *us*? Is that why you're being so brave now? You think just because you got yourself a magic butter knife that you can beat us? Oh, Daniel. I can't believe how foolish you really are."

"Wait, wait," Jacqueline laughed waving her hand. "Do that again. Do it again, Daniel. Pull your sword out again and act all tough like you just did. I have to see it once more, it's just so adorable!"

"Um, kid?" Felucia managed to finally say. "That's nice you have a magic weapon and all, but, um... so do *they*. Not to mention, in case you didn't know, they can't fucking *die*."

The gemini burst out laughing while stumbling back a step, each leaning over and holding onto the table for support as they watched Daniel with only amusement and ridicule.

"This is too good!" Jovian bellowed shaking her head. "You found some magic weapon out in the world, and actually thought you could waltz right up to us and stop us with it! You think that weapon means anything to us? You think we care at all whatever it is you choose to fight with? How stupid are you?"

"You think just because you've got a magic sword you can beat us?" Jacqueline mocked. "Are you mental? What could a pathetic human such as you possibly do against us? We're immortal, you fool! You couldn't hurt us with that no matter how hard you try, you yourself must know this from the last time we met! We don't even need our weapons to kill you at all, we can make do just fine using our bare hands to—"

"Hey!" Daniel shouted, silencing the twins as he glared at them with rising anger. "Before we go any further with this, clarify one thing for me. The priestess' daughter. Where is she?"

"Grace," Clover recalled with a jump. "That's right. Grace. Where is she? What did you fuckers do with her? Where the fuck is she?"

"Oh, her?" Jovian chuckled while Jacqueline was now shaking her head with a hand covering her face. "That's a good question actually. She was here, but then the little brat vanished on us."

"Vanished?" Clover repeated. "What do you mean?"

"She ran up into the tree, but never came back down. We searched all over and throughout this dump of a forest, but couldn't find a trace of her. I'm sorry to say we just don't know where she is."

"Liar," Clover snarled. "You're lying. What did you do with her?"

"I assure you I'm telling the truth," Jovian promised holding a hand to her chest. "Believe me, I wanted to peel her apart only with the best of intentions upon arriving here. I was even promised that child by your dear friend Sivil when she helped us orchestrate our little coup in your forest."

"Sivil... did *what*?" Clover raged. "She helped you? She conspired with you? This whole mess is her fault?"

"Pretty much," Jovian agreed with a shrug. "But before I could sink my teeth into the little darling, she ran away and vanished into thin air. We searched high and low for the little runt, yet we came up with nothing."

"It's true," Felucia chimed in. "The little kid disappeared completely. We don't know if she's alive still or not. All we know is she isn't here."

"Disappeared?" Clover breathed out. "But... how? Where could she have gone?"

“So what you’re saying,” Daniel spoke up, his glare never leaving Jovian’s face. “Is that it’s just us in the temple right now? There’s nobody else in here but us?”

“That’s right,” Jovian agreed.

“So there’s nobody at all, anywhere, behind you two right now?”

“That’s right,” Jovian said with a nod, then blinked and looked at him curiously. “Why do you ask?”

“Just wanted to make sure first,” Daniel answered, then stepped forward with a furious yell while winding back with his sword. He threw all his weight into the swing, focusing all his anger and fury towards the gemini into his attack as he stomped down with his boot and slashed across the air with the enchanted blade. Everyone watched in awe as he swung his sword, then held his pose as absolutely nothing happened except for a few cinders being thrown off the blade’s edge as it came to a halt at his side. Silence filled the chamber while the screams and rumbles of anarchy outside continued on. Clover and Felucia stared at Daniel with stunned faces while he merely glared at the gemini, the evil twins slowly looking to each other then back to Daniel while raising an eyebrow each. After a pause they started to giggle again as Jovian slowly pointed to him.

“What... was that?” she asked shaking her head. “Did... did you just try attacking us with that thing... without knowing *how* to use it?”

“Oh. My. God,” Jacqueline snorted before the two burst out laughing, both dropping to their knees and holding an arm around themselves. “He doesn’t even know how to use that thing! What a fucking idiot! HAHAAHAHA!”

“Dan?” Clover worriedly asked, seeing Daniel diverting his gaze down to his sword that he held to his side still.

“Are you fucking serious?” Felucia asked in disbelief. “All that show and talk, and you don’t even know how to use that damned thing?”

“I don’t believe this!” Jovian laughed as she and her sister dropped to the ground, both holding their sides and rolling around with kicking legs as they couldn’t contain their merriment.

“I can’t stop- I can’t stop- I can’t stop laughing!” Jacqueline cried out with tears coming from her eyes. “This is too much! Oh no, I think I peed myself! HAHAAHAHA!”

“What the hell?” Clover bewilderedly said, watching in shock as Daniel merely stared at his sword that didn’t even make the slightest attempt to harm the gemini with its swing. “How did nothing happen? When Triska gave it a little swipe it completely obliterated everything in front of her. How... Dan?”

Daniel slowly lowered his weapon then turned around to face the elf and sand wraith, his eyes remaining on his sword that had small flames still running up along its steel, showing that it was indeed possessing power of some form. As the gemini continued to laugh and roll around on the floor Daniel slowly turned his eyes up to the two girls that were staring at him in disbelief.

“Move,” he quietly said.

“What?” Felucia asked.

“*Move*,” Daniel repeated as he gave a stern glance to the side then back to them. Clover and Felucia looked to each other then to Daniel before slowly stepping aside towards the corner of the room near a wall with differently colored flowers growing from small holders on it. Daniel kept his eyes on the two girls, watching carefully as they moved away while staring him constantly.

"I can't believe you don't know how to use that thing!" Jovian bellowed. "What did you do, steal it and run from someone with an actual brain? Hahahahaha!"

