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A newborn in House Óraca, an addition to the Parliament…. When Selínhi was called to bear another child, she tried anything to stop it. She had miscarried three, until the Sages sent a permanent guard to monitor her every move strictly. After 9 painful months of worry and agony, she bore a baby girl, Amethyst, named for her clear purple eyes which glowed like dewy crystals. Although she didn’t seem particularly special to anyone at first, when Grand Sage Azmuel requested an appearance at House Óraca, it was all so clear: her time was up.

The entire House was made from whites and blacks, darks and lights. The ground level was strictly streaked marble, pale limestone, and clear crystal. The lower one went in the House, the darker the floors and walls became. Glofx from above looked rather boring, like a cemetary—the structures, though sparse, gray and somber intermingling with fog and the earth dusty and dry. However, if the Sages had decided to build up instead of down, Glofx would be covered in skyscraping black and white towers.

The Grand Sage would hold Governance on one of the lower floors, which were considered more sacred. The Houses in Glofx were like temples for the Parliaments which lived in them; in each House, ceremonies, both Parliamentary and Sagest, were held for numerous occasions: celestial-movement celebrations, births, fixing days, and Purification.

The whole Household was summoned and stood in front of the Grand Sage, each member dressed in her unique habit according to ability.

“*Mi alvokas vin*,” hissed the Grand Sage.

Each of the bleakly dressed characters had shed their vibrant purples, greens, and indigos and converted to a grayscale. The only ones with color were the Grand Sage in his petticoated, moss-green cloak and gold headdress and his Pages in large black ruff collars.

“I, Azmuel, chosen Grand Sage of the Mystic Land of Glofx….” His red lips flapped on, blurting random formalities. “I henceforth declare House Óraco under the direct jurisdiction of this Sagest Government until the order has been established and the court terminated. As High Sage of this Sagest Government I am accorded to any and all information that I may require in order to establish the order in the Mystic Land of Glofx.”

Once he finished, each member of the House was announced and vowed in. The High Page spoke, “Ílios Óraca, you in your fiery light are vowed to obey. Selínhi Óraca, you in your clear spirit are vowed to obey. Sofós Óraca, you in your wisdom are vowed to obey. Astéria Óraca, you in your divine control are vowed to obey.”

The Grand Sage resumed, “It has come to the attention of the Grand Council that House Óraca has born a child with no apparent nature, not uncommon for newborn children. However, Grand Oracle Ynyui has communicated that the child, Amethyst Óraca, is indeed barren of power. Her training will begin immediately following her Purification.”

Selínhi exclaimed, “She is but a child. She needs her mother. I shall keep her at House Óraca until she—”

“Do not speak unless requested to do so. You will obey, as you are vowed to do.Let this Sagest Ruling be known, *Amethyst Óraca will be allotted the next three days for Purification prior to her departure from Glofx for the High Kingdom.* Kaj estu konata.”

“Mom, we have to do something. It’s not right. She’s not theirs to have. They can’t just—”

“They can and will, Stéria. It’s not a question. Now help me wrap her for the ceremony.” Selínhi was the true head of the House, though custom expects her husband to take charge. Like the moon, she worked by night, yet had immense impact. She wore an outfit of loops of white cotton, silk, and satin and atop her straightened black hair sat a headpiece made of intricately coiled white gold and silver.

Selínhi knew the line of power in Glofx; nothing could be done for her Amethyst. She must mount her duty as a mortal. That’s why they wanted her. In Golfx, there are no mortals (at least for very long); the Council swipes them up quickly, plopping them where they want. On Earth, many think they know Golfx—Heaven, Nirvana, the Pure Lands, Paradise, Moksha, Olympus—, but none of them actually does.

*So stupid…. They think this is Heaven. Trust me, you’d rather be in Hell.* Selínhi had once been mortal, a girl. She can’t remember much else.

“Stéria, take her to the basin and have her drink bit of the water. Put your robes on, too. Don’t be late.” Selínhi knew better than to do it herself, for fear she may run away with the child. Many mothers have done it, though most of them die during the Dark Moon.

