

## Epics of Isavoire

### Chapter 8: Terrae Filii

Aurelius was worried, deeply worried. The old man had travelled far into the badlands, hoping to find something very important to him, but nothing so far.

Being baked by the hot sunlight, he soon needed a rest and went towards a small stone. The old man was sitting there, single-mindedly thinking about the danger that could be going on.

'I have to hurry along, otherwise they'll leave immediately...' he thought. Just then, Aurelius noticed that there was a group of travellers in the distance, human ones.

It seemed to be an adult and two children, heading in the same direction as Aurelius was.

One was a woman, dressed in a black and red outfit with bright blue eyes and aquamarine hair. On her hip was a sword, which her hand gripped firmly. Following her was a young man, who looked pale and was dressed in a coat and hat. He was pulling on the scarf of another young woman. The young woman was dark skinned and wore black clothes, having long, shaggy hair.

Aurelius realized that the trio could very well be headed towards danger and decided to go warn them. He started walking and soon enough they noticed him, too.

"Can we help you, sir?" the woman asked.

"Yes. I hate to intrude, but are you three going towards the Corundum Mines?"

“Yeah, at least that’s what these two tell me,” the female child smiled, and Aurelius saw that she was blind. The sleeves of her shirt were empty, showing she was also without arms. “Who’re you, mister?”

“You can call me Aurelius. I wanted to warn you that there is danger near the mines.”

“We know. The people from the settlement a few miles back hired my sister to get rid of some golems that ran them out.” The young boy looked at Aurelius, but something about him was different, almost unsettling.

“Are you sure? It might be difficult.”

“It likely will be, but it was the job I took. I’d like to see it through.”

“Then please, allow me to accompany you as well,” Aurelius said. “I have pressing business there.”

“I don’t see the harm.”

“Awesome! Looks like we have more friends,” the girl said before the scarf around her neck went up, one end outstretched like a hand in Aurelius’s general direction. “I’m Annie.”

“Nice to meet you. I would touch your scarf, but it looks so nice and my hands are a bit dirty.”

“It’s fine. Luka made the scarf. Wish I knew how nice it looked.”

“Very nice, trust me.” The boy smirked. “I did take my time when making it.”

“You made this? The cloth is finely crafted.”

“Thank you. My dad was a tailor. He taught me and Amber, my sister, and I picked up a bit of extra skills.”

“Ah, quite the gift you have.” Aurelius smiled kindly. “Perhaps you can tell me about it while we walk.”

The four continued their walk towards the corundum mines, following a well-worn trail there. At first the wastelands remained normal, but soon enough they saw that there was a few pillars and spikes of glass within the area, leading towards the mines.

“Annie, tread carefully. There’s a ton of glass here.” Luka was careful to make sure there was a cleared path and began to lead her through it.

Aurelius saw the woman with the sword and spoke. “You’re Amber, yes?”

“I am.”

“And you’re sure you should take these children on this quest?”

“Trust me. They are capable of handling themselves.”

“I suppose your judgment is best.”

“Thank you, sir.” Amber smiled slightly.

Moments later, the group went inside the mines, lit by a few dim lanterns before they were deep within. The mine itself was dank; several stones with red gems were seen as well.

The group looked around, but Annie’s hair began to stand on end.

“What’s wrong?” Luka asked.

“There’s a lot of magic here, like a crazy amount. I can sense it, and it feels like there’s nothing else.”

“Can you lead us down to it?” Aurelius asked her.

“I can try.” Walking ahead, Annie led them deeper into the mines.

Eventually, the group began to descend deeper, until they heard a noise that sounded like scraping.

“Seems we have intruders...” said a voice, deep and raspy. The group looked around and in a short time they saw a tall, helmeted figure, wielding two long swords. He seemed to be perfectly clear, and there was a slight noise whenever he moved.

“Who are you?” Amber asked, staring at him.

“I am Dusan. Milady Zyanya wishes for your kind to leave this place. I must ask you oblige.”

“Sorry, but we can’t go. We were asked to clear this mine of the golems that forced away the humans who were mining here.”

“It was my doing and a necessity. I can only ask you again, lest I force you out.”

“Then, by all means, force us.” Amber drew her sword, her expression serious. Before Amber could make a move, Aurelius held up his hand and approached.

“Wait...Are you certain we cannot negotiate the issue?”

“Fairly certain. What business have you here, old one?”