"You really have no idea what you're doing in this world, do you, Daniel?" Jacqueline laughed while looking to him with a few deep breaths. She and her sister then noticed Daniel glancing back to them while holding his weapon aside, the blade having a rising aura of malice growing from it along with more flames across its steel.

"Actually, I do," Daniel corrected. "Sure, I may not be as proficient with this as Triska is, but I do know the basics of wielding a magic sword. And I've seen the force this one gives off when it's properly used."

"Really now?" Jovian mused with a smirk.

"Really."

"Then what the hell, Daniel?" Jovian sneered as she and her sister stood up, both holding their swords up to their waists while smirking at him. "Why not let us have it? Why didn't you try to punish us for all our bad deeds and instead just stop like that?"

"I wanted Clover and Felucia to get away from the windows first," Daniel said, then promptly swung around with a furious yell, striking the sword through the air at the gemini while gripping the handle tightly. A flash of blood red light erupted in an arc from the slice before a wave of monstrous energy blasted forward in a wide bend, casting outward searing flames and snapping black electricity. The gemini managed to raise their swords up just as the brunt of the attack struck, the two enchanted blades flashing with bright green and white light for a mere moment before being engulfed in the destructive wave of hellish energy that stormed past. A powerful boom of energy exploded in the room, blasting out the windows behind Daniel with great force while the walls and ceiling before him were torn apart from the forceful wave. Felucia and Clover dropped down against the corner of the room and pressed back against it, both bracing themselves from the mighty blast that shook the entire building. Fire, charred rubble, smoke, and red light crashed through the hall and blasted all the way through multiple rooms behind it before barreling through the last wall and out into the open air above the ravaged Green Haven. A split second later every chamber next to those that were annihilated in the onslaught erupted outward as well from the force, casting fire and debris high into the air and the lowest branches of the grand tree as the priestess' temple violently burst apart from the attack.

Down on the ground elves and monsters nearby quickly looked up from hearing a loud explosion going off, all of them witnessing the temple appearing to viciously detonate from its side and set fire to more of the towering timber with a hail of flaming debris.

"What the fuck is happening?" an elf cried out.

"What did you bitches do?" another shouted at a nearby group of trolls and goblins.

"We didn't do this!" a troll shot back.

"Oh really? Is there another group of diseased-ridden cunts that decided to drop by and cause trouble?" an elf retorted. "We've been dealing with your shit with goddamned smiles on our faces, so what's with all this fucking hell you've brought upon our home in return? What in Eden's asshole is wrong with all of you?"

"We weren't planning on doing anything like this! This isn't our fault!"

"Well then what the fuck is happening?" an elf shouted before screaming as the ground gave away under her. The other monsters quickly backed up as the dirt began caving in areas all throughout

Green Haven, with some having patches of flames and smoke blasting up from them as the entire area shook again.

“Sian!” an elf cried in horror as she watched her shrieking friend fall into the dark abyss. “No! God fucking dammit, no!”

Elves all around the grove screamed in terror as their homes built into the sides of mighty timbers began shaking loose and even dropping straight to the ground with horrific crashes. Tall trees started sinking in some areas while a few just dropped straight down into pits with their branches snapping off as they tore through elven dwellings below. Rope bridges snapped and toppled more monsters of various kinds while others were scrambling about aimlessly on the ground as debris rained from above and the ground threatened to give away below them at a moment’s notice.

“This can’t be happening,” an elf whimpered, grabbing onto the rope railing of a wooden crossway for dear life. Another stood by her side, struggling to retain her balance on the swinging walkway as they both observed their once peaceful and beautiful home being turned into a hellish nightmare of calamity.

“The gods...” the elf faintly spoke. “This is their doing. It must be.”

“What did we ever do to deserve this?” her friend cried out. “First an army of savages invades, then our priestess is murdered, and now our home is being swallowed up by hell itself! What the fuck did we ever do to deserve this?”

“We’ve angered them somehow, we must have. Those horrid demons we harbored here, it must be because of them. We never should have let them take our home like this. We never should have let them step foot into our sacred forest. We have to do something!”

“Do something? *Do something?*” her friend shouted out with terror. “What the fuck are we supposed to do? Our priestess is dead! The gods are pissed! And we’re surrounded by blood-thirsty warmongers! What the fuck are we supposed to do now? Just who the hell can save us now?”

Up in the temple chamber Daniel watched as smoke and dust swirled outward in the trail of his strike, with fire catching on what remained of the temple nearby as a good portion of it had been blasted clear off the grand tree. Clover and Felucia stared with wide eyes as debris crumbled down around the large outward arc of leveled ruins that lay before them, their gazes then slowly turning to Daniel as he took a few steps forward while keeping a close eye ahead on the charred remains of the palace that had been sheared clean off from his attack.

“Holy... *fuck*,” Felucia breathed out.

“Dan...” Clover softly said.

Daniel kept his stance while eyeing the smoldering remains of the temple before him, seeing everything that had been caught in his wide-reaching wave of destructive energy completely annihilated, with only a few rooms and walls remaining above and around him on what was essentially one-third of the overall palace on his level. Walking forward he carefully glanced up, seeing the tree branches above starting to catch fire as well while smoke was billowing up from the elven grove below into the sky. After reaching what was once the hallway outside the meeting chamber he stopped and aimed his gaze downward, catching sight of a skeletal arm slowly pushing out from the rubble further away. As flesh began to magically reform around the limb Daniel could hear a rustling beneath the charred debris that he could easily take a guess as to what it was.

“What the fuck was that?” Felucia demanded as she and Clover carefully approached him. “Who the hell are you, and what... what *is* that you’re holding anyway?”

“Dan,” Clover said with a smile faintly forming. “That... goddamn, that was amazing. You do know how to control that sword, don’t you?”

“Control?” Felucia shouted at her. “Look at what he did! How is that control? He could have incinerated us in that blast! What makes you think he has any idea what he’s doing?”