Astéria took the child wrapped in purple cotton up to her chambers—she had been planning for this. Running up the slick black staircase she reached the threshold with a gasp, seeing herself and Amethyst reflected in the granite.

*Which port? Which port! Barqén is guarded by the Seraphs. Ráka is too close to the Capital. Amitá! It’s only guarded during the Dark Moon.*

She ran on, up and up the dark halls.

“It’s time,” spoke Sofós, opening the dark oak doors into the hall. He took out a short flask and sipped the gaseous substance inside.

A Purification spanned for three nights. A Sage must Purify the child through various ceremonies of scorching, baptising, chanting, and cursing. Purifications were only for the mortal children, the ones who needed to *forget*. During the Purification, the entire Parliament needed to participate to completely cleanse the child of its past lives. It was similar to a christening, but more like a funeral than anything else.

Sofós was to preside over the ceremonies, as the House’s Sage, a holyman, a wiseman, a murderer.

Flaming candelabras lined the musty, dark hall, leading up to the main sanctuary where Sofós stood cloaked in black, wrapped in in gold wiring. A single purple fire extended from a chalice on a marble altar studded with crystals.

“I, Sofós Óraca, Sage of House Óraca, summon Amethyst Óraca to be stripped, cleansed, and—.” He glanced up, realizing only two stood before him—the wrong two. “Where is she? Where is the child? The order must be established. Find her. Now. I’m contacting the Sage Council.” He strode toward the fireplace, pulling a pouch out of his cloak.

“*Mi alvokas vin.”* He opened the pouch and poured a slimy green powder into the flames, the hearth roaring up the chimney, spurting green flames out of the top.

Amethyst screamed out pathetic infant cries as Astéria rushed her further into the heights of the House. *I just need to get to the door. I need to save my power. I can’t use it all up yet.*

Far below, she heard the explosion of the Seraphic Guard flying through a portal. She needed to run faster.

She thought it over: *Turn left at the Malachi statue, take Tobit Slip through the Burachian Temple, then jump at Esdras Point to the final stretch at Port Amitá.*

She finally reached the ground level and flung back the opaque black drapes, ripping one down to cloak herself and Amethyst in the streets. Amethyst quieted as Astéria ran into the moonlit night.

“Where are they?” screamed Sofós. “Mother, you won’t get away with this. If you don’t comply, maybe I’ll Purify you instead.”

 Selínhi thought, *How did I raise such a reproachful little beast. Maybe I shouldn’t have let him join the Sages anway.*

 “Where did you hide them, Mother? Once they’re caught, I’ll have them both Purified and Reassigned. You’ve been very stupid—”

*Smack.*

“Don’t you dare call me that, you ungrateful brat. I raised you to be better than this.”

“The Sages raised me. Not you,” Sofós retorted.

A ring of swirling dark matter formed near the fire, an ominous swirling sound inundating the dark hall.

*BOOM!*

Giant, winged Seraphs burst from the portal and whipped their wings, blowing out all the torches in the room.

“*Ekbruligu*,” shouted Sofós. A green fluorescent light fell from the ceiling high above. In the dim light the angels looked more like demons, crawling along the walls like giant spidery bats.

“Find them! NOW!”

The winged beasts flew out of the room and up through the various grand halls, ripping down black and white tapestries.

In the few moments of darkness that she had, Selínhi darted behind one of the Parliament tapestries and jetted down the secret hall; she knew this House better than any. She had designed it to be a hiding place for herself and her family, always weary of the Sages.

 Selínhi found the room she had wanted, the scrying room. In the center of the room was a shallow black basin upon a clear pedestal. She took out a tiny vial of black fluid and poured the contents into white murky liquid inside the basin.

The black spread around the scrying basin in long streaks and short blobs. Selínhi stared into the bowl as she started to see an image of her daughters climbing the thousands of steps inside the House. She had to do something.

*Okay, Astéria*, she thought, *I can’t help you if you’re inside the House… but maybe outside.*

She looked upward, as if she were praying for some heavenly intervention, chanting softly.