Aurelius smiled somewhat. “I need to talk with your mistress. It’s an important matter.”

“I apologize, but I will not and cannot allow any to see her.” The being raised its weapons. “This is my final warning.”

“Then I suppose you can have your pick of which of us you’d like to face,” Amber said.

“Um, except me, I don’t really fight. No arms and all,” Annie said.

“Then I shall make it simple, swordswoman. Should I best you, you leave. If you win, these mines will be cleared before the day is out.”

“Sounds fine to me.”

The two stepped forward while the other backed away, both eyeing each other. A few seconds passed, before, at last, they clashed.

Amber made the first move, using her sword to stab.

Dusan blocked with one blade before swinging another, narrowly missing Amber who stepped in to strike. Dusan found himself using both blades, doing what he could to parry the onslaught. His opponent was swift, fierce, determined. Even with one blade, again and again she managed to control the pace. Dusan, however, knew he had an edge that she did not.

For a moment, there was a cracking noise, before Amber realized what was going on. Dusan’s arms were splitting in twain, while his swords did the same. Soon, he was four armed and had four blades. He began to increase his attack speed, slashing faster and stabbing with more ferocity.

Amber did all she could to block and parry, trying to read his movements, but several blows got past her.

“Do you see how outmatched you are, ma’am?” Dusan asked casually mid-attack.

“Actually, I’m intrigued. Let’s see what more you can do!” Amber smirked and slashed as hard as she could. Each slash had tremendous force, utterly shattering two of the glass blades before she knocked another from Dusan’s hand.

The being of glass was flabbergasted for a moment before composing himself. “Impressive. It seems you’re a talented duelist.”

“As are you,” Amber smiled. “Do others of your kind know swordsmanship?”

“Of course. We share many arts with your kind and the others. In some ways we have more intimate knowledge in terms of craftsmanship.”

“Hm. I think my master would’ve loved your style. Still, I can’t lose here.”

“Nor can I.” Dusan began to summon up the fallen shards, reassembling his arms and swords.

Next thing Amber saw, Dusan’s swords melded with his arms, which also grew spikes.

“You’ll have to forgive the unorthodox form. I hope you still find it acceptable.”

“It shouldn’t be a problem.” Again, Amber clashed with Dusan, but his change in form began to cause her more issues. The attacks were more sure and focused now, and when she attacked she couldn’t land a hit.

Each time her sword hit, it cracked his bladed arms, even chipping Dusan’s glassy form.

“Hm. I thought glass was fragile. Why’s she gotta whack him so much?” Annie asked.

“I guess he’s denser due to high concentration.” Aurelius looked at the fighters closely. “Still, Amber’s getting cut rather often. Even if she’s better with a sword, chips of glass that break up keep slicing her hand.”

“Yeah, I can see it.” Luka folded his arms. “But, I’m sure she has a plan.”

“Let’s hope so.”

Meanwhile, Amber was starting to feel the toll of the lacerations on her hands and her own tiredness. She had to go for the final blow.

With a heavy hit, using her strength, Amber cut Dusan’s arm at the elbow and grabbed the severed limb. Gripping the smoothest part, she used it and her other sword to shatter Dusan’s other arm before she performed a stab.

The concentrated blow went straight through Dusan’s chest.

The golem looked down, then up at Amber. “It seems I have lost...”

“So you have. It was a great challenge, though.” Amber sheathed her sword. “Is our deal still intact?”

“Yes, it is. We will leave the mines briefly.”

“Excellent. Then we shall wait until then.” Amber placed down Dusan’s arm and was about to go back to the others, when she saw a figure come out.

It was a woman with pure white skin and deep red eyes. Crimson colored markings were on her face. Her hair was a beautiful ivory color, though her clothing was simple, save for a silver necklace with a single golden charm

Annie’s hair stood completely up and the girl’s eyes widened in shock. “Dang, that’s a ton of magic!”

The woman said nothing, immediately running to the wounded golem of glass. "Dusan! Did they harm you?"

"Harm is very relative, Lady Zyanya. I've been bested, but am fine otherwise."

"It's fine. Our business here is done. Let me fix you up." With a snap, Zyanya began to gather the shards of glass and reassembled Dusan. Helping him up, she looked up to the taller figure. "I'll get us back."

"Wait, Zyanya...Can we speak?" Aurelius walked up to her.