Clover glanced behind them at what remained of the temple chamber then smiled in awe at Daniel.

“That’s why you asked if Grace was here first. That’s why you wanted us to move aside. That whole bit you did faking your first swing.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Felucia snapped.

“He pretended not to know how to use that to get the gemini to laugh at him and lower their guard,” Clover snapped back with a sharp grin. “He had us move to the side so we wouldn’t be blasted out the windows and thrown down to Green Haven when he *did* unleash that sword’s full power on those assholes. My man knows damn well what he’s doing, so show some goddamned gratitude that we’re here to help save you.”

“Okay, first off, *fuck you*,” Felucia retorted, shoving a finger hard against Clover’s chest as the two girls glared at each other, with Daniel still watching something closely before them. “Secondly, he just destroyed your priestess’ sacred temple or whatever this dump is to you, don’t you care? Third, that moron has no idea what he’s doing. If either of you had a clue as to what those two bitches really are then you should know you can’t kill them! You only piss them off when you attack them! Fourth, some rescue! Sounds like your forest is burning to the ground down there and we’re surrounded by vicious monsters! How is any of this going according to your plan?”

“Hey!” Daniel shouted, with the two girls then turning to him before noticing the gemini once again standing amidst the charred rubble.

“We hate to interrupt you two,” Jovian mused, the woman now standing completely nude alongside her sister as they had their swords held up while casually running a hand across their enchanted blades.

“But Felucia does have a point,” Jacqueline empathetically agreed. “Daniel here just demolished your priestess’ lovely home. Your forest *is* burning to the ground as we can easily hear and smell from here. Daniel does indeed appear to be forgetting that we cannot die. And, yes, you are surrounded by our dear friends who aren’t going to bat an eyelash if we lose any elves here today.”

“Though I must say,” Jovian said with a coy smile. “I am impressed a little by your efforts, Daniel. Don’t misunderstand, you’ve made a grave error coming here, but I do applaud your bravery and ability to actually fight for once in your pathetic life. It’s not much to commend you on, but hey, at least you’ve done something noteworthy for once.”

“You see?” Felucia yelled at Clover, waving to the gemini while Daniel continued to stare them down. “They! Can’t! Die! All that bullshit did was piss them off and strip them of their clothes! How the fuck do you plan to help anyone?”

“A good question,” Jovian carelessly agreed.

“I have a better one,” Jacqueline purred. “How much do you think Daniel here would cry if we murdered both his little elf and that sassy sand wraith right before his very eyes?”

“Oh my, that *is* a better question,” Jovian conceded with a dark grin. “I say we find out.”

Clover and Felucia watched in nervous silence as the gemini held their weapons at the ready towards them, with Jovian’s Hellstorm letting off crackling arcs of electricity that gleamed in her eyes while Jacqueline’s Ice Princess gave off a chilling aura that was just as cold as its wielder. Jovian and Jacqueline giggled and took a step forward before Daniel quickly stepped forth and sliced his blade down to his side while holding a hand out towards them.

“Your fight is with me,” he firmly declared. “You wanted me, didn’t you? I’m the one you two wanted all along. Well, here I am. If you want to try and hurt me, then come after *me*.”

“Dan, what the fuck are you doing?” Clover nervously asked.

“You got a death wish, kid?” Felucia bewilderedly said.

The twins merely watched Daniel with cruel smiles while poised to fight, his eyes glancing back to the two girls who were staring at him worriedly from behind before he glared at the gemini again.

“Clover, help Felucia find Cindy, and get them and all of your people out of this forest. Stick to the plan.”

“But-”

“Do not argue with me, Clover!” Daniel shouted, the elf jumping back with a squeak as he kept his eyes locked onto the twins. “You need to get your people out of here. You need to get yourself out of here. So get going while I deal with these two.”

“But you can’t kill-”

“Clover!” Daniel yelled, looking back to the elf who jumped further back with a yelp. “I know what I’m doing! You know what you need to do! Now stop fighting me and do as you’re told!”

“Wow, Daniel,” Jovian purred. “Cracking that whip hard, aren’t you?”

“Such a strong, little man,” Jacqueline mocked. “It’s cute you want to protect her and all, but what makes you think we’re going to let any of you go? You’re all going to play with us, until you all break.”

“No,” Daniel corrected her. “Like I said, your fight is only with me.”

Without pause he wound back with his sword, the gemini tensing up as they prepared for another magical onslaught from him, only to then watch as he swung all the way around and down towards the ground behind him. With a powerful strike he tore through the floor of the meeting chamber with flames and cinders rupturing from the impact, a splintering and fiery crevice streaking across the floor erratically before stopping as it hit the end where the windows were blown out. Clover and Felucia looked around at the split that was carved down the middle of the room’s floor then turned to Daniel as he was winding back with his sword again.

“You two are leaving, now,” he ordered, then swung down into the floor again. The second crevice sliced outward and ran past the elf and sand wraith before hitting the wall to the side, with the ground below them creaking with a growing rumble. Clover and Felucia blinked then turned to Daniel in surprise just as the floor beneath them gave away, the clipped section they were on dropping down like a board before crashing into the kitchen of the temple with a loud crash. The two girls screamed as they rolled down the incline onto the ground while tables with dishes and glasses shattered under the fallen ramp.

“Dan!” Clover cried out as she hit the bottom, on top of Felucia who hit the ground face first with a small splatter of sand. She looked up to see Daniel smiling at her with the Hellfire’s Edge flaring up at his side.

“I’ll hold them off for as long as I can,” he told her. “Get everyone out of here just as we planned.”

“No, Dan!” Clover screamed as she scrambled to her feet. She watched with fright Daniel then turning to face the gemini, giving the Hellfire’s Edge a quick twirl at his side before holding it with both hands as he stared the twins down.

“I trust you’ll get the job done, Clover. Trust me that I’ll survive with you.”

“But... Dan...”

