

Oh my fucking god this fought me. This fought me every step of the way. Reading through some of the discussions, I removed so much of the 'funny' repartee because it didn't make sense. I will reuse them later, especially some of Luna's portions, since they were genuinely funny, but for now, I only gave her a few one-liners and some more for Akeno. I liked some of the stuff I wrote for them both, but then I realized I was, again, making OCs that I was going to kill off by the end of the scene. That was foolish, and I could reuse those small fight scenes in another chapter, give those parts to actual characters from DxD.

The fight scene with Yasaka/Harry and Nefertiti/Akhenaten, ughhhhh. I rewrote that bitch several times because I wanted their fighting styles to be very different but to work together well. I wanted all the characters to be different from one another. I... think I did well, there. Then I decided to put in a bit of the Rivezem/Sirzechs 'combat', because I wanted to show what these two thought of one another. I... ugh. This fought me so fucking hard to finish.

I didn't even fucking Grammarly it. I am putting this out to you lot for Thanksgiving, but damn, I don't think I'm going to work on this in December. It's just too hard to work on. UGH. I will think about pushing another chapter out in January, but that's kind of doubtful. What I would like to do is maybe replace the HP poll in February for this fic, then do the same every other month to finish it off. Still, I will make a decision on December at the end of November.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoy this, despite the pain it caused me. I'll be interested to see your reviews.

Chapter 35: ... And Closes

Disdaining further posturing, the two couples began to exchange spellfire, although what that meant was different for each of the four combatants who found themselves facing one another in the amphitheater to Samael's prison. Quick and easy spells like the lances of Fox Fire from Yasaka's tails were the first to cross the distance between the two couples. Almost as hot as the fire that dragons like Ddraig or Tiamat could create, the thin streams of fire flashed out from the tips of Yasaka's tails from her position behind the Egyptian would-be gods, who had both been facing towards Harry as they spoke a moment before. These were followed by Harry's first spell chain, fast, easy spells to probe the teamwork and abilities of his enemies.

Yet despite their attacks coming so fast as to put most guns to shame, Yasaka's two targets were able to respond in time. Akhenaten stamped on the ground, and what looked like a series of Egyptian hieroglyphs appeared in a circle on the ground winding out from his foot,

whereupon a portion of the ground began to glow. This spot acted almost like a siphon, drawing both Yaasaka's attacks and Harry's slightly slower ones to it.

At the same time, Nefertiti teleported the pair a short distance away with a cry of "Εκάτη Βήμα(Hecate's step)!"

Whatever teleportation spell that was, it had looked for a moment as if the pair had turned into twin torches, the fire moving from one to another fire, flowing through the intervening distance in an eyeblink, rather than popping in and out of existence like with an Apparation. Given how hazy the image of the shifting flame was, Harry got the distinct impression that, were it not for his own semi-deific status, they would have simply appeared there, without any hint, magical or otherwise, as to what had happened.

Although it makes sense, Hecate's name is part of a spell. She was the goddess of magic in Greek myth and crossroads. Not that it matters much right now, Harry thought as he blocked several spells coming his way from Nefertiti.

The shift (or step, as Harry wasn't certain of his translation skills there) had taken Nefertiti and her husband to one side of Yasaka, leaving the pair facing their ambushers without needing to split their attention. The instant they became physical again, Nefertiti had started her own offense in the same manner he had, lashing out towards both Harry and Yasaka with quick, easy spells set in a rehearsed spellchain. Her husband hadn't responded with prepped spells, but rather raw bursts of magic. Only small ones, though, as if he was working on a larger spell.

A Protego shield absorbed one blast of raw magic before he raised a wall of stone from the floor of the wide hallway to block a series of AKs that were hurled his way as Yasaka ducked and dodged the green shards of the killing curse sent her way. Each AK shattered the specific cobblestone it hit, but dissipated, unable to break through the physical shield as they would have a purely magical one.

Harry quickly realized that Nefertiti seemed to be using Wizing World spells only. Each spell was powerful and insanely quick, one flowing into another as she attacked, showing a mastery of Wizing World-style dueling that Harry had to admit was impressive. But she wasn't using anything from the Egyptian or other schools of magic she had studied over the years as she attacked both Yasaka and Harry.

She seems to be concentrating on speed over anything to keep us off balance. The wizard school of magic lends itself to that kind of thing, but I can't grow complacent, Harry thought, working on his own spell chains. Two-thirds of his spells were defensive, taking over the defense for himself and Yasaka, whose youkai and Onmyodo skills were most useful offensively against things like AKs and curses designed to impact specific body parts or bypass natural magical

resistance. *But damn me, she would give Riddle a run for his money in speed and breadth of spellwork! Suppose I should be thankful she and her husband never bothered to work with him. Heh, he thought too small and too much of himself, I guess.*

The reason why Harry's mind was wandering a bit was that Nefertiti was using the Avada Kedavra spell in a manner Harry hadn't seen since Voldemort, showing precisely how much Nefertiti wanted to kill Harry and Yasaka alike. Beyond that, however, she was nothing like Riddle or his Death Eaters. She attacked the ground in various ways, crafting spells to manipulate it one after another, causing the ground to roil despite Harry cancelling each spell in turn, messing up his footwork enough he couldn't try to close or even move very quickly.

At the same time, nearly invisible spells flashed across the intervening distance to aim below the belt in various ways, a bowel exploding curse, a bone breaker, a eye bursting curse that was particularly nasty as it was meant to bypass a werewolf's normal magical resistance, along with several others that Harry had never seen before. This included two that blazed through his Protego or zipped around the walls he raised in defense, almost looking as if they had a mind of their own.

One such struck his arm, leaving behind a sense of great fear that faded quickly unable to get a grip on Harry's mind. Another left a mark on the stone like a skull that then exploded sending fire and some kind of gray puss everywhere, but Harry had already raced away, trying to get Nefertiti to turn to him so Yasaka could attack from behind.

This failed, but Nefertiti and Akhenaten, who wasn't throwing out nearly as many spells as his wife but seemed to be concentrating entirely on Harry when he did, weren't pushing Harry or his foxy lover back, rather the battle seemed even for now as both sides probed the other. Harry concentrated on spells that he could make bounce or curve on top of transfiguration spells, attacking at various angles with his own fast spellwork rather than anything too overpowered for the moment given how much effort he had to put into defense. He wasn't trying to close just yet, worried about the way Akhenaten had been able to somehow just summon up an Egyptian runic array with a foot stomp a moment ago and what else he might be concentrating on.

For her part, Yasaka placed her defense primarily in Harry's hands and went full offensive. From six of her tails, she lashed out with Fox Fire again and again, a simple, almost instinctual spell for the Kyuubi no Kitsune. From her hands came cutting spells that looked almost like claws. Her other three tails were used to attack with Onmyodo-style spells, mostly balls of wind, lightning and flashes of light designed to disorient.

The Kyuubi no Kitsune had talked about this at one point to Harry. With each tail came the ability to create a second spell at the same time. "It takes a lot of training after the third tail,

Harry-han," she had said at the time. "And even someone like me will see a marked decrease in the amount of power behind each spell, depending on how much time and effort I can divert. But in ancient times and even to this day, it makes those of us with more tails deadly spellcasters."

She had chortled loudly, shaking her head and nuzzling into Harry's naked shoulder, the conversation having come up in their version of pillow talk. "Especially when paired with illusion spells. Use a few tails to scatter illusions, then another to teleport, and you get an enemy very hard to pin down, let alone put in the ground."

At the moment, Yasaka was somewhat limited in her spellwork. Her first attempts to use the illusion magic that was a kitsune's first and greatest racial abilities even before spellfire began to crisscross the space between them had failed for some reason. She could sense it, and a few of Harry's own attempts, dissipating quickly, the illusions torn apart by the ground and walls nearby. It was as if the underlying magic of the area around Samael ate them. But her other spells, both racial and Onmyodo-style, worked without issue.

Working almost easily without any words between them, Yasaka shifted in the opposite direction of Harry and soon, as spells flashed and blasted between them, Nefertiti and Akhenaten had shift in turn to keep them both in sight. While none of Harry and Yasaka's spells had gotten through just yet, this forced a curse out of Nefertiti. "May scarabs eat your Akh (soul) and dragons defecate on your soulless Khat (body)!" she hissed, before grabbing onto her husband with a Leviosa, tugging her husband into the air as she took to the air with another spell.

For his part, Akhenaten was mumbling a long enchantment of some kind under his breath. Whatever it was, though, he still had the presence of mind and the ability to shift some of his attention away from it for a moment to raise a hand. From his hand, a shield of purple, a perfect globe, appeared around the pair, which blocked all the spells coming towards them for a split second. "Hāwi mēməṭāṭ (Absorbing Fire)."

As his spells disappeared into the purple globe, Harry's eyes widened. *That's not just a shield, it's absorbing...* "Yasaka, watch out!" Harry shouted, apparating towards Yasaka, conjuring up a Protego and a second shield spell from the Onmyouji school of magic. "Suchīruu~ōru (Steel Wall)!"

Even as Harry spoke, the shield exploded, sending purple flames everywhere. If Harry hadn't literally tackled Yasaka away from the wave of flame, even the wall she had conjured up with three of her tails wouldn't have been enough for either of them to get away without burns. The heat was immense, like Yasaka's fox fire, burning through the walls, turning them to slag

while both of them shielded themselves with a mix of conjured walls and magical shields, but even then, the heat of the spell got through.

“Mmm... far be it from me to ever object to being this close to you, Harry-han, but I don’t think now’s the time,” Yasaka voiced huskily as Harry crouched over her, both of their arms outstretched towards the defensive wall, Yasaka reinforcing it with stone pulled up from the ground. Despite that flirtatious line and the fact a part of her felt a bit tickled at their current position, Yasaka’s next words held absolutely no humor. “You go left, I go right?”

Harry nodded before Nefertiti launched a blast of Fiendfyre their way. Even as the spell ate into the already badly warped walls and ignored their magical shields, Harry used the fog of Manannán to create a brief illusion to cover himself and Yasaka, splitting up again. A large area of effect illusion spell that just covered an area like this with simple fog it worked, but like Yasaka before him Harry felt it coming apart quickly and had to concentrate to keep it in place even for the brief few seconds they needed it to work.

Despite that, it worked, letting the two lovers avoid the flash of Fiendfyre before it hit the edge of the giant cage that dominated one wall of the massive amphitheater-like room. There, the bars glowed for a brief instant before the demonic fire was snuffed out as if it had never been.

Admittedly, Nefertiti was fine with that, even breathing a sigh of relief at the sight. She had no desire to see what that kind of spell would do to a creature like Samael. The creature was so strange and unusual, cursed and warped in such a fundamental way by its creator, Yahweh, that it might not have any resistance against the evil-seeming flame spell, or could somehow absorb it in some unusual manner.

Yasaka and Harry attacked again, causing Nefertiti to curse again even as she responded. *FUCKING HELLS, I could barely make them out in that blasted fog, and I could see it even as they put it in place despite how quickly it started to come apart. Thank all that is good for this place’s background magic, or else their illusion magic would be even more powerful and we might well have been overcome already. As it is it’s only a matter of time.* “Husband, damn it, I need help here!”

“Oh my dear, you have no idea how much help you need,” Yasaka taunted, ending her own attempt at an illusion, which had only really served to obscure where she was from one step to the next. Anything more detailed than a vague outline of herself faded almost instantly.

As Yasaka spoke, one of her tails cast an Onmyodo-style spell to enhance her speed, regeneration and reflexes. A continuous spell, this would drain her magical core in a slow trickle but considering how at least Nefertiti was keeping up with her and Harry so easily, perhaps thanks to her stolen Nekoshuu powers, Yasaka felt it would be worth it.

A second later, Lightning, fire, and bolts of raw magic flashed out from her other tails Yasaka began to move around the area, bouncing off the ground and using her now heightened mobility to good effect. Even so, separated as she was from Harry's own efforts, Yasaka had to now devote three tails to defense, with one of them almost fluffing out to create a mobile shield of fluff at times to absorb the spells coming from Nefertiti and Akhenaten, who despite his wife's words, was indeed still launching spells randomly at Yasaka and Harry.

Harry also took this opportunity to transform.

Although he hadn't really made a big deal of the fact outside of training with it, Harry's werewolf form had changed a bit since the deification process he'd gone through in Egypt and with his interactions with the Nile. Given how much magical power his already changed soul and body had taken in at that point from the built-up prayers, and power within the river, it hadn't really come as a surprise, especially given how his werewolf form wasn't exactly a normal werewolf body anyway. The phoenix tears in his body had allowed the change to occur to both him and his daughter's werewolf form.