Zyanya's expression was one of brief recognition before her expression turned to one of pure anger. "No. Next time, I will have you killed if you come back for me, old man."

"But I wanted to explain. The last time we spoke-"

"I remember what you said, and your actions spoke far louder. Goodbye."

Raising her hand, Zyanya muttered a brief chant before she and Dusan disappeared.

Aurelius sighed. He had failed and would have to wait until the next time he saw her.

"You know her?" Luka asked Aurelius

"Yes. She's my daughter."

Everyone looked at him. The moment of silence was broken when Annie's hair flopped down.

"Your daughter is magic," Annie said.

"Yes, it's complicated. Either way, I want to talk to her. Hopefully next time."

"You can only hope. At least walk back with us to the town we were in. They promised a celebration after we finished the job."



“It would be an honor.” With a smile, the old man left with the other three. Once Annie had confirmed there were no other golems, they left and happily made their way back.

Aurelius only hoped he could truly talk to Zyanya next time and convey his deep regrets.

## -PART TWO-

Gaia’s Cradle. An ancient and far away place, settled deep within the earth’s crust. Gaia’s Cradle, commonly called the Mother Lode, was said to be the place where all golems could trace their origins.

Zyanya was back with Dusan, underground and sitting on a bench of obsidian, the two looking on at the mecca of stone.

It was a sacred place, with a statue of their matron deity. Gaea was believed to be the creator of their kind, titled as the Earthshaper. The statue overlooked the many golems who went about, mining ore, checking for Newforms, newly born golems, and building up their society.

Directly in front of the Gaia Statue was the Terra Tower, which was the dwelling place of the golems’ leader.

“We have to go and speak with him soon.”

“I know, Dusan. I just don’t want to tell him that we didn’t find the mythrill we were looking for.”

“No, but I’m sure The Hadean will be satisfied. You haven’t even failed him once so far.”

“Thank you, I appreciate the positive reinforcement.” Zyanya smiled faintly.

“It is why I exist.” Dusan stood and offered his clawlike hand to Zyanya. “Shall we give our report, milady?”

“Yes, we will.” Zyanya took his hand and entered the Terra Tower.

The tower itself was surprising in that the Hadean was actually found in the basement, deeper below ground, while the portions going up served another purpose.

There was a black crater in the floors center, as well a glowing deposit of some form of metal behind the Hadean’s stone throne.

The Hadean was covered in robes, his appearance absolutely hidden. It was how he usually appeared, unless a special occasion came.

“Zyanya, Dusan. Welcome back, my friends,” the Hadean said in a friendly tone. “How did the mission go?”

“It did not go as planned. We drove the humans out and gathered some corundum, but could not find mythril.”

“Ah...How disappointing, but such things happen. Nonetheless you did well, it isn’t as if one can force an ore to be where it is not.”

“Thank you, my lord,” Dusan said before bowing. “We shall strive to find it next time.”

“For now, I do have another task I’d like to send the two of you on. Some of our brethren have been enslaved by a baron who considers himself a jewel collector.

Apparently, he's made a habit of selling "valuable" golems. I'll need you both to also bring him back to me, alive."

"We will, sir," Zyanya said. "You have my word."

"Good. I trust you both. You will likely finish in three and a half days, barring bad weather or treachery. Your magic should be able to take you to Avendale, where you will head northeast before you find him."

"It will be done." With a bow, Zyanya used her magic to teleport herself and Dusan away.

The Hadean decided to simply wait, with nothing but time on his hands.

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Avendale was a busy town, a place where many folks passed through in order to get someplace more important.

Zyanya had disguised herself, with a very minimal alteration. It simply turned her skin a shade that normal humans had and made her red markings look like make-up.

Dusan was, in comparison, completely covered in robes. Not a single bit of him was revealed, in order to hide his true status.

Looking around, Dusan did notice just how many human beings there were and the variety of structures before them.

"They are a busy bunch, aren't they?"

“They usually are, but it’s admirable,” Zyanya said. She smiled as she looked on at children tossing a ball back in forth in a clearing, and then again at two adults holding one another. “Places like these remind me they aren’t all bad.”

“I’m glad they made a positive impression. I must admit, I am curious about their creations.”

“Well, we can go look at some,” Zyanya said as she pointed to a store. “They’ve got some impressive weapons, for a small town, anyway.”

Dusan nodded. “Very well, lead the way, milady.”