“Trust me,” Daniel said glancing back down to her. “I will see you again, and I will make you my woman when this is over with.”

Clover’s eyes widened, staring in stunned silence at him even while Felucia knocked her aside and got back up with a grumble and a slowly reforming face.

“Trust me, Clover,” Daniel repeated as he turned his eyes back to the gemini. “I will return for you. Nothing in Eden could ever keep me from you. And nothing will keep us from making a family together.”

“Dan...” Clover breathed out.

“I’m the only one you’re playing with here,” Daniel boldly told the twins. “Enough with your hesitation of dealing with me personally. You want to cause me pain? You want to make me scream? You want to kill me? Well, here I am!”

With that Daniel ran towards the gemini sisters with a furious yell, his sword flaring wildly at his side as the twins laughed at his approach.

“Dan...” Clover softly said, holding a hand tightly to her chest. She shook her head and struggled with her mate’s order while Felucia finished regenerating her face.

“That guy’s fucking insane, isn’t he?” she muttered with a twitch of her nose, the woman slowly walking towards the doorway while the elf heard thundering booms above them. Clover growled furiously then grabbed Felucia’s hand, quickly leading her out of the kitchen and into a hallway that she led the stumbling sand wraith down.

“Shut the fuck up!” Clover snapped. “He just saved our lives and he’s fighting those demons to buy us time to get the hell out of here!”

“Like I said, fucking insane,” Felucia repeated shaking her head. Clover instantly stopped, turned, and slapped the wraith’s face that blew to the side in a puff of sand.

“Don’t you DARE talk about my man like that!” Clover raged. She shoved Felucia against the wall, watching with rage as the wraith reformed with an annoyed look on her face. “He is risking his life to save you, me, and every elf in this forest, to stall those demons so they don’t come after us, to give us a fucking chance of getting out of this mess! If it wasn’t for him you’d be those bitches’ plaything until they decided to burn you to dust! You owe him your life just as I do, and you’d better show him some goddamned respect or so help me I will light an arrow ablaze and shove it all the way up your ass!”

Felucia stared at her in stunned silence before they looked up to the sounds of thundering clashes of steel and crackling energy erupting above them.

“He knows damned well he can’t kill them,” Clover stated with a stern glare the sand wraith. “Yet he’s up there right now, fighting those two monsters, all so we can get away from them. If those two get down from this tree they could kill anyone they want, every elf they see, and even your own daughter who’s here helping us evacuate this forest because unlike you she actually gives a damn about other people!”

“Cindy is... *what?*” Felucia bewilderedly asked. Clover grabbed her hand and again quickly led her down the hall as the wraith stared at her confusedly.

“And for the record I’m only saving your ass because my man told me to!” Clover barked out. “Anyone who dares speak ill of him in front of me would have more to worry about than gemini coming for their skin, and don’t you forget that!”

Up above on the exposed floor of the temple Daniel sprinted towards the gemini while trailing a fiery wave behind his sword beside him, running right up to the monsters before he dodged to the side and swung his weapon around. Jovian quickly jumped forward and clashed her blade against his, a backlash of flames and electricity firing off at an angle as the Dark Queen held his weapon in place. With a hearty laugh Jacqueline merrily twirled around her sister and swung at Daniel with her sword, the deadly-cold blade freezing the air it sliced through as Daniel lunged to the side away from it, albeit still feeling a painful chill streaking across his arm from the near-contact it made with her runestone weapon. The freezing blade struck the Hellfire’s Edge on its way down, knocking Daniel’s blade and himself off-balance while a flash of steam and frost blew from the impact. Spinning around her sister in a dancing motion Jovian swung her sword at him, with Daniel anchoring himself with one foot and throwing all his weight into an upward block with his own. He clashed against Jovian’s Hellstorm, knocking it away just as Jacqueline followed her sister’s motion and repeated her attack. Daniel yelled out as he parried one sister’s strike then another with sharp downward and upward thrusts, the two girls constantly twirling around each other and never letting up on their attacks. Smoke billowed in the air behind them, electricity snapped at the ground with sharp pops, steam and frost flowed away in the wind, and Daniel growled in rising anger as he backed up more and more with the twins always keeping him on the defensive.

“Well, since you’re so insistent, Daniel!” Jovian laughed as she pushed Daniel back further. “We’ll enjoy some quality playtime with just you. Your dear friends can scurry away like fearful rats for now.”

“It doesn’t really matter,” Jacqueline giggled as she spun around her sister and clashed blades with Daniel, this time engaging him in a power struggle as she literally pushed him back along the ground. “We’ll kill them later anyway. It’ll be lots of fun, I’m sure.”

Jovian darted to the side and swung down at Daniel, forcing him to jump back and near the edge of what remained of the temple they were standing on. Looking behind he saw a *very* long way down to the ground and a burning forest, then ahead at the gemini laughing in unison as they held their swords towards him.

“Oh, Daniel,” Jovian sighed, holding a hand to her cheek. “You know, we originally weren’t planning on killing you right away. We wanted you to watch as we crushed your dreams into the dirt first. We were going to save you for last.”

“We wanted you to see Rockhelm falling to monsters,” Jacqueline said. “We wanted you to see your dream of humans becoming friends with monsters fall into flames just as the kingdom did. And then we were going to kill your friends.”

“Lovers now, right?” Jovian mocked. “That’s right, you took them *all* as your mates. Honestly, I’m surprised they agreed to that, but whatever. They are utter morons such as yourself after all. Morons that we were planning on killing right before your eyes.”

“With them being your lovers, I’m sure that would have been even better to watch,” Jacqueline dreamily sighed. “Oh, you would have cried and cried, and then cried some more. It would have been a magnificent sight.”

“But now the surprise is ruined,” Jovian pouted. “And here you are, challenging us to a fight that you’re destined to fail with. Seems we have no choice but to skip right to the main event, and kill you as slowly and painfully as we can. We have to try and make it last now, thanks to you cutting to the finale so abruptly.”