He was now a bit taller than before in this form, able to tower over Yasaka even more than he had previously. His previously gray body hair had shifted to thick golden fur with black and bluish highlights, making him look almost like a werewolf version of a Nemean Lion, in particular on his back and chest, while the fur on his head had thankfully remained black. That would have been a bit much, in Harry's opinion.

Yasaka's reaction to his changed form had been rather... interesting the first time she saw it while they had been in Danan. She had called him, "A Kitsune's wet dream done up in gold, and all mine, too!" Yasaka enjoyed how Harry towered over her even more in that form, and the other changes had also been extremely nice in her opinion.

Despite that, Harry had been somewhat reluctant to give in to her desires at the time, considering they had been sharing a bed with Rias at the time. His primary lover had no interest in "Furry Fun" as Rias put it. Afterwards, though, well that had been a very nice night off indeed.

More importantly, tests with Rias had shown this form also had a **significantly** greater magical resistance, although Harry wasn't willing to really assume that kind of thing against enemies of this caliber, nor against soul-attacking spells like an AK. That kind of thing was not something they could study or train against, after all, so dodging was, as always, the better option.

His speed, reaction time and senses were only a little better than in his normal werewolf form, but even that was a decent step up from his human body's physical abilities. Now he showed that, dancing around the room even faster than Yasaka could, dodging more spells than

defending directly, concentrating more on offense now and slowly putting Nefertiti and Akhenaten on the backfoot.

This made Nefertiti teleport her and her husband away more than once even as she lashed out with as many spells as she could toward their circling opponents. She even had to use the modified Leviosa spell from before to pull her husband along with her when Harry correctly anticipated where she would teleport to, and soon, Nefertiti was sweating, her eyes wide as the onslaught began to overwhelm her. If not for her teleportation skills and the size of the area she would already have been overcome with what little help her husband was being right now. "Now would be an excellent time to join in whole-heartedly, husband mine!"

Akhenaten didn't answer, but despite his lips still moving in a series of what Harry could now tell were a chain of enchantments, not just one, one hand began to flick. Shield spells leaped up around the pair and as her and Yasaka pressed in, those appeared more and more.

Most of the shields he used resembled the same purple globe as before, giving Nefertiti some help and interrupting the onslaught from Harry and Yasaka, but not enough to let her take back the initiative. Confrigos, Bombarda, Fiendfyre, hundreds of Avada Kedavras and more flowed from her hands in a torrent, but both Yasaka and Harry dealt with or dodged and attacked continuously, pushing the pair back and keeping Nefertiti from doing anything too advanced.

The AK spell was deadly as it targets the soul directly, to be sure, but the kitsune and werewolf made a point of dodging or blocking with stone every one of them. Yasaka's teeth were bared in growing hate with every sliver of what her people thought of as the basest evil launched her way, but Harry dealt with them grimly, not wanting to test his deific status with such a spell, but also more used to such things than Yasaka.

Harry's Onmyodo spells in particular were good for dealing with the killing curse now that he had shifted to a more offensive stance. More than once, a snake of metal shattered under the green bolt of Nefertiti's spell only to then reform under Harry's mental command. The continual control of the summoned element gave Harry the ability to shift between defense and offense with it with ease. In contrast, Yasaka raised small, precise columns of stone to do the same if she had to, but was even better at dodging them than Harry.

One of the purple shields flashed, blasting the area with the same purple searing fire as before, but this time, Harry launched himself forward. A metal battering ram appeared in front of him, spreading out to protect him from the fire, being melted and renewed from one millisecond to the next, but Harry still didn't let the fires touch him. *I don't know what other properties that purple flame has and with unknown magic, caution is always a good idea*, Harry thought to himself, still worried about what kind of spell that really was despite having seen it

five or more times before this. With a thought, he lifted his Kinzoku (Metal) element out of the way and then lightning flashed out from his outstretched arm.

Cursing, Nefertiti, who had been concentrating on Yasaka, used Hecate's Step to teleport away once more. This time, Yasaka followed, and beams of barely shaped magic flashed in, along with a thin plume of nearly white flame and something else, a stream of some kind of watery substance from one of Yasaka's other tails.

"FUCARRGGGGHH!!" Nefertiti screamed as the tongues of flame hit along with the stream of whatever it was. The impact of One of Harry's spells shattered her hastily raised shield, and the resulting hits from the two elements Yasaka had hurled her way pushed Nefertiti into her husband, the spells splashing over both of them in the next moment, causing the would-be goddess to scream in even more agony.

"What exactly was that other substance you tossed their way," Harry shouted over the hissing noise coming from the still burning pair. "I didn't recognize it."

"Just because you humans forgot what made up Greek Fire doesn't mean everyone has. I thought it appropriate," Yasaka chuckled throatily, trying hard not to stare at Harry for a moment. The sight of his new were-form always got her motor running despite how inappropriate that thought was right now. *Fucking hell, he's like some kind of were-god, yummy! And none of the others have any interest in sex in this form, more fun for me!*

Yasaka's somewhat pink-colored thoughts broke off a second later, however, as the fires and smoke around the would-be-gods went out abruptly and a wave of force crashed out from the two supposedly beleaguered Ancient Egyptian rulers. The invisible wall of force crashed into both kitsune and werewolf blasting through shielding, stone and wall alike.

Smashed off her feet, Yasaka covered herself with two of her tails, the appendages becoming almost poofy yet also heavily armored, like her fur had become so thick as to act as armor. This saved her a moment later as she found herself smashed against a wall, almost squished there thanks to whatever spell this was.

Harry simply had to take it, his own spells somehow dissipating under the weight of that wave. Still, his newly enhanced magical resistance meant the impact of whatever spell this was only hit him like a powerful wave of wind. He found himself skidding back, his feet digging into the rock beneath him as the stone of the floor cracked, the walls shattering all around the area before the magic of Cocytus began to repair the damage.

This the prison did, but slowly. That aspect, like many others of the pocket dimension's underlying magical matrix, was being overwhelmed at present.

As the spell dissipated, Harry uncrossed his arms and Yasaka dropped to the ground, only slightly ruffled from the experience as their enemies appeared out of the rapidly dissipating steam. Before this, the pair had been dressed in regular looking clothing, black pants, shirts and what looked like body armor that could have been taken from a black ops team of some kind. When they appeared out of the ash and fire, that clothing had been replaced entirely. *Was this what Akhenaten was working on?*

Briefly concentrating, Harry tried to see if the new clothing was magical but rapidly had to cancel his mage sight. With his changes from human to deity, that spell had become more to help concentrate his senses than anything else, as he could now detect most magic without it, even if he couldn't figure out what intent was behind a spell unless he already knew the spell. But now, it was useless, as looking at either Egyptian practically blinded him.

Nefertiti now wore a pair of leggings that covered her body from waist to foot in green and dark blue stripes. Within the green stripes were lines of magic, runes that Harry recognized as coming from the Egyptian school of magic. Her shirt was more formal looking, a vest of some kind that was separated into squares by thick golden threads, built up from the rest of the shirt.

The ensemble looked almost Aztec, although Harry's wasn't an expert. Rather, Harry was comparing it to images he had seen in history books about South American and Spanish history. When Harry looked at it closely, he saw small eddies of air, barely visible thanks to the amount of stone dust in the air. Similarly, her legs seemed to almost shimmer, oddly reminding Harry of something he had seen in one of his daughter's games.

Within each square of Nefertiti's shirt was either the image of an animal or a glowing enchanted scale, each of which glowed in white. What they did, Harry couldn't discern, but Harry could sense that each of them did something different, with at least one of them creating a new purple and yellow aura around the woman.

On Nefertiti's head sat what Harry vaguely recognized as an Incan priest, or maybe even king's raiment. It was made of gold, covering much of her forehead and the back of her head up to her cat ears, which stuck out from the top of the helmet. The forehead portion was etched with a single large rune of some kind, with little beams coming out of it as if the rune was supposed to symbolize the sun, although Harry didn't think that rune was the one traditionally used for that in Incan arrays.

Behind Nefertiti's ears was a line of red fur, and in her hand was a short-shafted mace of some kind. One side of it looked like an Incan war club, the other was a European mace. On her other arm she wore a small buckler, a purely European style that looked like it was made out of cold iron and only had something magical set into the center of it.

Something to ground or block specific spells, Harry realized. Wherever they pulled that outfit from, it's obviously their version of battle armor.

"Well, it is about darn time, husband!" Nefertiti grumbled, raising her shield hand to touch her chest lightly. "That was far too close, that last spell nearly had our flesh seared off our bones."

"Now, now, my dear. I had to concentrate. Pulling so many enchanted items from our expanded pouches isn't easy. Activating all the enchantments on them all at the same time is worse, especially when I then need to fit them to our bodies on the fly. While also giving you what aid I could," Akhenaten retorted mildly. "Nevertheless, it seems to have worked out well."

That wasn't all he had been doing, but Akhenaten wasn't about to tell his enemies everything he had done. The attempt to teleport them past into the still barred cage had failed, somewhat annoying him despite his first enchantment, the Kiss of the Emperor, a Native American spell, working to connect his and his wife's minds with no interference.

The spell was used on couples that were having trouble connecting after marriage, and it didn't allow for the exchange of complete thoughts or anything of that nature. Such things could get in the way especially in a fight like this. Rather it was more instinct-based, making each of the married pair understand what the other was doing on an instinctual level, up to knowing how your partner wanted you to act in relation to their own movements. It was this skill that had allowed him and Nefertiti to act in tandem so well despite most of Akhenaten's concentration being on other things rather than the threats in front of them.

I had forgotten the sheer delight in fighting alongside my lady love. This is amazing, and I will not forget again. Potter has lost his best chance to overwhelm us, Akhenaten mused as he sneered at Harry, his earlier anger and shock at having been ambushed long gone. Now, having had time to summon up his and his wife's armor, he was feeling far more confident in the outcome of this fight, and the last few moments had been somewhat thrilling.

"You're done changing clothes, then? Can't say I approve of the overall ensemble. So much gold Nefertiti, but even with all of that you don't truly shine," Yasaka taunted. "And whoever told you that green is your color lied to you. I would have thought that in the thousands of years you've been aging you would have evolved some kind of fashion sense."

"Bah, the envies of the little people mean nothing to me," Nefertiti snarked back.

Harry said nothing, his gaze switching to Akhenaten. While his wife's armor seemed to mostly be made out of cloth, that wasn't the case for the would-be god. He instead wore a formfitting gold armor, its shape somewhat like a V, paired with large, armored greaves, forearm protectors, thigh guards and pauldrons, all of the edges glowing with what Harry thought to be defensive magic. The area over his thigh guards and forearms were marked in bands of blue

and red, each piece of armor glowing with magical runes in places. Those were Egyptian, while the ones on the wide necklace, made of links of jade etched with runes and a golden disk, were clearly something else, either Incan or Mayan, if there was indeed a difference.

All around his waist the man's belt remained from before, marked with lots of small pouches. Unlike his wife, Akhenaten didn't have a visible aura around his entire body, but one finger on each hand glowed with a sickly yellow energy that made Harry twitch just to concentrate on them.

Like his wife, Akhenaten was armed. The sight of the long khopesh in the man's hand caused Harry to summon his own sword from his mindscape. The khopesh in question looked like it was made of bronze but gleamed with yet another series of spells. *Toughness and cutting force, for certain.* On his head was the traditional Egyptian Pharaoh's headdress, a high, semi-pyramidal hat made of black and gold bands, falling to either side of his chest.

"It is customary to bow to your god," Akhenaten's voice cut across the repartee that Yasaka and Nefertiti were about to engage in. In that, at least, he and Harry were alike. They both didn't care to bandy words with their enemies, but with these words came a weight, a spell coming from a piece of his clothing, allowing him to use his voice as if it was a physical force, gravity pushing in on Yasaka and Harry alike.

He glared at them one after another, the ancient Pharaoh's eyes flashing, but Harry did not kneel. He had not knelt to Ophis despite the suddenness of their meeting or how powerful the Infinite Dragon God had been, a elephant to a mouse. He did not bow know. And Yasaka was the Kyuubi No Kitsune. She could no more bow to another than she could set aside her duties as a leader to her people.

Seeing this and realizing his attempt to gain an advantage had failed, Akhenaten hissed, "And if you will stand in the way of our ascension, you will be slain here."

With that, he raised a hand, and the forearm guard runes on it flashed, sending an axe of lightning towards Harry, followed by a string of lightning that followed Harry as he shifted to the side. "Chaac's Fury!" Further lightning axes flashed out from his hand, spreading out and then attacking Harry and Yasaka from every direction even as they counterattacked.