“But of course!” Walking ahead, Zyanya led the glass golem into the weapon store. It was a tad slow there, with the storekeeper busy polishing a set of knives with an absent look on her face.

The freckle faced woman looked up, just in time to see her guests. She smiled and stood with a wave.

“Heya. Didn’t expect to get customers ‘round nowabouts,” the woman said, placing a hand on her hip. Her head was tied with a scarf, keeping her hay blonde hair up while she stared at the two. “Welcome to Lilah’s. What can I do ya fer?”

“We just wanted to look at your weapons, Ms. Lilah. Do you have anything you can show us?”

“Well, if’n y’all got the time, I can show ya some of my wares. I got this steel beaut of a greatsword some passerby pawned. Then there’s that there bow and arrow set.”

“Bows and arrows do not interest me.” Dusan seemed to be disinterested. “I could produce blades finer than that steel mess, as well.”

“Oh? I guess I got mahself a critic,” Lilah said. There was a slight edge in her voice, but she merely folded her arms and winked. “ ‘Course, there’s one thing I got that I’m sure ya couldn’t make for yerself.”

“Can you show us?”

“Of course, but I wanna be sure y’all ain’t just windowbrowsin’. May be slow, but time’s money and all.”

“I’ll pay you for your time, then.” Reaching into her pocket, Zyanya picked up a few pieces of copper she kept on her person. She focused briefly on them, before they started to shift and change, becoming pure silver. Dropping the chunks of metal into Lilah’s now open hand, she spoke. “Will this be enough compensation?”

“Wow! This here’s real silver!” Lilah’s eyes were wide. “I reckon y’all can buy the thing I’m ‘bout to show you. One sec.” Rushing off to the back, Lilah came back with a strange weapon, several small metal pieces, and a log. “I present ta y’all a genuine firearm.”

“It looks nothing like an arm, and it certainly isn’t on fire...” Dusan said as he reached for it. “Humans have the oddest naming schemes...”

“What was that last bit, hon?”

“He didn’t say anything.” Zyanya gave Dusan a look.

The glass golem grumbled before speaking to Lilah. “How does it work?”

“Well, it uses blasting powder to actually fire, but what y’all hafta do is load these here bullets into the chamber. Once ya do that, you aim and pull this here trigger.”

There was suddenly a loud boom, shocking both golems before they saw the log now had a hole in it where the bullet had passed.

The two were amazed. It was faster than anything they had ever seen before.

“Amazing...”

“Yeah, but unless yer careful, it’s more dangerous for ya to have one.”

“Very dangerous...” Dusan commented. “This has been enlightening, though.”

“Yes. Ms. Lilah, we have to go, but you can keep the silver. I enjoyed the lesson.”

“Well, ya did break mah boredom. Y’all come back and I’ll give ya somethin’ on the house.”

“Thank you for the offer. Goodbye.”

Wasting no time, the two left, their minds still buzzing from the amazing display. The technology was impressive. It made Zyanya in particular wonder if golems could replicate such a weapon.

After, they walked straight on for a day and a half, never stopping. They needed no sleep and required no food, making the trip simple.

Zyanya could easily have teleported them, but the spell she knew only worked for places one has personally been. Regardless, time with Dusan was time well spent.

As they crossed a stone bridge, passing a river before they faced a garish and somewhat overly fancy looking chateau.

The guards out front saw them, while Zyanya approached.

“Dusan, follow my lead.” Zyanya then faced the guards. “Hello!”

“What’re You doing here on Baron Milden’s Estate?”

“I heard the Baron was a golem collector. I myself am something of a witch, and I come bearing gifts.”

“What could you offer to the Baron?”

Zyanya faced Dusan and snapped. Instantly, his robes and wrappings faded, revealing his sharp, glassy body

“Behold. A golem of pure diamond. He obeys my every whim, and with some proper payment from your master, he shall obey him, too.

After brief deliberation, one of the guards left and then returned after a few minutes.

“Wait within the foyer. His Lordship will see you soon.”

“Fine, just don’t keep me all day.”

Soon enough, the group was within the foyer and the Baron approached.

He was a short, balding man with red hair and blue eyes. His outfit seemed a tad overdone, having a cape adorned with peacock feathers. Walking with a cane and having his outfit covered in golden buttons, he smiled. “Hello, fair sorceress. How may I honor you on this day?”

“Baron Milden, I presume.”