“And we were working so hard to give you one hell of a show before you died,” Jacqueline sneered. “All that work, gone to waste now all because of your recklessness and foolishness. Honestly, Daniel, you’re nothing but a bother to those in this world.”

“Are you two done yet?” Daniel dryly asked. The gemini blinked then looked at him curiously while tilting their heads as Daniel was holding his sword before him and staring them down with a harsh glare. “Are we going to fight, or did you two want to just keep running your mouths? No offense, but just staring at you, even when you’re naked, is incredibly boring. There’s just nothing before me that’s worth seeing or listening to.”

“My sister’s body is anything but boring,” Jacqueline scoffed. “She’s perfect from head to toe.”

“My mates are the definition of true beauty, both on the outside and within. You and your horrid sister couldn’t hold a candle to them no matter how hard you tried.”

“What makes you think you’re in any position to speak to us like that?” Jovian coldly asked him.

“Actually, I’m in a pretty good position now,” Daniel reasoned with a shrug.

“Really?” Jacqueline dared as the sisters got ready to thrust forward.

“Really,” Daniel answered, with him then surprising the gemini by hopping back and falling down from view. The sisters paused for a moment then smiled awkwardly.

“Did he just jump to his death?” Jovian laughed.

“That damned fool,” Jacqueline mockingly sighed as they walked over to the edge. Looking down they blinked before jumping in surprise as they saw Daniel standing on a terrace from the floor below them, the human glaring at them with bared teeth while having his sword wound back behind him. Without pause Daniel shouted with a furious swipe of his blade, casting out a nightmarish eruption of flames and dark electricity that carved through the building at an angle and engulfed the sisters from below. Flaming debris and smoke blasted high into the air while more rained down further away across the ravaged temple. Quickly scrambling up along the collapsed palace chamber he demolished Daniel got back to the top and looked around quickly as his attack finally dissolved above in the air. He saw flaming chunks of stone and wood scattered everywhere while burning leaves were drifting down from the tree all around, his eyes then catching sight of the two runestone blades of the gemini further away. Sure enough Jovian and Jacqueline were getting back onto their feet, which slowly reformed to have flesh covering their bones again, while pushing themselves up with their enchanted weapons. As

Jovian's eyes formed in her skull she saw Daniel rushing towards her, following up with another vicious slash through her body and knocking her sword out of her skeletal hands. Her remains were thrown back along with flames and raw magical energy from the strike while her weapon bounced away and struck into a pile of rubble with a sharp strike. Turning his attention over to Jacqueline he saw her lunging at him with her weapon. Moving quickly, he darted to the side and parried her sword away, following through with bashing her head with the Hellfire's Edge's hilt before spinning around and striking his sword down across her front with a fierce yell. As she splattered to the ground while feebly holding onto her sword Daniel glanced back and saw Jovian rising again, having reformed once more and glaring at him with her multicolored eyes.

'Need to keep them separated. If they double-team me again I might be finished. Fight them one-on-one the best you can and keep them here as long as you can. Do not let them go near your mates!'

"I must say," Daniel mockingly retorted before swinging his sword around and into the ground, tearing through the rubble and knocking Jacqueline's sword away. "I thought you two would be able to give me a good workout. I know my mates certainly do. Especially Triska, she's definitely become more of a lustful monster in the sheets. Sad to see you're both quite lacking when it comes to satisfying others, let alone this man. How pitiful for monsters of this world, wouldn't you agree?"

"You little..." Jovian hissed with anger.

"You're dead!" Jacqueline yelled as she lunged at him with her hands. He quickly stepped around and jammed his sword through her gut, halting her as she was run through down to the hilt, then spun her around to face him before giving a hard slap to her cheek. The girl gasped and looked back to him in surprise just before he yanked his sword upward, slicing through her body with its heated edge and out her shoulder with a crunch. He swung around and sliced her head off, following up with a swift kick to knock the falling severed girl's skull straight over to Jovian. The girl caught her sister's head with a startled jump and stared at it with rage and disbelief before glaring with a furious growl at Daniel who was smirking bitterly at her.

"I'd tell you to shove that up your ass," he derisively stated as he walked past Jacqueline's body that dropped to its knees behind him. "But something tells me you sick bitches would enjoy that."

"How dare you..." Jovian snarled as she crushed the head with a loud crunch. Daniel glanced back to see Jacqueline's body dropping forward before it stopped itself with its arms, the neck having a bulge of flesh and bones growing out from it. The girl slowly stood up as the head regenerated, her long hair dropping down and swaying in the wind as she glanced back to him with a furious look on her face.

"What's wrong?" Daniel taunted. "You were so happy a moment ago. Where's your smile, sunshine?"

Jacqueline fumed with anger before turning around and lunging at him with a scream. Daniel stepped away and dodged the girl's frantic swipes at him, the girl stumbling a bit with her attempts before picking up a large slab of stone and swinging that at him instead. Daniel watched her carefully while dodging to the side and swiping around with his sword, cleaving her arm off with a quick slice. The girl screamed furiously as she swung down and off-balance with her stone, smashing it into the ground as Daniel jumped around to the side before darting behind her. He thrust his sword straight into her rear, the girl lurching forward with a surprised gasp as the sword burned its way through her insides up

to her ribcage. Daniel then turned to see Jovian pulling out her blade from the rubble while staring at him in shock.

“What?” he asked with a shrug. “Don’t tell me she hates anal. I really didn’t think she would mind. Alyssa always jumps for joy whenever I give it to her in that hole.”

Gripping the handle tightly Daniel yelled out while swinging to the side with his sword, the blade letting off a powerful eruption of fire that blasted apart the girl while throwing her bloodied remains off to the side in a wide splatter of charred flesh and seared bones. With a small flick of his fiery sword Daniel turned to face Jovian who was dashing towards him with a furious scream and blade drawn to her side, her Hellstorm sparking wildly while trailing electrical arcs all along the ground it passed over as she swiftly closed in on the human.