These were followed by Nefertiti lashing out with a spell that looked oddly like a Patronus in the shape of a lion. It attacked instantly as if it was a separate entity while Nefertiti launched spells Yasaka's way, the creature attempting to attack from the side. "Menhit will eat your soul when I am through with you, kitsune!" Nefertiti howled, furious at the wounds she had taken moments before.

In response, Yasaka disappeared under another temporary illusion. It shredded instantly under the impact of Nefertiti's attacks going through it and what Yasaka now knew was the background magic of Cocytus, but she was still able to race to the side while Nefertiti batted Yasaka's own attack spells easily, seeing them each coming and now moving so fast she could react to each one with her buckler.

Ducking under several lightning axes, Harry launched his own attacks, a tongue of flame and a spear of metal flashing towards Akhenaten. Even as those spells were in the air, he targeted the ground underneath the man like Nefertiti had Harry earlier in the fight while also launching a blast of raw magic towards the man.

In contrast to his wife, Akhenaten seemed to be a more sedentary sort of fighter. After deflecting the element spells he was forced to cut the hands that rose from the ground to grab his legs with his khopesh, doing so as easily as a man would cut through a slab of hot butter. This opened him up to a spell that slid past Nefertiti's guard from Yasaka, but that and even Harry's blast of raw magic did nothing, simply washing over his armor, causing a few points on his thigh guards to glow before they faded away.

The next second, Harry was in his face, having apparated the intervening distance. *Let's see if someone who likes big, splashy attacks can handle direct combat!*

His sword flashed out, but Akhenaten blocked it with his khopesh, his arm moving almost like it was on a string for a moment to Harry's eyes. Regardless, the man's eye and hand movement were remarkably quick, and soon both of them were moving so fast they would have seemed little than an almost indiscernible blur to most people's eyes, each hit creating a sonic boom that Harry had to actually shield his ears from and which caused Yasaka and Nefertiti to do the same.

The pair exchanged a few sword strikes, along with contact based spellfire for a bit, with Akhenaten proving to be just as fast in terms of reaction time as Harry and far more skilled in his swordwork than Harry had ever seen. His sword movements were quick, insanely well measured, each blow echoing with experience and skill, although his footwork wasn't quite fast enough to keep up with Harry's own in his enhanced body. His attacks were quick, harsh things of lightning, seemingly his favored element, along with brief, powerful flares of fire, quick, dirty but powerful, showing he had trouble multi-tasking while fighting in close. The only spell he used from the Wizarding World's school of magic was the AK, causing Harry to twitch and dodge every time the tiny slivers of soul-deleting magic flared from his fingers, khopesh or even his chest at times.

Harry's spells were mostly Onmyodo in nature: electrocution, stun, slowness, things that could impact an individual without actually needing to hit their skin coupled with a few from his

Hogwarts education although he had left simple Stupefies and Reductos in the rear-view mirror. Instead, Bombardas, cutting spells that made Sectumsempra seem tame, and curses designed to bypass magical defenses abounded.

None mattered. Even those that got through Akhenaten's defenses, his clothing ate, regurgitating the spells in Harry's face, adding to Akhenaten's own offensive spellwork.

Here, though, Harry's newly increased magical resistance came in handy again. The spells hitting him caused Harry pain, but pain was something he was used to, and none of them were able to stick to his form for long, just like his own weren't to Akhenaten.

This brief stalemate was broken when, on a whim, one subtle spell from Harry's off hand created a wide cloud of itching powder right before he went for a punch. Akhenaten blocked the punch, but the cloud of itching powder hit him. This causing him to suddenly wrench his free hand down to scratch at his arm and shoulder where the itching powder touched, the itching so strong it overwhelmed his mind for a second.

Feeling Akhenaten's sudden wariness and shock was enough to cause Nefertiti to once more teleport the two of them away before Harry could capitalize. The next moment, Akhenaten had tapped his necklace, activated a one-shot array that cancelled all enemy enchantments around him. This cancelled Harry's spell and his next two which had created a bluish dragon out of the air to accompany a series of earth spikes, and allowed the ancient Egyptian ruler to throw out small discs.

These were Huaca, specially enchanted items that, like his armor and that of his wife, they had prepared long before this. These Huaca launched creatures all around them, spiritual monsters that would have been able to disembowel even someone like Akeno prior to her becoming involved with Harry and the training she'd had since.

Against Harry as he was now, they only served to draw Harry's fire for the brief moments it took to put them down. The last two fell to a claw strike from his enhanced werewolf form followed by a sword blow when they closed, although that caused his offense to pause for a moment.

At the same time, Yasaka created a bolt of flame that was several yards in either direction from several of her tails. Nefertiti shouted in pain at the heat of the assault, although the flames themselves couldn't do direct damage. Akhenaten also grimaced a bit, but then one of the small items on their clothing lit up for the pair. Soon, their wounds and tiredness were gone, but before they could go on the offensive again, two massive stone fists from Harry crashed into both ancient Egyptians.

Instinct kept them moving then, teleporting away, but Nefertiti had to yelp as a spell from Yasaka took out her iron shield, slicing it right above where her forearm lay. Her return blast of

magic caused Yasaka to howl in agony, collapsing for a second under a Crucio, but Harry's blast of Fiendfyre forced her to cancel it even as her husband blocked it, the impact of the fire pushing him into her side for a brief second.

"Ex Chuaj!" the spell based on the name of an Incan or Aztec god shot out poison in Harry's direction, but he tanked it, letting the poison attempt to harm his advanced were-form before crossing the distance between them again. A cutting spell followed by an Onmyodo spell battered Akhenaten as his wife defended, but then Yasaka, with a snarl of rage, slammed a hand down on the ground, creating a shockwave that blasted into them.

Lashing out with a Fiendfyre Harry tried to push the pair apart, but the two Egyptians however refused to be separated, a spell almost sticking them together like two magnets, repelling and attracting at the same time, letting them move separately but keeping them in the same area so they could support one another. Harry and Yasaka were more mobile, far more agile and thus could dodge way more spells, letting them concentrate more on offense, and they kept apart, attacking from each direction.

However, the pair of armored Pharaohs were just as durable if not more so. Even more telling, now that they were armored, Akhenaten's teamwork with his wife was exemplary. It was like fighting one person with two perfectly controlled bodies. Their enchanted clothing also completely dissipated or grounded a lot of Harry's spellwork, leaving him with only a few that could bypass it, as well as simply raw magic which he could use to try and overwhelm those defenses.

For several minutes, Harry and Yasaka pressed in hard, but as the battle continued, Akhenaten shifted into area of effect spells. One in particular nearly spelled the end of the fight, followed as it was by a series of AK spells from Nefertiti. "Hun Batz AnKa!"

The image of a giant howler monkey appeared and it screeched. The sound was nearly subliminal, a mix between the howl of a banshee and a dog whistle. Other words, the worst of both worlds to were-creatures like Harry and Yasaka.

"AIIIEEEE!!!" Yasaka and Harry both screamed, and then more spells and raw magic flashed out from both Egyptians.

Even as his eardrums burst, Harry teleported himself over to Yasaka's position. As she shrieked in agony, his regeneration went to work on his annihilated eardrums, and Harry pushed through the pain to raise a wall of metal around him, renewing it under every subsequent blow, of which there were hundreds as the Egyptians tried hard to take advantage of their momentary advantage. Some ate at the metal, others created acids that tried to splash around it, while still more acted as rust, but Harry's defense held.

Whimpering, Yasaka began to heal herself, using a muffling charm on the pair so as to not be caught out like that again, one far more powerful than the spells they had been using earlier when Harry and Akhenaten's sword blows had been creating booms. This would cut down their ability to work together, but the pair hadn't trained to fight alongside one another all that much, so that didn't matter.

A moment later, Yasaka tails took over defense, and Harry's wall of metal, once again ruptured, flowed down onto the ground. "I Orgí tou Agíou Neílou (Holy Nile's Wrath)!" he roared, lashing out with a water spell as powerful and as filled with his magic as he could make it, one he had basically created from whole cloth after the events in Egypt. It was practically a Deific Curse in its power, as if light and holy magic had filled the water, calling up the power that his connection to the Nile gave him.

Perhaps because of the dual nature of the spell, the purple shield and Nefertiti's more physical shield both failed within seconds of the attack smashing into them. The tsunami of water crashed into the pair and their attempt to anchor themselves to the ground failed instantly, hurling them backwards and into one of the walls, the water continuing to carry them through several other empty jail cells for a moment.

Both Nefertiti and Akhenaten cried out in agony as they were carried away, their bodies racked by internal pain from the crushing force of the water and the internal touch of whatever else had been carried by it, the holy nature of the spell almost acting on them as if they were low-tier devils. Their armor however protected them from the worst, and as the water faded away, Akhenaten summoned several more monsters. Two undead sphinxes, their bodies rotting and their heads nearly gone, appeared between them and Yasaka and Harry.

Both of them died from a spell from Yasaka, but they'd survived long enough to let Nefertiti and Akhenaten to push to their feet. Akhenaten had even somehow transfigured one of his bracers into a large kite shield. Now, he stared over the lip of his shield at Harry a furious snarl on his face. "That spell... How... how do you have ... why..."

"That spell, it was touched with the Divine, Potter! The divine and the soul, the very Ib (heart) of the Nile! I would recognize it even were I being flayed alive! What have you done to be so linked to the original sacred river of our land?!" Nefertiti bellowed, unable to contain her fury at what that might mean even as her husband tried and failed to find the words to express his own.

At that, Harry spoke up for almost the first time in this battle. "Your lands? They ceased being your lands the moment you decided to prey upon the people living there rather than lead them."

“Silence!” Akhenaten and Nefertiti roared as one, angry and furious at seeing someone like Harry merely stumble into the divinity, the godhood that they had been working toward for more centuries than any nation could brag about existing for. “How, Potter?! How did you make the jump between demigod and god?”

“... I never wanted to be a god, not like you. But when the Egyptians prayed, prayed for salvation from **you**, as I was already working to help them, to protect them through the Nile, those prayers empowered me.” Harry allowed a wintry smile to cross his face for a second. “I suppose it is somewhat ironic. What you looked to take by force, to reap as a scythe through wheat, I was simply given by earning it.”

At that, Akhenaten lost it completely. His wife and he had come so far, done so many things, all for the sack of becoming the God of Gods, and here was someone who had made the initial jump to becoming a deity without even wanting to. It spat on their sacrifices, their time and intelligence all in one go. Gathering his magic, he roared out, “Kiss of the Serpent God!”

A spell flashed out from his hand a dagger of purple and dark green, as if someone had added something even more deadly to the AK. Harry and Yasaka both dove in different directions to avoid it, but the spell exploded in midair halfway towards its targets, sending shards of magical power out like living snakes. At the same time, still directed by the Kiss of the Serpent God spell, Nefertiti launched out a wide spray of silver.

Yasaka shielded what she could as did Harry, and none of the silver touched Harry, although the other spell seared his hand off, showing that Akhenaten and Nefertiti alike could get through his magical resistance with enough power behind their spells. Harry’s return blast however threw both of them even further away from the cell containing Samael, and Harry and Yasaka followed, his hand regenerating between one second and the next. The Egyptians though responded with fury, larger and more powerful spells coming from both as they threw caution to the wind entirely in their sudden wrath.

Scene break

In stark contrast to the battle of spellfire and movement that Harry and Yasaka were engaged in, Sirzechs found himself in a battle of raw magical force. There was very little in the way of specific spells being thrown around about between himself and Rivezem. Nor was there any attempt between the three ambushers or the targets to work together. Indeed, all six of the combatants had broken off into their own one-on-one duels, although they had yet to push away from one another far enough for the magic of Cocytus to ensnare them all.

As he blasted Rivezem through a wall and out of not one but four jail cells in a row, Sirzechs could see lights and flashes of magic and hear the shouting threats from Shalba from one side

fighting Creuserey, while in the other direction he could still hear the bellowed laughter of Sairaorg as the combat junky found himself in a worthy contest.

With a howl of fury, Rivezem drove in. Punches, kicks of insane power, and blasts of energy released at point-blank range crossed what little distance there was between pair or exploded upon contact, both Devils moving so fast even someone at Grayfia or Rias's power levels would have been unable to see them, let alone dodge or block. Each blast of magic was parried, the magic of attack and defense both interrupted, sending backblasts of magic that ate at the walls, ceiling and floor, gouging, melting or simply dissipating the physical structure of the prison around them as they burst through one cell, into the opposite wall, then back through another prison cell.

Hopping up over a low sweep, Sirzechs landed a kick on the side of his opponent's head. The kick sent Rivezem into and through one of the empty prison cells with the weird mutated bars, although Sirzechs took a light blow to the face from Rivezem at the same time. The other Devil released a thin bolt of magic from his chest that was so concentrated it actually got through the redhead's magical resistance to cut into his cheek, if very slightly.