“Your presumptions are correct, my dear.” The Baron went to kiss Zyanya’s hand, only for Dusan to push him. The Baron stumbled back. “Wh-what is this insolence?!”

Please pardon him. My diamond golem is a tad unruly. However, I can teach you to tame him, if you’re willing to compensate.”

The Baron gave off a toothy, greasy grin, showing off his off-white teeth and almost purple hued lips. "Oh, I will. Name it. I shall pay you in titles, in gold, in services. Perhaps a more...permanent position at my side?"

"Hah. Quite the joke, milord. However, I would rather trade. You have other golems, yes? If you allow me, I can trade my diamond for one of yours."

"Yes, but you see, I already have a diamond golem, and mine is far more lustrous than yours. Perhaps I should rethink if I even want one that is so rude."

"Really? More lustrous? Can you show me?"

"Certainly. I don't mind showing off my collection...Come."

Following the baron, Zyanya, Dusan, and the guards went upwards to the top floor, where there was a locked door. The two were wary as the Baron opened it, revealing a room where several rare gems and treasures were displayed. In the back was a cell, where three feminine, gem-like golems were.

One was thin, having a younger looking body with more rounded edges and a fearful expression. She was formed of emerald and wrapped in light green cloth.

The next looked like an older woman, formed of Turquoise. She had a more hourglass shape and developed look to her. Her exterior smooth and shining a bright, bluish green, with a teal wrapping covering her.

The last was between the two in age, appearing more sharp, similar to Dusan, but possessing a sort of firm, stoic resolve. Draped in a white shawl, she looked determinedly at the Baron, not noticing the two newcomers.

"There. You can compare my own golems to yours and see mine are superior. It's nothing to feel bad about, though. It's the same for all my peers."



“Others you know collect Golems?” Zyanya asked, feigning interest despite her disgust.

The Baron’s chest swelled as he closed his eyes and smiled. “But of course. Only the finest among us, though. These creatures have the loveliest gem surfaces, however they can be a bit mouthy. Given time and proper training, they become as dumb as rocks!”

“And they still aren’t the dumbest ones in the room.” Dusan, growing tired of the act, delivered a sharp punch to the Baron.

The man groaned, his chest pierced by the sharp, glassy hand; the two guards behind the baron, in fear, ran off.

“Feh. I would have loved cutting those fools to ribbons...”

“We want the troublemaker. This is the only one we need. Make sure he lives long enough to get him to the Hadean.”

“I’ll make sure he is alive. I promise nothing else...” Dusan dragged his fingers across the Baron’s arm, cutting him lightly as his fingers trailed

Without any ceremony, Zyanya snapped her fingers. The steel bars holding the golems became iron, and then she touched it, reshaping it so that it became a strange statue in place of the iron bars.

“There. You’re all free.”

“About time one of your kind did something right,” the turquoise golemess said. “That wretched toad was despicable.”

“He still is,” the young emerald golemess said. “Still, thank you, miss.”

“No problem. Can I get your names?” Zyanya asked as she returned to her chalk white skin tone and her red markings became more prominent. “I’m Zyanya, a golem like you.”

“Hmph. Not quite like us, but good enough,” the turquoise said. “I am Joy. The emerald girl is Claire and the diamond is Lucia.”

“Thank you again.”

“No problem, Claire.” Zyanya then noticed that Lucia was staring at Dusan, just before her attention turned to the random structure Zyanya made. “Why isn’t Lucia speaking?”

“I’m not sure. She’s a silent one. Perhaps she was not given voice when she was a newform. Either way, it is irrelevant. Will you take us from this place? There are no other golems here and I’d rather go before one of his deplorable friends appears.”

“Yes, of course. Please come close.”

Once all had approached, Zyanya cast a teleportation spell, taking them back to Gaia’s Cradle. Once there, they went to the Hadean, who was pleased.

“Seems you returned, and faster than I anticipated.”

“We didn’t need rest, sir. We liberated the captured golems.”

“So you have.” The ruler of the golems then spoke to the new three. “I am glad the three of you are here, safe and sound in Gaia’s Cradle. I must ask that your wait in the upper floors of this building while I interrogate this human. He may know where others of our kind are captive and I want to know.”

“Do what you have to, Hadean, sir. I’m just glad to be free,” Joy said.

“Me, too.” Claire seemed to be just as happy.

Lucia stood there, silent and merely watching. She said and did nothing aside from stand and observe.