“NOBODY TOUCHES MY SISTER LIKE THAT!” Jovian roared as she swung at Daniel. He threw all his weight into blocking the attack while focusing his might to channel as much power from the Hellfire’s Edge into it as he could, the two swords clashing with a violent eruption of fire and sparks that shot out all around them in a chaotic display. Daniel’s legs braced from the force of the gemini’s powerful swing, his boots sliding a bit at first as he was pushed back before he quickly darted around the girl and steered her sword down with his. Jovian snarled while swinging her blade back up at him, with Daniel again parrying around her and trying to throw the sword’s direction off.

“I’m going to kill you!” Jovian screamed with murder in her multicolored eyes. “Her body is only for me!”

“What’s wrong? Afraid she might like it more from me?” Daniel taunted as she razed her blade up along his towards his face, with him ducking under it and parrying her sword around and down to the ground again. Jovian merely replied with a slurred yell, her blade building up a dangerous amount of electricity as it began wildly sparking with arcs of energy zapping the ground below it. Daniel smirked as he saw he pushed her over the edge, the gemini then furiously swiping towards him with great strength. With a quick leap Daniel lunged to the side while angling his sword to guard himself, watching as the girl swung her sword at where he was and cast out a powerful torrent of lightning that crackled violently with bright light past him. The blast of energy seared across the ravaged battleground and engulfed Jacqueline as she stood up holding her sword, the girl jolting uncontrollably while arcs of electricity ran all along her body and down her weapon. Jovian stared in surprise as Jacqueline was shocked to her core, the stammering blonde shaking about before the attack finally fizzled out, leaving her standing with a dazed expression and hair that was sticking straight out in all directions with small buzzes of energy arcing between them. After a moment she wavered and dropped to her knees while her eyes finally stopped rolling around in her head.

“Sister,” Jovian mourned in dismay. She snarled furiously and looked back and up just in time to see Daniel having leapt upward and driving his sword down at her with both hands. Before she could move he struck his searing blade through her mouth, down her neck, and into her torso with a loud crunch, with Jovian wavering off-balance and gurgling blood as her eyes sluggishly looked at the weapon then to Daniel, before he yanked her down onto her knees while grinning sharply at her. He then glanced over to see Jacqueline staring at him in disbelief while her hair finally dropped down behind her again.

“Tell me,” Daniel dared as he kicked Jovian’s sword out her hand. “Does it make you upset seeing me skull-fucking your sister in front of you?”

“Daniel...” Jacqueline snarled while trembling with rage.

“Or does it arouse you?” Daniel wondered. “I guess I can understand that. I hear Clover is a big fan of fellatio as well. Though I must confess I’m sure I’ll enjoy skull-fucking her far more than your tramp of a sister.”

Daniel stepped around Jovian while yanking up his blade, the gargling monster turning to him with a vicious glare, then promptly wound back with fire searing along his sword again before slashing down and destroying the girl’s body with a powerful blast of flames that carved a crevice through the rubble past her. Pulling his sword back up, he gave it a small twirl before walking towards Jacqueline, the girl standing back up while seething with anger as she held her blade in both hands with a trembling grip.

“Ready for your turn?” Daniel casually asked. Jacqueline snarled like an animal before rushing at him, lunging forward with a powerful downward slice that had freezing air billowing from the blade. Daniel darted aside, dodging the attack that struck into the ground with large shards of ice and debris rupturing from the impact, then nimbly ducked and dodged to the side again as Jacqueline swung her sword around at him with a crazed yell, icicles and frozen rubble being thrown outward behind it as the girl wildly tried hacking the swordsman in a blind fury. As she swung again and again at him, Daniel found dodging her presumably fatal attacks to be increasingly easy as he confirmed something about the gemini.

‘It’s working. The more angry and upset they become, the sloppier their attacks get. They’re going blind with rage. Just keep egging them on and don’t let them fight together, buy as much time for everyone to get out of Green Haven as you can.’

“I’M GOING TO KILL YOU!” Jacqueline roared as she swung down with her sword, slashing it into the ground and causing an explosion of ice and debris to burst from the impact. Daniel dodged to the side, and then slipped on the frozen ground, falling down with a hard grunt before quickly rolling away as Jacqueline tried to stomp on his head, her foot crushing the ground in with a powerful smash instead. Rolling back onto his feet Daniel turned and parried a wide swing from Jacqueline’s Ice Princess before spinning around and slashing hard with his sword, obliterating the gemini with a searing hot arc of fiery energy that pulverized her body across the ground with a splatter. Standing upright and catching his breath Daniel noticed Jovian again rushing him with her sword drawn and a furious yell as she charged him like a wild bull. Shaking off the stumble he took he prepared to once again fight and taunt the blood-thirsty monster while her sister slowly regenerated from his attack.

‘I hope I can keep this up. Pace yourself, Daniel, and watch your footing. Or else you’re in for a very painful demise.’

“Now this is quite the show,” Aeon chuckled, standing atop a distant knoll while watching Daniel’s fight with the gemini. “I must say, those two lowly dogs give us Dark Queens a bad name. No self-control, no finesse, no sagacity. No problem fighting completely naked, so class is clearly out of the picture too. So nice to see some sense being slapped into them, and by a mere human no less.”

“I have to say I’m surprised he’s lasted this long,” Flarah conceded, her eyes staring intently at the elven forest further away as she witnessed Daniel’s battle. “Not bad for a human.”

“What are you two talking about?” Kindra whined hopping up and down. “I can’t see jack shit from here! What’s happening? What’s going on with Daniel?”

"He's engaged the gemini in combat," Aeon replied with a smug smile and quick glance to the kitsune.

"He's *what*?" Kindra cried out.