Ignoring the tiny droplets of blood slowly dripping down his cheek, Sirzechs looked to the side where a shout of "Drill through your corpse and hang your skin as a warning to all who would challenge the True Beelzebub!" had come from, chuckling slightly as he turned back towards his own enemy. *I would actually call him a nemesis in terms of power and how much he's done behind the scenes, but I think a true nemesis should be willing to challenge you directly. And Rivezem has certainly never been willing to do that.*

While his face was calm and composed, there was a certain amount of snark accompanying that thought, as well as a great deal of eager anticipation to prove Rivezem's reasons to avoid that contest correct. Sirzechs had wanted Rivezem dead well before he knew the full extent of his machinations. Now, he wanted that all the more.

"You know, every time Shalba shouts, I am reminded of a human phrase: small dogs bark the loudest. He certainly has a lot to say, although little worth listening to. Whereas my friend isn't one to bandy words with his opponents. I've always admired how Ajuka always treats combat as if it is something that he needs to get over with quickly so he can get back to his real work," Sirzechs said aloud, even as he parried a blast of magic from his enemy.

"Whereas you are always willing to exchange words with your enemies. Trying to get them to see the **light**," Rivezem stated, spitting out the word light with the same sort of vitriol that a human would've used the term child rapist or serial killer as he tried to press Sirzechs back. "Do not believe that for one minute that you will be able to sweettalk me to surrender. I am not like

that weak whore of yours. Nor am I one of the other equally weak elders you talked around to your position in the civil war.”

“It honestly never occurred to me to think I could talk you down from your ledge, Rivezem. At best, you are a relic of the past. The last relic, hopefully, among our people that look to our self-destructive past rather than what we hope to become in the future,” Sirzechs said coldly, his aura flaring around him for a moment to disrupt some kind of formed spell that Rivezem had just tried to hit him with. “At worst, you are a nihilistic madman who wants all of existence to be turned back to dust for some unfathomable reason. I don’t care which.”

In contrast to Sirzechs, Rivezem seemed to want to talk. Sirzechs could sense he was doing so in order to try and activate some items on his person, but Sirzechs was fine with the idiot spending effort on that, indeed, there was a part of him that wanted Rivezem to know escape was impossible. Either victory, or death, that was all.

There was no ‘fight or die’ in Sirzechs’ opinion. No, Sirzechs was going to put Rivezem in the ground. That was all there was to it.

“Of course, that is so you, Sirzechs. You’ve always been so **certain** of your course, despite the fact that course is such a weak one!” Rivezem sneered even as his magic began to warp around him flaring out in spikes of power for a moment. Then he was jumping away, still speaking even as he lashed out with balsts of magic from one hand and formed spells from the other. “You and Ajuka alike. I remember when there were such high hopes for you among the original Maou. The two of you were the strongest of your generation. With you leading our forces, we could have finished off the Fallen, my Father’s original mistake! We could have taken the fight to the church, and won, or at least broken the monotheistic religion’s stranglehold over the minds and faith of the Humans! But no.”

Rivezem shook his head mockingly, trying to goad Sirzechs into attacking as he prepped a spell he’d created while observing the magic of the Fallen as a young Devil appeared in one hand. “While you were always willing to challenge yourself in fights against either other faction, you never cared for the Great War. You always wanted us to look inward, always preaching restraint and thinking about our survival instead of our victory. How... disappointing you were then, and your rule has been since. Although of course, because of your weakness, that rule has proven to be built on sand rather than a sound foundation, hasn’t it? How does it feel to know that there are still so, so many Devils who do not agree with your ‘vision’ for the future?”

The civil war between the New Devil and the Old Satan Factions had not been a fast thing to build up to or to resolve once it reached the point of open warfare between the two sides of the schism. In fact, calling it a civil war wasn’t quite right. It had more resembled a revolution, particularly the one in Russia after World War 1.

The Revolutionaries had spent years spreading their ideology throughout Devil society. Sirzechs and Ajuka had been the movement's leaders, the strongest of their generation, as Rivezem had said. The pair had gathered the disaffected, the youths who had been born after the last climactic battle of the great war. Devils who didn't have any kind of personal hatred towards either of the other factions, in other words. With them came older lords who could see the writing on the wall and identify the main problem: the fact that devils were slowly dying out. Not just because of the ongoing violence, but because of the problems devils had in reproducing with one another or anyone else.

But instead of getting angry at Rivezem poking at his ego, Sirzechs merely shook his head sadly, returning contempt with contempt, his Power of Destruction searing through pale imitation of a Light-based spell that Rivezem had attempted to use, then nearly taking one of Rivezem's legs out from under him, forcing him into the air. "And you never understood that, did you? Despite the fact that your father was dead, slain by Michael in the war. Despite the fact that Beelzebub, that Leviathan, Asmodeus and even your own father had all been torn down by the fallen or the angels. We had lost so much knowledge, so much magical understanding and power because we kept on losing people, leaders and thinkers alike because they kept on dying."

"You never saw how much of a problem the fallen were becoming simply because they had begun to recruit among humanity, and that the church's recruits among humanity had long begun to outnumber devil kind." Sirzechs laughed loudly as his blasts of magic forced Rivezem back, pushing him almost entirely on the defensive. "Your power bloc only cared about continuing the war. And when Ajuka proposed the Peerage System, what did you idiots do? You rejected the very idea of recruiting among humans, rejected the proposal to pull back from direct conflict, even when we couched it in terms of preserving our manpower." Sirzechs shook his head. "But then again, none of that ever mattered to you on a personal level did it?"

Rivezem guffawed, as if the very question was moronic, while he hurled a segment of slagged wall at Sirzechs, transforming it into a wall of TNT that then exploded, letting him obscure his position for a second. "Ah, Sirzechs, Sirzechs. That's always been your problem. You care so much about other devils, you care in the first place! That is so **human** of you!"

Once more, Rivezem spat the term 'human' as if it was the greatest insult in the world. His face, which had been composed in a little, sneer, now shifted into a rictus snarl of hatred as his aura flared around him. But it didn't just flare around him, as his aura appeared, a change started to come over Rivezem's body. Horns began to sprout from his head, and not the jokey sort of small horns that many devils had. No, these were horns enough to make a Minotaur weep with envy. Curving forwards they gleamed not so much like bone, but more like metal, coming to wicked points.

Rivezem's mouth too began to shift and change, becoming almost but not quite vampiric, as instead of four large incisors, all of his teeth became pointed, his jawline shifting to match. From his back came devil wings, accompanied by the appearance of his tail, which was not the usual spade-like tail. Rather it ended in a wicked point, the whole thing shaped more like a drill, then anything else.

As his body change, the King piece he had taken from Bedeze Abaddon's corpse appeared in one hand for a second, before dissolving back into modes of energy, that energy being subsumed by Rivezem's body. "Ajuka is a true genius, but to assume that we would be willing to raise up humans to the power of we devils, to share power with them? That is bad comedy. We are devils!" Rivezem roared, his roar filling with enough magic to make the whole of Cocytus tremble. "We were created to prey upon humanity, not live alongside them! We gain power from giving in to Sin, through which we devour the souls and minds of our victims, growing ever stronger by feeding on their weakness. That is what we devils are!"

Sirzechs stood like a rock in the storm, uncaring of the reinforced magical aura, which could not touch him through his own. He simply stared back at Rivezem as the smoke and dust of the explosion from earlier dissipated, slowly shaking his head. "Is that all you think Devil kind can be? Simple parasites? Because that's what it sounds like to me. Is that how you would define our race? By what we can take, by the vileness we indulge in? What kind of race can live only be feeding off another?"

"Bah, you still you do not see. Thinking about definitions like parasite or predator. Thinking about our race as a whole, what good does that do for a devil? I couldn't care less about devilkind as a whole, the future, or anything else. I simply want to destroy, to break the world and remake it into my own image and call it good! To be able to break anything I want, thought anyone I wish!" Rivezem laughed, his voice now somewhat distorted by his jaw's new shape.

"There are the sins that call to you the most I suppose. Wrath, Greed, Lust," Sirzechs murmured, shaking his head as he heard his earlier thoughts on the worst case in terms of Rivezem's thoughts being proven all too accurate. "And Pride I suppose, although..." Here he smirked his own aura flaring around him. "You know you know what they say about pride coming before the fall?"

With that, Sirzechs crossed the intervening distance faster than nearly any other devil could have seen. But Rivezem was no normal devil. He had already been a Super Devil, but now having used the King Piece he had reached a even higher level of power.

He saw the attack coming and blocked it, blocked the next one, then launched his own as the battle began again. Once more, there were no formed spells here, just raw power occasionally blasting out of their bodies as a whole but more often than not simply accompanying their

physical moves of punches, kicks, elbow blows, stabs, chops, and grabs. Nor did either of them move to disengage, again unlike the battle going on below. This one was up close, personal and far more primal.

before falling through the floor underneath them as Rivezem's foot slammed down to the ground with just a bit too much force. The two continued to trade blows as they fell the short distance to the hallway below, then landed, still lashing out at one another. The floor once more cracked under them, dumping both down, but they barely noticed, floating down as they continued to trade blows.

As they landed, though, Sirzechs had to blink a bit at the oddity of some of the prison area around them. The walls here looked like someone had taken Lego blocks made to look like regular stone and brick and mixed them up, adding odd splashes of random dark colors here and there. There were also strange bulges in places, almost like zits or pustules pushing out from the surface of the ceiling, floor and even the bars of some of the jail cells they say as they fought back and forth.

That sight was important for some reason, but right now, Sirzechs couldn't devote any real thought or attention to it, given how hard Rivezem was pressing him. *The man is good*, he reflected. *If Rivezem had really fought in the civil war rather than giving the Old Satan cause lip service, our victory would have been far more hard fought, or maybe even in doubt entirely, given his age. He was already at the peak of his power back then, while I was still training and growing stronger. He's even stronger now thanks to the King Piece, but then again, so am I.*

Each blow was accompanied by enough raw magical power now that even Harry, after his recent metamorphosis, would have been hard-pressed to defend against the numerous attacks from Rivezem. Similarly, every time a blow was redirected, the entire prison shook, or rather, the entire dimension did.

Every redirected blow sent magic blasting through the walls of Cocytus. Every blocked or countered blow sent massive arcing blasts of energy, shattering the physical framework of the prison in an ever widening area.

So much magic being used in the area was starting to overwhelm the underlying magical matrix that created this pocket dimension, to the point where the deformities that Sirzechs had noticed before became commonplace, along with wide swaths of what could only be called blank space. Areas of nothingness that would in any other circumstances been horrifying or something few could look away from, like the depths of a blackhole, hungry to feed itself on matter, yet never being able to become full.

At present, neither combatant noticed any of this now as Rivezem smashed Sirzechs backwards through several walls, then Sirzechs got the other hand, pushing them in an entirely different

direction. The pair smashed through jail cell doors, walls, and even through what should have been solid bedrock, but only turned out to be a few more empty cages.

Rivezem knew how dangerous Sirzechs' Power of Destruction could be, as well as his ability to create teleportation tunnels. As such, he had developed a means with which to disrupt small teleportation tunnels, random blasts of magic coming off of his aura, like spikes of magic randomly flashing out from his body. This negated one of Sirzechs' favorite techniques, which he had learned then modified from his father: creating small transportation tunnels and firing through them.

This was the same technique that Rias had begun to use in combat and shown off in the small interfamilial duel she'd had soon after it became known she had begun a relationship with Harry, and it would have been deadly here, as Sirzechs was actually a good deal better at it than his father, but there was still a limit as to how small he could make the teleportation tunnel's entry and exit points, and Rivezem's defense against such from appearing around him, while wasteful in terms of power, did the job quite well. Worse, if he tried it from anywhere beyond a foot away from the man, Rivezem's instincts and reaction time let him dodge easily, causing Sirzechs to grumble mentally a bit.

Similarly, defending against direct attacks from Sirzechs' Power of Destruction was both easy to understand, and hard to do: Don't get hit. Unlike simple devil-based raw magical power, the Power of Destruction had a distinct color to it, so whenever Rivezem saw an incoming attack shifting color, he instantly dodged rather than attempt to block or redirect the strike.

Because of this, Sirzechs was doing far more damage to the surrounding prison of Cocytus than Rivezem was, This had Rivezem, drunk on the power of the King Piece, cackling inside. Right up until the point where one of Sirzechs' fists caught him in the center of the chest.