“Yes, well, please make yourselves comfortable. All of you are dismissed, and Dusan and Zyanya?”

“Yes, milord?” Zyanya asked.

The golem gave an unseen smile. “You have my sincerest thanks. Please rest well.”

“We will.” Dusan bowed and escorted a happy Zyanya out.

Once they were gone, the Hadean walked to the restrained Baron, who had his arms shackled. The Hadean then removed the shackles.

“There, now you can move your arms freely.”

“Pah. You think that will make me happy? You arrogant clods of dirt and your pet witch will pay.”

“Actually, it will be you and your golem trading ilk who will pay.” The Hadean then placed his hand around the Baron’s throat, gripping. “Tell me their names and where they are. Every golem you know they have and where they are kept...”

“Or...what? You’ll choke me?” The Baron croaked weakly in proud defiance. The Hadean laughed and shook his head. “No, I just need to do this...”

The Baron began to wonder what was happening, when suddenly he noticed his hair was falling out. It was a follicle here and there at first, but before long they were falling out in bunches, and he felt weaker. His clothes were starting to look wrinkled and worn, while he felt hungrier and thirstier.

The man looked at his hands and his body, his now faded finery looking worse as the silver became tarnished and his body became more emaciated. He was aging, rapidly.

“Again, before you go senile, tell me all you know, and I may restore your youth.”

The baron gulped. Either way he was dead, but the stone cold tone of the robed golem made him fearful. What scared him most was the very normal, very human hand that the Hadean had been using to grip the Baron’s neck...

-Preview of Part Three-

Zyanya’s latest mission was one of the toughest yet, testing every bit of fortitude, patience, and durability she had.

It was a mission that would make most golems run away or fear for their lives, but she had to do it without Dusan’s help. The mission was to help Caldera deal with warlords who were encroaching on territory that belonged to the golems.

While Zyanya was happy to put up fortifications and protect her kindred, she knew that sometimes Caldera could be...Emotional.

“Zyanya, it’s great to see you again!” Caldera hugged the chalk white golem, her smoldering body warm and rough. “How are you, my dear, little sister in arms?”

“I-I’m great, Caldera. Thank you!” Zyanya managed to say before she wriggled loose. The whole time, she looked upon Caldera’s smiling face.

Caldera was tall and thick, even by Golem standards, around eight feet tall and adorned with a crown of granite, emblazoned with her personal signal. Other masses of igneous rock composed the surface of her body, although the lava that made up the bulk of her frame was visible.

“You are welcome, little Anya. I’m looking forward to our job together. Will Dusan be joining us?”

“Sadly, not today. He’s going to be busy, but he left me a charm for good luck.”

“May I see?”

Zyanya reached into her pocket and produced a small, glass heart that Dusan had crafted.

“I take it this is a show of his eternal love?”

“In a platonic sense. I told him I liked the concept of hearts, so he crafted one for me.”

“Well, Dusan is a kind man, even if his motives are as transparent as he is.”

Caldera winked happily.

Zyanya laughed. Even though Caldera could be a handful, she admired the golemess’s passion and jovial nature. After she finished, she heard another voice speak.

“Glad you two are having fun.”

“Aesta, a pleasure to see you.” Caldera smiled.

Aesta was a Golem of alabaster, a fine, well crafted body belonged to her, despite its fragility. The stones that composed her body were smooth, artfully

crafted, as her head and face had been patiently carved into the visage she possessed, though her arms and fingers remained in segments.

Her manufactured beauty aside, Aesta also possesses one of the most treasured roles as the right hand of the Hadean.

“Hadean Omphalos sends his regards, and I must thank you both for coming today.”

“It is an honor to serve,” Zyanya said with a bow. “Do you know how soon the warlord’s men shall come?”

“The Diviner Crystals have told us it will be in minutes. I only want for everyone to come through this ordeal unscathed.”

“Noble sentiment, if a bit unlikely. Nonetheless, we will defend our home for you and all our other beloved comrades!” Caldera boasted.

“I trust you will. It will be a group of one hundred.”

“One hundred? Sounds like half an hour’s work at best.” Caldera cracked her knuckles, the stones that made it up breaking before she mended them again. She could tell this unsettled the other two, but she merely chuckled.

“Well, shall we begin?”

“Of course!”

With their mission prepared, the duo decided to leave on their quest, not knowing the trouble that would ensue.