"And he's actually fending them off all on his own," Flarah mused.

"He's... what?" Kindra curiously asked. She looked ahead at the burning forest with wonder then back to Flarah as her sister merely raised in eyebrow in question.

"Make no mistake, he's no closer to killing them than anyone's ever been, but he is managing to fight them off without any support."

"Daniel's... winning against the gemini?" Kindra wondered.

"Not winning," Aeon answered shaking her head. "More of a stalemate for the time being. Of course I doubt he can keep it up for too much longer. The gemini will never tire, whereas he will slowly grow weaker and weaker with each clash they make."

"Then why do you want him to face the gemini at all?" Kindra demanded. "What game are you playing here, chrono wench?"

"A very enjoyable one, I promise you that," Aeon retorted with a twitch of her eyebrow.

"Her question does still stand," Flarah mentioned glancing to Aeon. "Daniel may be able to hold them off for the time being, but that time will fall short very quickly. What is it you've arranged for him, Aeon?"

Aeon merely looked at her with a sly grin, the kitsune studying her carefully for a moment before turning her gaze back towards Green Haven. Her eyes scanned the surrounding chaos that Daniel was encircled in while fighting the gemini high atop the grand timber of the forest, her focus then slowly shifting downward as something new caught her attention. Kindra growled in rising frustration as she watched Green Haven burning with large trees falling amidst the elven village, the catastrophic crashes they made and the screams of both elves and grunts of The Sisterhood being heard even from their distant position.

"I don't like this at all," Kindra snarled with rustling tails. "Daniel's not ready to fight like this, let alone a Dark Queen. He can't kill them, and he's as good as dead if his fatigue catches up to him now. Fuck this. He's in a fight he can't win while surrounded by those blood-thirsty monsters, I need to get him out of there before things get even worse."

"Too late," Aeon carelessly replied with a shrug.

"What?" Kindra said quickly turning to her. "What do you mean too late? Explain yourself!"

"Kindra," Flarah cautioned, her eyes widening slightly as her sister looked to her with growing apprehension.

"What is it? What do you see now?"

"You mean you can't?" Aeon teased. "I thought as a kitsune you would have been able to tell by now."

"Tell what? What are you talking about?"

"Kindra, look closely," Flarah warned.

Kindra sharply observed Green Haven while searching for whatever else could be Daniel's doom amidst the growing number of candidates. She looked around quickly for a while before stopping suddenly, her eyes narrowing slightly as something did seem off to her.

"Wait... Green Haven, it's... the fire's energy..."

“So you can tell,” Aeon mused. “I thought as much. You kitsunes are essentially fire demons, yes? Just as I’m in tune with the ether of time itself, you have a unique grasp and sensitivity to the element of fire, don’t you?”

“What is this?” Kindra said shaking her head. “I can sense it now. The power of fire from that forest... it’s spiking. But how? Even with the forest burning it shouldn’t be rising this profoundly. What... what the hell? Flarah? Why can I sense so much burning energy building up there now? Where’s it coming from?”

“Look down, Kindra,” Flarah cautioned.

Kindra blinked then slowly turned her eyes downward from the forest, her senses over her natural element suddenly becoming overwhelmed as her focus shifted lower. She quickly pondered an explanation for what she was feeling, her mouth opening slightly as it only made her heart skip a beat from the mere thought, before she turned to Aeon who was now chuckling with a dark smile on her face.

“Oh, Flarah?” Aeon coyly taunted. “Do you remember that little trick you pulled in order to allow the Hellfire’s Edge to enter that forest? Something very important belonging to the elves was broken during that event, isn’t that right?”

“The Aquarius Gateway,” Flarah recalled. “That elven child destroyed it upon her escape from Green Haven.”

“Yes, she did,” Aeon applauded with a few claps, then showed an innocent expression as the two kitsunes watched her carefully. “So, why do you think the elves had that unique seal constructed over their home? I don’t believe it was intended just to keep that legendary sword from entering their forest.”

“What are you getting at? You never mentioned any of this before,” Flarah accused. “This wasn’t destined to happen last I checked with you.”

“Oh, that is true,” Aeon slyly insisted. “Though you seem to be forgetting that after I told you what was originally destined to happen, *you* made a change that not even I could have predicted. You wanted that magical seal removed, thinking you *had* to remove it all, and you got your wish from me doing that small favor you requested of guiding that elven child to safety.”

“What is she talking about, Flarah?” Kindra asked.

“And after I did that little favor for you, fate changed. This is the result of *your* meddling, Flarah, not mine. I never foresaw the Aquarius Gateway being destroyed when you were plotting your own little show here.”

“But you said the gemini were going to be slain here tonight,” Flarah recalled. “The Hellfire’s Edge had to have come here to do that.”

“Yes,” Aeon answered with a nod. “But, I never said the Dark Queen was destined to fall *within* Green Haven. Rather, it was to be just outside of it.”

Flarah stared at Aeon in silence as the chronofly chuckled while seeing words failing to come from the kitsune’s mouth now. Kindra looked back and forth between the two before shaking her head anxiously.

“What does all that mean?” she demanded, before quickly noticing something that caught her complete attention.

“This little deviation in the fates is because of you, Flarah,” Aeon lectured with a shake of her finger. “You’re the one who threw change into motion with the fates that I was so kind as to inform you of. You’re the one who wanted the Aquarius Gateway removed to better suit your own plans. You’re the one who assumed you knew everything when you didn’t ask all the right questions to begin with. You thought you had every detail planned out, and yet you didn’t see the full picture at all. And just as you didn’t put any real thought into any of that, you didn’t with *why* the elves had that special seal erected to protect their home in the first place. Here’s a hint, Flarah, it had nothing to do with the likes of you kitsunes or even that sword Daniel Sorres now holds.”

“Flarah,” Kindra said as her eyes widened, her gaze locked onto a gigantic source of heat energy building up below Green Haven.