This threw him back and bruised his chest something fierce, but he was able to dodge the follow on Power of Destruction blast, getting in close again and lashing out with a barely formed cutting spell of his own that sliced into Sirzechs' chest. It should've opened up a wide gash, but such was the magical resistance that Sirzechs had built up along with his own magical power that it only barely cut into his skin at all. Once more, the two of them exchanged punches, kicks, thrusts and blasts of magic as they pushed one way and then the other through the prison.

Neither of them said anything now. Nothing mattered but killing one another, no more words, no more taunts, just rage and hate, two of devil kind's strongest, each representing a different concept of what their race should be like, fighting it out, knowing that the universe was no longer big enough for the both of them to survive in it.

Scene break

Reverberations rocked the entire pocket dimension of Cocytus from the various battles going on, and it wasn't just a physical reaction. There was **so much** magic being thrown around throughout the prison complex now that the basic underlying structure of the pocket dimension itself was being affected in a way that, rather ironically, was a mirror of what was going on in Earth thanks to Ophis's presence.

The watchers in the control room were not among the most forward-thinking or brightest of Devil-kind. Not a one of them had any idea what was going on with Earth's magosphere, or the fact that the same thing could happen in a pocket dimension. Only far worse, and far more abruptly. That was, until one of the men who had been monitoring the fight between Sirzechs and Rivezem yelled, lifting his hands away from his station and kicking off the bottom of the station, hurling himself away. "GAHH!"

Everyone else turned to look his way in confusion, only to watch as his station seemed to dissolve almost, as if it was coming apart at the seams. Later, one of them would remark that it looked as if, "A computer screen had suddenly begun to dissolve into all of its separate pixels, but it wasn't a computer screen, it was the world, and you couldn't hit the side of your computer to fix whatever was going on."

After moment, the strange effect began to ebb away, leaving nothing but blank stone behind. "What the hell was that?" The scared devil muttered, staring down at his hands, which were now trembling. "I was touching that, that console when it began to, to... dissolve!"

"Or come apart maybe?" Alvenhov said, keeping cool as he knew that if he panicked, so would his officers. "Regardless, we still have a duty here. Order all of our prison guards out of the prison complex, have them join the fight outside. The impact to the basic magical structure of the pocket dimension isn't as great from that fight, and if something does happen, it'll be the last area to be affected."

The fact that the control center would probably be among the first to be so affected, and it had just been so, was not lost on anyone there, but the warden didn't allow anyone to concentrate on that just yet. "Let's see if we can get some of the prisoners out from near the impacted areas, shift them to the furthest outskirts we can. I'll want runners ready to go the instant that Sairaorg, Lord Ajuka or Sirzechs finish their fights, we'll want to get the victors out of here just as fast."

He glanced idly in the direction of the battle between the two infiltrators, the ones whose presence on Floor Zero was still a mystery and Harry Potter and his wife. That fight looked to be the one that would be the last to die down, if only because of how mobile all four of the combatants were in comparison to the fights going on between the members of the Old Satan

Faction and Lord Sirzech's force. *And I'd guess that formed spells, which all of that group are using more than raw magic, has less impact on Cocytus than the raw stuff.*

However he turned away from that fight quickly, looking over towards two of his operators.

"You said it looked as if the fight between Typhon and the Belphegor bitch was dying down?"

"Yes sir. In fact, I think it's over." One of his officers reported.

Alvenhov moved in that direction, looking into the console's screen, nodding in some amusement a second later. Roygun was embedded into one of the walls of the prison, her eyes rolled back in her head, and one of her hands missing, torn off and then the tattered remnants cauterized, while the rest of her body was covered in cuts and bruises. Typhon in contrast had shifted back into his normal young human boy form, although he seemed to be muttering to himself. The video cameras in Cocytus didn't normally have any kind of sound recorder, but he was looking around warily for some reason, his eyes staying away from Roygun.

Thank the Maou one of these fights ended quickly at least, the chief warden thought, wishing wistfully that they could open up the pocket dimension and reconnect to the greater Underworld. Then they could start basically offloading his own people, Typhon, and others, removing some of the magical weight on the smaller pocket dimension.

But he knew he could afford that. Not while those two infiltrators were around. Sirzechs had been adamant on that point. This dimension was to remain separate until all of their enemies had been captured.

Instead, Alvenhov ordered, "Get someone down to tell Typhon to head out to the surface as well. But make certain that whoever we send down there is able to analyze if that woman has a King Piece inside her. We'll want to know about it, and remove it."

With that, the warden turned his attention to one of the few remaining exterior cameras, watching events playing out there, while elsewhere, Yubelluna and her strike team were about to engage their targets.

OOOOOOO

Yubelluna had taken the time to figure out the precise kind of area within the prison she wanted to have the battle occur, working closely with Warden Alvenhov to set it up. Stuck as they were within the prison, despite the amount of destruction Cao-Cao was creating with the True Longinus, time was on the defender's side in this instance, and unlike the other ambush teams, Yubelluna knew that she and Cu gave their group an opportunity to prepare the battlefield in a way that Harry and Yasaka hadn't had time for and Sirzechs hadn't felt he needed.

...Or wanted. Whether or not that decision was entirely because of cool calculation or a desire to have it out with Rivezem Sirzechs one-on-one, Yubelluna didn't know nor care. One aspect of being involved, in many senses of the word with Harry and through him his clan was that Yubelluna had left behind devil society. So whatever had happened to put that particularly well-hidden but vicious look in the mild-mannered Sirzechs' eyes was well outside her understanding, and she was happy for it.

Yubelluna and Cu placed several traps directly ahead of the group led by Cao-Cao in the area the bandrui decided on. This was a wide-open area with a high ceiling and scattered cage-like cells scattered in a random pattern. There was even another cage in the ceiling, set aside the large, magically glowing light there. It was one of the larger 'formations' that Cocytus's interior could come in, built for overly large prisoners or those who had to be isolated even further than most of the other prisoners here for one reason or another, usually because of racial-specific area of effect magic of some kind, like continually emitting a deadly smell or some such.

This would make for a wide angle from which attacks could come from, a marked contrast to the rest of the prison, and an area where there wasn't an immediate wall or prison cell through which they could just burst through into another area as Cao-Cao had been doing with the True Longinus. The group would already be jumpy and Yubelluna didn't think they had enough discipline to keep looking for trouble once they saw one threat in such an area, regardless of what Cao-Cao might expect of his fellows, which would allow Kiba and the others to push their initial advantage hard.

Although honestly, if it weren't for the True Longinus and the fact the Khaos Brigade had already proven to have a teleportation method that meant they could escape the moment Cocytus was connected back to the greater Underworld, Yubelluna might well have suggested they leave this group to just tire itself out. There was very little this group could do to escape Cocytus without that teleportation method. But on top of that, the True Longinus was too powerful. Eventually, if Cao-Cao kept pushing his use of it, it might achieve Balance Breaker status. At which point Cao-Cao might be able to somehow blast through Cocytus's background magic, not just it's physical structure.

Cu was more than happy to go along with her plan, since she had set it up so he was the initial, visible threat after the work on placing runic traps and Image Bomber-based traps had finished. While the others hid behind various physical objects or behind temporary invisibility spells, He stood in the center of this open area, looking in the direction the Khaos Brigade group would arrive from.

As he watched, the outer wall of the trap zone began to glow. *Ere now, that looks a bit more powerful than most of the blasts I saw earlier,* Cu thought, scowling. He hastily began to create a

sphere of magic in front of him, his wode tattoos glowing blue along with his fingers as he did, right before the beam slagged the wall and rippled on, fit enough to burn across the open area and out the other side.

The beam of intensely powerful Light Magic from the True Longinus had barely begun to fade away before Cao-Cao and his remaining pair of followers rushed into the area. Cao-Cao was in the lead, with Perseus taking up the rear, and Connla in the center. He had begun to grumble about having to carry Hercules, but Perseus's shield, the Mineral Materialization Sacred Gear, was far better at reacting to attackers, turning defense into a nasty kind of offense thanks to the Medusa head set into the boss of the shield.

For his part, Hercules was still out of it thanks to Cu's eternal hangover trap. Luckily for Connla, he had at least stopped throwing up a while ago, so all the Irishman-who-didn't-look-like-one had to deal with was the larger man's groaning.

The moment the nature of the area they had entered became clear through the dust of their entry all three men were intelligent and experienced enough to instantly start looking around for threats, with Cao-Cao barking orders. "Connla, prep Night Reflection and dump Hercules," Cao-Cao ordered. "I have front and left, you have right and above. Perseus, keep an eye out behind—"

"No need for that, boyos," Cu called as his hasty shield faded and he rose to his feet. It hadn't done much, but it had allowed him to duck below the radius of the attack. Now he smirked a little as he twirled Gae Bolg around him. "I'm right here. Been waiting for a while frankly. You lot o' new type 'heroes' are really slow, y'know?" he continued, making his derision when using the term hero plain, something his brogue made all the more effective. "Made me wish for an ale to wile away the time with, although sayin' it might be a bit cruel given what I did ta yer friend there."

Cao-Cao did not respond, shifting to one side and eyeing Cu Cuchulain with a penetrating stare, while Perseus and Connla both spread out. Perseus had obeyed his injunctions and was now watching behind and all around them, but Connla had jolted the moment Cu had started speaking. He had dumped Hercules to one side and was now staring at Cu instead of watching his sectors, his eyes wide in recognition. *Well, one out of three being distracted isn't bad, although it looks like our hopes of taking both the Irishman and the Grecian by surprise isn't gonna happen.*

"You would be the one that is purported to be calling himself Cu Cuchulain. I say purported to be because your legend does not imply that you are someone who would willingly serve someone else, especially a nonhuman like Gremory," Cao-Cao probed, his eyes flicking everywhere rather than concentrating on Cu. "There's also the fact that your legend is also tied

up with your death, although admittedly, that isn't such a issue given how many ways you could have been resurrected. Although it is a surprise that we had never heard of you until recently."

Scowling, Cu leveled Gae Bolg at Cao-Cao. "I ain't purporting anything. I am Cu Chulainn, the Shining Sun of Lugh. If you call me a liar to my face, we're gonna go from friendly to unfriendly right quick." He waited a tic, then shifted Gae Bolg's tip towards Connla. "And you, boy. You've got a touch o' somethin' in you that makes me wonder if you'd be the descendent of one o' me by-blows from afore I married."

His smile turned wintry. "Don't expect that to matter to me. That blood's too thin fer me to care about it more than hopin' ya can give me a good fight."

"Of course not. After all, it is part of your legend that you killed your own son in combat," Cao-Cao said, causing Cu to roll his eyes.

"I'd ask if ya'd be able to know yer son from a random feckin stranger if he were in disguise, fighting for an enemy army, an' made no mention of your connection until yer speartip were in 'is guts, but given yer age and what I know about ya, you probably think all women're simply a useless distraction to your 'great goal' or whatever," Cu snorted, his brogue again making his derision not so much plain as impossible to miss. "Furthermore, to call Connla my son, I'd at least would've had ta know he was alive at all—"

At that point, Cao-Cao moved aside, allowing Perseus to whirl around, pointing his mineral materialization shield towards Cu, showing a remarkable amount of teamwork seeing that move had been done with no conversation or even signal Cu could see. But Cu was already moving by the time the Medusa's eyes on the front of the shield were pointing in his direction, putting a wall from a cage gutted by Cao-Cao's earlier blast of power between him and Perseus's current position. He also whipped out a small runestone, one of a few that he had carried into battle, having prepared them along with working on the traps that he and Harry had scattered throughout the prison.

The runestone shifted form, becoming a bolt of raw magic as it sped through the intervening air between him and his target of Perseus. Perseus was forced to use Mineral Materialization to shield himself rather than attack, the eyes of the Medusa face on the center of the shield closing right before impact.

"Wait, what did he mean when he said he was the one to prepare the trap Hercules walked into?" Connla shouted, even as the shadows began to appear underneath him, deepening, widening slightly as he prepared Night Reflection. "If we can figure that out—"

"Don't bother! It's tied ta him now. Yer friend's either going to puke himself to death, or I'm going to remove it, and I'm not liable ta do that right now!" Cu caroled, coming around the edge

of the wall. His wode tattoos glowed, speeding him towards Cao-Cao before Perseus could get in another attack with Mineral Materialization. Cao-Cao got the True Longinus up in time to block Gae Bolg's strike, but then the two were locked in to close a combat for Perseus to keep on using his shield. He began to circle in, shield up and his own Grecian hoplite-style spear raised, while Connla moved in the other direction the trio moving to encircle Cu.

For his part, Cu would've been more than fine with that kind of arrangement. A three on one fight sounded like a lot of fun, especially when he was facing two spears users, one of whom used a style similar to his own, and the other a very different one. Stil, Cu knew that wasn't the plan, and wasn't about to demand the others stay out of things. There was a time to give into his battle lust, but this wasn't one of them.