Astéria ran farther on the winding streets. The full moon shined brightly on everything outside. She was maybe two streets away when she heard the Seraphs singing in their high-pitched language. It sounded like screaming. They were getting close.

 Just as their wings started to stretch and beat, the moon quickly eclipsed and an intense storm flooded the clear night sky.

 *Mother,* she thought, as she fasted the black curtain over her head to protect Amethyst.

 Seraphs can not fly well in the rain, so they could not find Astéria or Amethyst as long as Selínhi’s power lasted.

 Astéria had reached Esdras Center and went in the front doors, knowing no one would be guarding them during a full moon—typically all the transportals don’t function during the full moon, but Astéria knew what to do.

Inside, the Esdras had dark vaulted ceilings far above the ground and long columns that extended down into the floors. Astéria ran towards the transportal and Amethyst burst into tears.

*“*Shh shh shhh.” She tried to soothe her as her cries echoed through the entire building.

Astéria reached the portal and frantically pressed the activation buttons on the keypad. She brought out a little pouch, grabbing out the green powder and blowing it onto the portal door. (The transportal just looks like a normal wood door, handle and all.) Suddenly a bright blue light shined from behind the door and illuminated the rest of the room.

Astéria pressed the activation button, and as her hand reached for the door handle, all the windows began to moan and crack.

Amethyst started to whimper as the sounds of the windows grew louder and louder.

“Just hang in there, baby girl.” Astéria set Amethyst down and began to pound and slam on the door with her whole body.

“Why.” *Slam.* “Won’t.” *Slam.* “You.” *Creak*. “OPE—”

The door flung off its hinges and a bright swirling portal pulled at Amethyst and Astéria. She grabbed up Amethyst in her curtain-blanket and jumped into the portal. They fell horizontally into a dark purple and white space.

She glanced back and saw hundreds of demons swarming toward the portal gate.

 “No no no no no!” She took out the small pouch of green powder and threw it toward the still-open gate.

 *THUD*.

Astéria and Amethyst had been spit out onto a stone bridge near the Amitá port. The rain still poured down in heavy sheets on the two girls.

Astéria coughed and squirmed to sit up. She pulled the sopping curtain away from the baby’s face and staggered to get up.

A mass of white angel feathers covered the ground around them and a detached claw twitched near Astéria’s foot.

*The port!*

She scooped up the baby and bolted for the giant metal arc hundreds of yards across the long stone path.

“*Aktivigu*! *Prenu al ni atendi*,” Astéria shouted. The giant portal started to brighten and a hazy mist started to swirl inside the giant hoop.

Suddenly the storm stopped and the full bright moon shined down on Astéria like a spotlight. Her breath was caught in her throat as she realized what just happened.

“Astéria,” the cunning voice of Grand Sage Azmuel said to her.

Astéria kept running further toward the glowing portal.

“You don’t have to do this… Maybe your mother can convince you,” he hissed.

Astéria kept running.

*Don’t stop. Mother would want you to keep going. Don’t stop. Don’t stop.*

She was almost to the giant swirling swarm of purple and red when the Grand Sage offered, “She doesn’t have to die, you know. Come back with me and I will take you on as a personal apprentice. Your powers are far to great to be lost.”

“*Go! Astéria, go!”* Her mother screamed out as Amethyst waled.

She jumped into the portal and heard her mother’s final screams of pain.

*Thump!*

“Eyy! Ged ouda da way!”

Bright lights blinded Astéria as she tried to figure out where she had fallen. Horns sounded, people chattered, and bright screen lights shined down from all the buildings around.

Astéria, white feathers still stuck on her back, scrambled to her feet and grabbed at a passing man in a brown trench coat.

“Eh! Faakk off, yuh freak,” yelled the man in a peculiar accent.

Amethyst screamed out. Astéria reached for a boy in a black cap.

“Please. Please. Where are we? Please.” She stumbled, still breathless from the run to the portal.

“Why, don’t ya’ know?” He questioned. “This here’s Times Square, silly. We’s in New York.”

Astéria squinted up at the bright lights and a light rain began to fall upon her and Amethyst’s faces.

“Yeah. Yeah, we are,” she smiled.