“Seems those ant girls dug a little too close to what the elves had suppressed with their precious Aquarius Gateway,” Aeon chuckled as she turned her gaze towards the forest. “And without it still standing, they’ve awoken what once lay dormant. Don’t worry, Flarah, I’ve already taken into account this happening before I arrived here, it changes nothing of what I promised would come from this fateful night. Although, it surely will make things all the more interesting to watch now, won’t it?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Kindra fretted as she grabbed her hair. “Green Haven... it’s...”

Flarah stepped forward in front of the two women and watched as a dangerously high amount of fiery energy was building up below the elven forest, knowing perfectly well what they were seeing and what was about to happen thanks to her own meddling with destiny.

“It was built over a volcanic fissure.”

“Would you hurry up?” Clover shouted as she dragged Felucia down the long spiral stairs inside the grand tree. The two raced down the stairwell as the area rumbled again, causing them to stagger against the wall for a moment before continuing downward.

“Would you stop telling me what to do?” Felucia barked back. “And let go, I can run just fine on my own without you guiding me like I’m some sort of child!”

“You’re too fucking slow!” Clover retorted. “We need to get the hell out of here and find my friends! Now move your ass!”

The two descended along the spiraling stairwell before being thrown against the wall as another violent tremor rolled by.

“What the fuck is going on out there anyway?” Clover cried out. “Why was everything on fire all of a sudden?”

“Who cares? Just take me to my Cindy right now, I need to get her out of this crazy shithole!”

They began making their way down again before another powerful quake rocked the tree, causing them to stumble with their steps as they held onto the wall for support.

“Holy shit,” Clover said looking up. “Is this from Dan fighting the gemini? How much power are they using up there?”

“Your human didn’t start your forest on fire,” Felucia reminded her. “Something else is happening here.”

The two girls raced down the stairs for a while before finally coming to an abrupt halt, both staring with wide eyes as they had reached the bottom of the steps with nothing at all now resting below them. Instead they only saw what was now under the grand tree; a seemingly bottomless chasm

with hazy clouds of dust swirling far below in its depths. Slowly they looked around in shock, seeing that the tree's roots were spread out far enough to still reach into the cliffs of the gaping pit and hold the mighty timber upright despite there being nothing at all directly below it now.

"What the fuck?" Clover breathed out.

"Where did the fucking ground go?" Felucia cried out. "What's going on here?"

They jumped back quickly as the step they were on broke off with a snap, the two girls watching as the loose piece fell all the way down into the pit before vanishing in the haze.

"You've got to be kidding me," Clover shakily stuttered. "What the hell happened? What's doing this to my home? Did those other monsters plan this?"

"This isn't The Sisterhood's doing," Felucia said shaking her head. "They don't have the means to cause something like this. It's like Eden itself is falling apart below our feet."

"Fuck!" Clover screamed as she looked up and down in frustration. "We're trapped between the gemini and oblivion! You've got to be fucking kidding me! This is as bad as it can possibly get!"

Upon uttering those words the area started to rumble again, this time with Felucia and Clover stumbling to the side and bracing against the wall before quickly backing up a few steps as more dropped out from below them. Felucia grunted while holding onto the wall before she and Clover slowly looked down as the rumbling was growing louder. The haze at the bottom of the chasm slowly shifted to a bright crimson, waves of heat suddenly rising and increasing with growing updrafts of smoke.

"You just had to open your mouth," Felucia snapped.

"That heat..." Clover cautioned, the elf and sand wraith then jumping in fright as they saw the haze parting to reveal molten lava and burning rock rising with bursting geysers erupting from it.

"Oh... my..." Felucia breathed out as she turned pale.

"Climb. Climb!" Clover screamed as the pool of magma quickly started to rise upward with a violent vibration rolling through the forest. The elf and sand wraith turned and dashed up the stairs as fast as they could while heated air was blown through the hollowed tree in a powerful gust.

Running about in a panic elves and monsters of The Sisterhood were scrambling in all directions within the elven forest, all of them slowly halting and turning towards the grand timber that now had pillars of smoke blowing up from under it.

"What the hell is that?" a witch nervously asked.

"I have bad feeling," a goblin whimpered while stepping back.

"The royal tree," an elf softly said as a tremor shook the forest heavily.

"What is going on down there?" Daniel asked as he and the gemini paused from feeling the temple shaking beneath them. "What did you two do this time?"

"This isn't us," Jovian and Jacqueline mused together while looking around curiously.

With a thunderous boom an eruption of lava and charred rock blasted up all around the mighty tree from underneath, shooting molten stone and searing magma up and out in all directions as the royal tree's roots were lit ablaze and engulfed with the volcanic emission. Every monster nearby screamed as the forest was bathed in a deep red light from the fiery hail and then watched in terror as it rained down all throughout the village. Trees were struck with burning globs of lava that quickly seared right through them, more of the forest floor gave away with monsters and elves dropping down where broiling steam vented up from, a group of trolls were hit with a heavy molten chunk that plowed them down into the burning ground, witches shrieked and ran about while a few were clipped by raining lava

and burst into flames violently, and the grand tree shook as what little foundation it still sat upon was being melted away.

Within the hollowed timber Clover and Felucia were sprinting up the stairs while watching in fright as a torrent of liquid magma tore through the hollowed tree below them at high speed.

"We're going to die!" Felucia cried out. Clover looked up and saw a near-endless flight of stairs awaiting them, then down to the lava that was quickly annihilating the steps below while racing towards them. They managed to climb just a little higher before they stumbled with their footing and dropped onto the stairs, both then gripping each other close as they were engulfed in a fiery light while staring in horror as the rising lava quickly closed in on them.

"I hate this fucking world!" Felucia screamed out. Clover stared with unblinking eyes at their approaching deaths before she shut them tightly and screamed the loudest she had ever done in her life.

"DAN!"