As Cu retreated sideways and to the left of where he ha charged Cao-Cao, he blocked a thrust from Perseus before a significant portion of one of the nearby jail cells exploded, sending shrapnel and stone everywhere, catching Perseus completely by surprise where he had been standing by one of its corners.

Showing that the would-be heroes didn't have a monopoly on good teamwork, Koneko leapt up and out from where she had been hidden behind several wizard style enchantments within one of the other cages an instant after Yubelluna activated her Delayed Bomber, a version of her Image Bomber-based attacks that she could create and wait to use, much like an explosive on a timer. The Boosted Gear gleamed on her forearm and hand as she landed a blow on Connla that the shadow user barely blocked, the shadows under his armor taking the hit and deadening much of the force behind it even as the actual armor was dented badly.

Even so, enough of the force of that Boosted shot got through to raise the youngster off of his feet and catapult him into another jail cell's wall, shattering it and causing some of the rune based protections on his armor to fade slightly. At the same time, one of Cu's own traps activated. This one wasn't nearly as ingenious or refined as the one that had cursed Hercules with an eternal hangover, and simply shot out lightning into the man, causing chunks of his shadow armor to peel away for a moment and the man to gasp in pain.

Before Perseus could recover, having blocked a significant portion of the chunks of stone and the explosive wash with his shield, Kiba was there, one of his devil-style swords in hand. He'd been stationed on the other side of the room from where the battle had begun and had closed slowly so as to not cause the invisibly spell Yubelluna had cast on him to fade, but now, his sword, a Spanish Falcata with an edge gleaming a dark purple, lashed towards Perseus's neck

Perseus was a master of the shield and spear style of combat though, and was able to get the lip of his shield up in time to deflect the blow high over his shoulder even as he stabbed, forcing Kiba to dodge to the side. He and Kiba both whirled around one another, one trying to land the

blow with the spear, the other a kick, and Kiba then ducked low over a second strike coming in from his opponent. The falcata dematerialized in his hand as another, a rapier, appeared in his other hand, stabbing upwards and towards Perseus's chest, only to be deflected by Mineral Materialization. The eyes of the shield were already open, but Kiba had already shut his own, and rolled to the side, lashing out and downwards towards Perseus's foot in a slash, causing him to leap upwards.

Whereupon Yubelluna caught him in the side with a blast from Image Bomber, the air to one side of his helmeted head glowing briefly before exploding. When he landed, the ground underneath him exploded in turn and, hurling him further away from his companions as Yubelluna appeared, hovering over the battle, her bandrui robes eddying under unseen currents.

Cao-Cao wasn't about to let his team be split up like that though, and shouted, "Connla, Perseus!" So saying, he broke the deadlock he'd been engaged with Cu for a second by launching a blast of magic down at their feet, causing Cu to leap away. With that opening, Cao-Cao turned, and raced towards where Perseus had been sent, bouncing up and over several of the jail cells to keep Perseus in sight to keep the magic of Cocytus from separating them. This also allowed him to jump over a series of runic traps, much to his irritation, although the move also left the groaning, moaning mass of Hercules behind.

Luckily, given all of the strain it was currently under, the maze portion of the underlying enchantment was far slower to react now than it had been when the invasion of the prison began, keeping Perseus from being transported elsewhere. Cao-Cao landed next to his follower, as Connla broke off from fighting Kiba, disappearing into shadow and appearing beside them.

He gasped though as he came out of the shadow, shaking his head. "Dammit! That's about as far as I can Shadow Walk. Cao-Cao! If you're thinking that I could get us out of here somehow, you'd best think again, unfortunately."

Connla wasn't speaking about getting out of the prison complex, but getting away from an area their current enemies had obviously prepared for this battle. *God damn it, this whole mission's gone wrong from the first. We, all of us, walked right into a damn trap the size of a pocket dimension, and didn't even realize it!*

Before Cao-Cao could reply, Koneko flashed towards them, Ddraig's Boosted Gear power helping her speed reach levels even most Knight Pieces would have had trouble with. Boosted Gear met True Longinus, and Koneko's blow went wide. The tip of his spear came around in a slice, nearly cutting her face, but she had seen it coming, and she ducked to the side letting the spear pass her head by easily, launching another punch into his chest, which he was forced to

block with his spear shaft right before Kiba flashed in, a cut coming towards his side, forcing Cao-Cao to dodge even as the Knight shifted on to attack Connla and Perseus.

The two Sacred Gears strained against one another as the young nekoshu growled, "I've been wanting to smash your face in for a long while, you racist pretty boy!"

Admittedly, Cao-Cao did look like a, well, a pretty boy from Korean or Japanese manga, although he was very much the type that had looked after himself and bulked up considerably. The rest however was Koneko's personal opinion, although that didn't mean it was necessarily wrong. While he had a lot more complicated reasons for wanting it, Cao-Cao's purported goal was force every other race off of Earth or put them under humanity's control in some fashion.

Something that Koneko, along with many other youkai felt was ridiculously stupid, and which she wanted to make clear Cao-Cao understood. "My race has been on earth as long as the humans have, just like a lot of the other youkai. It's our home just as much is yours!" She growled angrily, staring into up into his eyes.

"You have no understanding of my real goal!" Cao-Cao said, pushing her back with quite a bit of difficulty. Her time gaining experience in working with Ddraig had given Koneko even greater strength than most high-level Rooks out there and she glared back up at him not backing down an inch as their weapons strained, despite being near the True longinus supposedly weakening her given it's very nature. Her other hand came up to grab at the shaft of his spear, both of them holding onto it now as they strained, while all around them the battle continued with Cu and Yubelluna pressing Connla and Perseus, trying to push them away from Cao-Cao.

"The devils, the fallen, even the Angels, all of them seek to manipulate humanity in various ways, pray on us as if we were simple animals, lesser than them! That cannot be borne! Yes, in the past, you Youkai did the same, but in this day and age, you are far less of a threat than the three factions. You can be controlled..."

"Funnily enough, I thought that the Youkai Association was doing a pretty good job of controlling themselves," Kiba said, moving to flank the arguing pair, his blade flicking out, forcing Cao-Cao to break his engagement with Koneko to block it while Yubelluna's explosions tore at Connla's Shadow Armor, and Gae Bolg skittered across the front of Perseus's shield, the impact driving him back.

"And if you're talking about devils and so forth taking advantage of humans, treating us like were lesser than them, have you looked in a mirror?" Cu snickered, shaking his head, but when he spoke, he sounded oddly philosophical, showing a aspect of his personality that he rarely did even as he and Perseus exchanged sword blows. "Be it as groups, countries or people separated by simple ideologies, all of us look to get ahead in life, be it as individuals or as societies. It's all about you getting ahead, your people getting head, or your nation becoming stronger. Do you

think every war I fought in was a 'just' one? Do you honestly think your ancestor was some kind of philanthropist? Get real! Whatever he might've started as, by the time he was really famous, he wanted to conquer China in his own name, to put his own blood on the throne. That was all there was to it."

"This coming from a hero!?" Connla grunted from the exertion of using his Night Reflection against Image Bomber taking it out of him. On top of that was the strain from Shadow Teleportation, which Connla knew he could not get away with using again at all, despite his words earlier. The magic of Cocytus fought him, and there'd been something else there too, some feeling or other that he had gotten as he passed through the Shadow Realm that caused a shiver to go up his spine.

Whatever that was, he wanted to never feel it again. *I honestly thought my own Sacred Gear was turning against me for second, and I don't know where that feeling was coming from, this pocket dimension or, or something else!!*

"What? Just, what? Heroes ain't supposed to think about solving the world's ills, just overcome the challenges in front of us. If we all tried to go around tryin' to solve the worlds problems, there'd be no end of it. All we'd do is create another tyranny, which is what yer friend here would do," Cu snickered, before Kiba launched an attack at Perseus, before rolling into cover to get away from the gaze from Perseus's shield.

"NOW" Yubelluna shouted, flicking her arms out in every direction. Tiny finger sized bits of air gleamed with the outline of Image Bomber and fell through the air towards all three of the heroic descendants below, exploding as they came. "Image Dust Bombardment!"

As the trio all reeled and Cu, Kiba and Koneko pressed in, Loup, the last member of the ambush team hurled himself out from out of one of the nearby cages. While he had learned some magic from Harry and the others, he wasn't nearly as adept with it as Yubelluna, nor did he have any Boosted Gear or Peerage Piece to enhance his speed. What loop did have going for him was monstrous strength, speed, and a werewolf's healing power, though, and a sense of timing.

Now, as Perseus tried to turn so that he could bring Mineral Materialization up toward Yubelluna and Kiba, Loup, smashing two fists into his rising shield, covering the eyes there with his hands as he lashed out with a kick that Perseus was forced to block with the butt of his spear, pushing the kick back down into the ground. This opened him up to a nattack from Kiba, which flicked up and over his shield to slam into his upper arm. The armor there held but it sent Perseus skittering sideways before he brought his spear up to thrust into Loup.

To his shock, Loup didn't try to dodge simply letting the spear hit him. It pierced his side where Loup grabbed it in one massive paw, grunting at the pain, but holding Perseus there, allowing Kiba to whirl around him and attack from Perseus's spear side.

He got in several strikes as Connla made to intervene, but the continuing hail of explosions from on high suddenly concentrated on. The resulting explosions nearly tore entirely through his Shadow Armor and succeeded in separating him from Perseus and Cao-Cao.

A blast of Light magic from the True Longinus nearly caught Yubelluna in turn, forcing her to dive down towards the ground. Then, even as he stumbled, Connla struck back. Shadows underneath all of the attackers roiled, stabbing upwards into their legs.

Loup grunted as they bit deeply into his flesh, but Kiba, with the speed boost given to him by his Knight Piece was able to actually keep away from the daggers coming up out of his own shadow, although he couldn't dodge a blow from Connla, which hammered into his own defenses, the two of them going sword to sword for a few seconds. Connla was even able to twist them around so that they interfered with Cu's attack on Cao-Cao, letting Cao-Cao get off another blast of power from his spear towards the hovering Yubelluna.

This he shifted into a crescent shaped blast of energy, bringing the spear around in a continuous blast of power aimed toward Cu. The hound of Ireland leapt up and over the attack, flipping in midair to bring Gae Bolg down on top of Cao-Cao's head like a halberd, forcing him to cancel the attack and defend himself.

Meanwhile, Perseus had finally pulled his spear out of the werewolf's guts, but only after taking several strikes from Kiba and then one from Koneko, who had ducked under the blast of magic from Cao-Cao rolling underneath his defenses. Cao-Cao had shifted away from her at the same time, but this allowed her to charge into Perseus. His shield took the blow, and Boosted Gear met Mineral Materialization, with Mineral Materialization losing out.

A dent formed on its face, causing the Medusa-like face on the boss of the shield to distort almost as if it was somehow alive enough to feel the pain of the strike. It's eyes widened in an effort to catch Koneko, but Koneko was already closing her own.

This wouldn't normally have been enough. Yes, if it had been the original Medusa, it would have stopped Koneko from being frozen into stone. But Mineral Materialization didn't just turn whoever it's gaze locked on into stone. Instead it should have slowed the movements of anyone that came in contact with it, the whole of the shield acting like the Medusa's gaze, only at a more limited level, like you had stared into the eyes of one of the head's snakes rather than gaze of the woman herself.

For the first time, Perseus noticed that Koneko was wearing what looked like some kind of necklace. It sparkled for a second, and Perseus flicked his gaze sideways, seeing the same necklaces on the neck of the werewolf and the blonde swordsman.

Quickly putting two and two together, Perseus shouted, "They've got some kind of defense from my Sacred Gear! Connla, remove those necklaces and we can—" that was as far as he got before Loup grabbed at his spear just as he was thrusting it towards Koneko, holding it in place long enough for her to smash it with a punch. With a shriek of tortured metal, the Boosted Gear shattered the spear, leaving him with just the stub as a blunt weapon, and his shield.

However, Perseus was a practitioner of magic, and had prepared multiple spears, shrunk down to the point where they looked almost like little metal toothpicks on his belt. Before either of his enemies could take advantage, he hurled the blunt end into Koneko's face, causing her head to snap back for second. Then he was holding a second spear, whirling it into the attack on Loup, slicing the werewolf's throat with a quick economical twirl of the spear even as he backed away from both of them, bringing mineral materialization into play.

Even that deadly strike though, didn't matter to Loup much. He went to his knees, but only for a second before surging to his feet, launching a punch towards the embattled Connla.

Explosions rattled Perseus and Cao-Cao alike, nearly upsetting Cao-Cao's footwork enough for Gae Bolg to slice into his side, while also forcing the eyes of the Medusa closed for a second as Perseus protected his head and upper body with his shield. A second later, Yubelluna flung herself to the ground. A mere touch of the ground sent hundreds of thick, twisting vines upward. These worked to try and grab and capture their movements.

Such was Yubelluna's control of them that they only targeted the three humans, but Connla quickly slashed them all to pieces with his Night Reflection even while dodging Loup and Kiba's attacks.

This did however allow Cu to stab Cao-Cao in the thigh, forcing him to gasp out in pain, before the butt of his spear came up into Cu's head, smashing out a tooth and breaking his jaw. The next instant, a blast of magic from the True Longinus caught Loup, hurling him away from Connla. It wasn't as wide or as powerful a being as Cao-Cao had been using previously, but it punched straight through Loup's armor and werewolf body, removing a significant chunk of his side and thigh, causing him to crash to the floor with a howl of pain.

The werewolf wasn't dead, and already his regeneration was kicking in, but he was down for the fight.

Worse, Connla, now sporting a few broken ribs thanks to Loup, had recovered from his earlier exertions. "Shadow Army!" He shouted, stabbing his Shadow Sword into one of the shadows under a vine.

Every shadow within sight of Connla rose up, growing quickly to become perfect copies of their creator, if all in black. In their hands gleamed similarly shadowy daggers or swords, the edges of

them a deeper darkness than the rest. Koneko Barely had an instant before she was being grabbed by several of the shadows, and stabbed by more, forcing her to defend herself viciously, while Loup groaned in further pain as the shadow daggers and swords found him, cutting into him from every angle, slowing his regeneration badly. Kiba summoned up a second blade, finding himself locked in battle with not just Perseus, but four copies of Connla, while others flung daggers up at Yubelluna, forcing her away.

But instead of being angry or frustrated as he too was attacked, Cu laughed. "Good! Excellent! if ye're really descended from me, then ya should be at least that strong!" More than a dozen of the shadow creations made to attack him, but the wode tattoos around his body flared with magic, and the shadows that hit him came apart instead. "But you'll need to work on your creations, boyo! They're not nearly durable enough!"

The next second, he redirected a blow from Cao-Cao, allowing him to nearly spear Cao-Cao again, although he was able to deflect the blow. The two master spear wielders began to exchange blow after blow, with Cao-Cao releasing small blasts of magical power from the True Longinus whenever he could, almost accidentally smashing Yubelluna out of the sky from where she had been forced to dodge the hurled bits of shadow. The hit she didn't see coming seared her side and arm before she could get into position to attack Perseus again. Her half-finished bombardier style attack didn't take, fizzling out and letting Perseus push himself to his feet where a kick from Perseus had sent him.

Connla wasn't the only one who could play with summoning up a horde, however. "Dragon Knight Platoon!"

For the second time since he had achieved it, Kiba called on the Balance Breaker version of his Sacred Gear, Sword Birth. More than two dozen armored forms appeared around him, instantly attacking the shadow creations of Connla, slicing them into pieces, battering them away from his allies, as Kiba darted forward, his own form now covered with armor he called the Glory Drag Trooper, two new swords in either hand.

Before he could reach Connla however, Perseus intervened. His shield came up, it's eyes wide open. Both Koneko and Kiba were forced to close their eyes, with Kiba pausing in place, holding his swords up in front of him, her eyes tightly shut even under his futuristic looking visor as Koneko prepared an attack with the Boosted Gear. And unlike Kiba, Koneko had a partner at the moment. Through whatever magic had forged his soul into the Boosted Gear, Ddraig didn't need physical eyes to see, and when Perseus darted around his companion and moved to stab him in the side with his spear, Koneko was ready.

Her hand flashed up, grabbing the spear shaft right behind the head, holding it still before it could strike Kiba's side. As powerful as he was, well beyond human norm, or indeed most devils

and fallen in terms of raw physical strength, Perseus was no match for a high-level Rook, even without the Boosted Gear helping. Since that was on her other hand, it wasn't at the moment.

A fact that Perseus had a brief second to lament as Mineral Materialization met Boosted Gear again, with his shield once more the loser. This time, the Boosted Gear shouted Boost at the same time, and the blow cracked Perseus's shield badly, causing the Medusa face on it to fade, followed by the shield as a whole.

Weakness came over Perseus for a second. His Sacred Gear hadn't been completely destroyed, but it had been damaged severely. It would need time to recover within his soul before he could call upon it again.

Releasing his spear, Perseus grabbed another from his belt, stabbing it forward before Koneko could dodge. The spear's hammered into her chest the metal of it warping but still smashing in with enough force to get through Koneko's durability even if it acted more like a blunt object than a penetrating one. Koneko allowed herself to move with the strike just as Connla was pushed into Perseus by Kiba, a hammer blow from one of his swords slamming into Connla's armor, causing the last of its purely runic defenses to fade. The Shadow Armor underneath had reformed, but alone that wouldn't be enough against enemies of this caliber.

But while that portion of the battle had begun to turn in the favor of the Potter-Gremory clan, the battle between Cao-Cao and Cu had just hit a speed bump. Despite Cao-Cao's best efforts to stay within range of his fellows, Cu had pushed Cao-Cao away from his companions with a blast of his own power, the blue of his wode tattoos cascading down into Gae Bolg, creating a concussive force the next time the two spears slammed into one another. This was powerful enough to knock Cao-Cao off of his feet and threw several of the cages back the way they came. His flight activated more than a few of the scattered traps, which hit him with conjured lightning, a short-lived blindness, various-sized explosions, and bowel wrenching curses, although those didn't hook on his body long enough to really do significant harm, whereas a few other specific, not truly debilitating traps worked far better.

Despite one leg still refusing to obey orders and an ear that was blazing with orange and white light, when Cu chased after him, Cao-Cao was ready. A blast from the True Longinus about as wide as Cao-Cao was tall flashed out, causing Cu to swerve to the side. The blast continued on its path, removing Loup's regenerated upper arm as the werewolf pushed himself to his feet, causing him to stumble back down.

"What is it with you people and trying to dismember me?" Loup growled, even as his other hand moved down to his belt, where several prepared runestones lay, grimacing as Connla's shadow warriors continue to attack him, along with the others. He'd killed more than a few but

there were still a hundred or more around the primary combatants, dueling with the automated soldiers of Kiba's summoned army.

For Cu, unfortunately, Loup's distress didn't matter, because as Cu leapt to the attack, he found his foot suddenly grabbed from someone.

Unbeknownst to any of the others, Hercules had actually been able to hear through the pain of the hangover curse on him, enough to know that Cu had been the one to place that trap. Enough to know what was going on around him as the battle continued. In an act of pure willpower, Hercules had begun to push through the agony of the curse, to push through the dizziness and weariness caused by throwing up so much, the migraine that came with the hangover, to build up power in his Sacred Gear. "Variant Detonation!" He shouted now, before throwing up even as his Sacred Gear activated with all the magical power he could pour into it.

Variant Detonation was a simpler version of Image Bomber. They were both built around the concept of causing explosions, with Variant Detonation allowing the user to impart an explosive spell to something he was touching or simply explode outward from the body via a visible aura, which Cao-Cao had once theorized could be taken further, to the point of becoming solid-state. The power of those explosions could vary dramatically given how much time and power Hercules could impart.

Since he had been building this one up since the start of the battle, the amount of explosive magic he imparted into Cu's body – he couldn't limit the effect to one part of whatever he was touching - was quite large. Massive enough to fill the entire area, blowing the distant Yubelluna off of her feet again as Cu disappeared within the explosion, a cry of pain being buried under the explosion. Loup lost several of the runestones he had grasped in his hand as he was hurled off his feet into a stone wall that collapsed around him, and nearly all the copies, Dragon Knight or Shadow, were wiped out.

The only one to stay put in the face of the explosion was Koneko and Cao-Cao. Kiba was sent flying along with Connla, but Connla landed awkwardly, as Perseus lost another spear, and smashed his head into the stone hard enough to get through his helmet and his own durability for a moment. Cao-Cao kept from being hit by rolling to put a bit of rubble from the first clash with Cu between him and the center of the explosion.

The heat and the explosive wave still roiled over him, burning his back badly, but while Cao-Cao might have made a lot of mistakes and errors of judgment, he was still a warrior with few peers among humanity. The pain was intense, but he pushed through it, becoming the first one to respond as the shockwave passed. Another attack had already been formed on the tip of his spear, but instead of using it on Cu, he now lashing out towards Kiba instead as he lashed out in

turn towards Connlay nearly decapitating him. The blast Light magic slammed into Kiba, and he screamed as his Armor peeled away, the Light magic burning through his armor.

Seeing that, Koneko shouted, "Balance Breaker!"

At her words, Ddraig shifted, flowing up from her forearm and hand to her arm then her entire body, covering her as much as Kiba's armor had him. Perseus groggily pushed to his feet, grabbing at another spear from his waist, but the spear jab shattered on her armor as she charged forward, and before he could get away, Koneko's elbow rammed into him and she carried him towards Cao-Cao. Before he could do anything, her other hand reached up, grabbing his armored face in one hand, squeezing. Perseus's head burst like a ripe melon causing Connla and Cao-Cao to shout in fury.

The shadows underneath Connla roiled, shifting up and out from under his armor, then covering it and the rest of his power. "Night Reflection Death's Cross!"

What appeared after a moment was a kind of body armor that looked far more modern and tactical than the knight-like armor Koneko and Kiba's Balance Breaker forms had shown. It looked like leather made of shadow in many ways, complete with designs that emphasized his armored fists and chest. He didn't have an armored tail like Koneko did, which obviously made sense, although the inclusion of thick tentacles that sprouted from his back in various places did not.

Within an instant the two now armored titans crashed together, causing Cao-Cao to curse. "Get away from her, Connla! I need a clear shot!" Even against Ddraig's balance breaker, the power of the True Longinus, and the impact of Light based magic on a devil, would give them a win.

However, a clear shot was the last thing that Cao-Cao was going to get for two reasons. One, Loup had grabbed at a few more of the runestones he had been given, and now tossed them around the area. Those stones shifted form, turning into smoke, deep, thick smoke that no one without enhanced eyesight could see through. Not that Loup needed to be able to see. As a werewolf, sight was secondary to smell for him, and he raced forward keeping in a growl with difficulty as he once more closed the distance.

The other reason was far more pertinent to Cao-Cao personally, as a spear flashed out from the smoke of the explosion, nearly catching him in the head. Only his well beyond human reflexes and the noise that Gae Bolg made as it flashed through the air saved him. Smashing it aside, Cao-Cao watched as the spear made from a dread beast of the deep then floor flew around for a moment, disappearing into the smoke where it was caught in the hand of Cu.

Cu's body was a wreck. The explosion from Hercules had hit him harder than anything he'd felt in this battle or during the battle against the shackled gods that Nefertiti and Akhenaten had

sent after him in the ruins of Amarna. But already, his body was changing, as he lost himself to his Ríastrad, his wode tattoos shifting from blue to red.

It was his most deadly power hit, his greatest shame. A mix of the change a werewolf went through and the berserk fury that ancient Celtic or Norse warriors had made famous, hit gripped him now. Cu's body shifted, changed, became less than human, more bestial than even a normal werewolf, but healing at the same time, burnt blackened skin repaired, missing chunks of his leg reformed in a way that only Harry's new level of regeneration could match.

As the change finished, Cu howled, then launched himself forward, his passage blasting away the smoke Loup had created. Once more Cao-Cao saw him coming and the two spear wielders clashed with Cao-Cao nearly blasted off his feet.

Nor was Yubelluna or Kiba entirely out of it. Yubelluna was still dealing with the injuries she had taken from the strike from Cao-Cao, but her spellwork had deadened the pain of it and had begun to heal her thanks to her bandrui powers letting Yubelluna heal herself by absorbing the life energy from the vines she had previously used to try and bind the group. Indeed, those vines continued to try and attack Connla and finished off Hercules now, draining the heroes' life force to heal their mistress.

As for Kiba, his Glory Drag Trooper armor had protected him long enough to allow him to survive the strike which, considering how much Light Magic the True Longinus could put out, was indeed something. Even someone like Sairaorg or even Kiba's previous master, Souji Okita, would have been hard pressed to survive a strike from the spear that had been used to slay the son of God.

Despite surviving, Rias's Knight was a mass of pain, his whole body feeling as if Akeno had used him for target practice. Despite that, as the pain slowly started to fade, Kiba was able to slowly push himself to his feet. A moment's concentration caused his spine to arch in agony, his mind suddenly filled with a migraine to make the one that Hercules had been dealing with for more than an hour by this point. "ARRGhhh..." he hissed out, trying to not shake his head, knowing that would just make things worse. "My word, that is most inconvenient, he mused before looking around.

Nearby, he saw a mangled piece of metal that must have at one point been one of Perseus's spare spears. He grabbed it, and with effort, heaved himself to his feet. *This whole ambush thing has not been nearly as one-sided as we hoped,* he mused, as he watched Loup appear out of the limited smoke cover that remained, a blow from his hand smashing into the back of Connla's head. *Still, so far we're all alive, at least. That's a victory no matter how you look at it.*

He then paused, staring thoughtfully at a nearby cobblestone, which glowed with runic script. *Well, any port in a storm, I suppose. Now, that looks like one of those that is only activated by stepping on it, so...*

Connla ducked underneath a blow from Koneko, lashing out with a kick that caught Loup in the chest, but the werewolf moved with it, trying to grab his foot, only pausing and ducking aside as the tentacles from Connla's back tried to grab at him. One cracked his head a good one, pushing Loup's head down within range of a knife strike to the side of the head that had his head ringing. At the same time, his other tentacles and the two swords he had conjured out of Shadow from his hands kept Koneko at bay.

However, Connla did not see Kiba coming through the smoke and fog until too late. The Knight heaved his makeshift weapon forward, the cobblestone with the runic trap on it smashed into Connla's back right between a pair of the tentacles. It sparked and suddenly Connla screamed as the magic within, a simple sticky glue like spell burst out, entrapping all his tentacles by their roots.

This left Connla open for a blow from Ddraig, which blasted into the man's shadow armored head completely removing the shadows from around his head for a second. This was long enough for Loup's claws to rake across his face, tearing an eye out and creating a ruin of his nose and face.

Connla howled, lashing up and into Loup with his sword, stabbing the werewolf almost through the heart, but missing by a bare centimeter while he whirled around kicking Koneko in the chest and sending her tumbling into Kiba. He might have been able to push on and maybe finish off the battered Kiba or even decapitate Loup, one of very few injuries no werewolf could recover from.

However, Yubelluna had recovered by this time, and as Cao-Cao was currently being thrown around by Cu, she concentrated on Connla.

An Image Bomber outline appeared underneath the man, exploding upwards. This completely removed all of his shadow armor. His one remaining eye widened, but he couldn't dodge in time as Koneko roar to her feet, a blow taking him right in the center of his chest. His armor shattered and only the hero's own physical endurance kept him from not exploding. "Get out of here, you shadow prick!"

Connla was still hurled off of his feet though, landing near where Yubelluna was leaning against one of the shattered walls of its cage. Before he could do anything, the ground underneath him glowed again for a brief second, then exploded again.

Despite that, Connla was still there as the explosion cleared. His entire body was a bloodied mess, almost matching Cu's body moments before. Unlike Cu, though, Connla had no ability to deal with his injuries, and no experience to deal with the pain. "AGGHGHHGGHGHGHHG!!!!" he scream-whimpered, his face a rictus of agony and pain.

When Yubelluna finished him off a second later by dropping a piece of rubble with another explosion embedded into it into the black-haired man's mouth, it was more about mercy killing than anything, in the bandrui's opinion.

Seeing Connla's head disappear, Yubelluna breathed a sigh of relief, then pointed towards where Cu and Cao-Cao were still going at it hammer and tongs. "Koneko! Go!" *The rest of us are too battered* she thought, shaking her head, her thoughts on this battle mirroring Kiba's from a few moments ago. *For all of our planning, these three were far more durable and dangerous than we expected. Still, we're all walking away, and they're not, so I will take this as a win.*

With a vicious grin hidden under her helmet, Koneko launched herself towards Cao-Cao, eager to put the final touches on this battle. "Let's go, you overgrown Chunni!"

Unaware that his final companion had been felled, Cao-Cao had his hands full currently with Cu. The hound of Ireland's basic speed strength and agility had all gone up when he gave into his rage, although his skill had deteriorated with the impact to his mind. This allowed Cao-Cao to get in a few strikes, but they didn't matter. For one thing, he couldn't empower full-bore strikes, the battle having taken it out of him up to this point and Cu simply being too fast for anything that took more than a brief second as Cu retained enough presence of mind to dodge whenever Cao-Cao tried to craft a more powerful strike. Beyond that, Cu's body simply healed itself too quickly from whatever strike landed.

However, Cu's lack of skill allowed Cao-Cao to turn the dueling pair around so that he could look around Cu to where his companions had been. Doing so, he was in time to see Koneko coming towards him in Balance Breaker. Deflecting a blow from Gae Bolg, Cao-Cao allowed the punch that Cu launched the next instant to land, sending him sideways a little, just enough to bring his spear up to bear not towards Cu, who was already dodging anticipating that kind of move, but towards the incoming Koneko.

Koneko couldn't dodge in time, the blast of magic from the spear was far too wide, similar to the ones he had been using to pave his group's way through the prison. It slammed into her, and Koneko shrieked in pain, but unlike Kiba's armor, Ddraig's Balance Breaker held, and Cao-Cao continued the attack just a little too long. He was still able to dodge Cu's next strike so that it didn't lop off his arm, but it bit deeply into his forearm, causing blood to spurt and for that hand to become useless.

His attack cut off, and Koneko stumbled forward a few more steps before falling to her knees, Balance Breaker slowly cracking all around her. Before it could do so, Koneko concentrated, and Balance Breaker faded away more naturally, the Boosted Gear appearing on her arm again as she pushed herself to her feet and raced forward. "I'm not done yet!"

Now down to one arm, Cao-Cao battled Cu determinedly, getting in several more slashes even as Koneko tried to close. As she did, his entire body erupted in an aura he pulled out of his connection to the True Longinus, causing Cu to twitch and yowl in agony and Koneko to reel away a yowl of pain erupting from her lips. The portion of Cu that was part-devil thanks to the Knight Piece within him caused Cu to have a decent amount of the same weakness most Devils would feel toward such, and there were very few devils powerful enough to ignore the Light magic from the True Longinus, while Koneko was forced to back away hastily.

However, it didn't do nearly enough to slow Cu down. Not for nothing was Cu famous for his durability and his Rierstrad. Eventually Cao-Cao found himself pushed back, stumbling over rubble, through several of the cages that had been shattered earlier, and almost to the wall of the large area.

When the end came, it came from an unexpected direction. Cao-Cao's foot landed on a patch of rock that looked almost exactly like all the others. When it flared up, it caught him in a series of tangling vines of energy to cause his clothing to awaken and try and strangle him. His clothing wasn't strong enough to do so, but it caused Cao-Cao to wrench away for a moment, tearing at his neckline and his sleeves.

That was all that Cu needed, and his next blow stabbed deep into Cao-Cao's chest, taking him straight through the chest and out his back, severing his spine barely an inch below where his heart lay.

For a few seconds, Cao-Cao stared at the monster in front of him in disbelief, then down at his chest, before he smiled wintrily, ruby-red blood gushing through his battered lips. "Ah, at least in this, I proved to be a hero, dying to a great monster."

Cu snarled back at him, the rage slowly subsiding, his form shifting, the wide tattoos glowing ever brighter, pulling his power inside his body slowly, dimming as they did. By the time Yubelluna and the others reached him and Koneko, Cu was back to his normal body, and shook his head. "Hah, a monster, am I? Ain't nothing I've heard a hundred times before, boyo. Yer weren't even the strongest spear wielder I've ever faced. That's still a tie between me son, Connla and Ferdiad. Ya were a distant third."

Injured as he was Cao-Cao could only stare back, his face shifting to an insulted sneer before Cu stepped back, pulling Gae Bolg's warped, bone-like spearhead out of Cao-Cao's

chest. This allowed the wielder of the True Longinus to slump forward, hitting the ground with a plop. He turned back to the others, a grin on his face, as the final vestiges of his Ríastrad to slow only slowly began to leave him. “Well, that was fun! What next?”

OOOOOOO

Most of the Devils, wizards, magicians, vampires and werewolves that had remained outside the entrance into Cocytus proper had been completely caught flat-footed by the golems, Grayfia, Akeno, and Mittelt’s assault. While Grayfia and her brother fought it out, the rest of the devils put up a defense, but the golems proved to be game changers with their various attack abilities and high magical resistance.

The reason for this was simple. The latest version of the combat golems made by Yubelluna, the dwarves and Akeno were built to fight mid-tier devils or fallen, and most of the devils here were low tier. This put them above the combat ability of nearly all the devils in the host left outside Cocytus’s maze,

It had been relatively easy for Rivezem and the remnants of the Old Satan Faction to earn the loyalty of the dregs of evil society, those devils most inconvenience or passed over thanks to their betters having access to New Devils via the Peerage System. These kind of devils didn’t see the large picture, only the fact the new system was screwing them over, and that they were no longer be allowed to take advantage of humans as easily as they had been previously.

Only the scattered wizards, werewolves and magicians put up anything resembling a fair fight, and with lightning and holy lances flashing down from Akeno and Mittelt, those fights began to fade quickly. This was made worse by Luna’s... Luna-ness. It was very difficult for anyone to really fight well when they are suddenly dealing with their hands trying to become the Thing from Adam’s Family, their eyes no longer working or their target suddenly turning into a two-dimensional figure while taunting them with phrases like:

“The nargles hurl better spells than you!”

“Ooh, if I had been standing still that might have hit me.”

“Tell me, do you try to be ugly, or is that just hereditary? Only, I doubt even your mother could love your face.”

Luna was a past master at using oddity on top of her, admittedly, exceptional combat speed, agility and randomness to throw off her opponents. Death Eaters or Devils, they all couldn’t keep up with her strangeness, unlike the Unseelie Fae they’d fought on the island of Tir Na Nog. Add in the spells and abilities that Luna had gained there, and she became a true terror to anyone who couldn’t simply move fast enough for her to keep up with or overwhelm her in some

fashion. And with the golems drawing a large portion of the enemies fire, there was no chance of that happening.

And, well, there was also Akeno and Mittelt's own psychological attack on the enemy. Although in their case it wasn't so much that they were taunting them, as simply announcing to the world how much fun they were having.

"Yes, YES~~~ mmmmmmm, feel it, feel the lightning, yess~~~ scream for me!" Akeno shrieked, lashing down into one of the larger groups of devils. For Akeno, there was nothing she liked more than using lightning to cause pain to her opponents and this she did in spades.

Even a few who thought that they would be able to tank her hits because of their demonic heritage or some other reason could not. Since she had changed on the isle of Fand, her lightning had become linked to her powers as a Fallen. Light magic made into Lightning form proved horrifically deadly against Devils.

Similarly, Mittelt laughed, hurling light lances at any devil who tried to take to the air. "No, no, no, you bastards! The air belongs to us! Get down there with the rest of the worms!"

Euclid might well have tried to close with one of the flyers. If not for Grayfia. But, alas for Euclid's ability to concentrate on anything else and his overall blood pressure, Grayfia was indeed there. And it was not for nothing that she was known as the second strongest woman in the Underworld.

Thus beyond the first few seconds of combat he had no idea what the battle on the ground was like, hence why he would have attacked Akeno and Mittelt. The damage they were doing was the only thing he could see as Grayfia pressed him hard away from the area behind the outer wall.

As he dodged a ice spear, Euclid sneered, eager to hopefully get under his sister's skin, to break her concentration, knowing that that was the only way he would be able to win through. "What is the matter, dear sister! Has becoming the queen whore of the upstart Sirzechs slowed you down? And those wounds, I would not have thought he was into that kind of bedroom play."

Grayfia did not reply, instead creating a series of ice walls as tall as a high rise around him. Euclid shattered two with his own ice walls, spearing through one and heading out the other, hoping to throw Grayfia off. It failed, and another wave of cold air hit him, cold enough to freeze even Euclid, who as a Lucifuge should have been immune to that kind of thing.

A desperate dodge to one side brought him away from Grayfia as a magician hurled some kind of wind blast through the top of the prison's outer wall nearby, but he didn't notice that was pretty much the last gasp of the host his master had put together until Akeno came in from above, lashing out and down with holy lightning.

Euclid dodged, then raced upwards towards her, using his own mobility to get away from Grayfia for a few seconds as her ability to fly had been badly eroded thanks to the injuries she had sustained against Hades. A spear of ice appearing in his hand launching at supersonic speeds towards Akeno's position. Akeno was forced to create a Protego around her but the spell shattered at the touch of his spear.

His next spear would've gutted her, but Euclid suddenly flinched, gasping as his wings were suddenly wrenched out of position by his own clothing. His long Butler coat had suddenly formed into hands, grabbing at the base of his wings where they came out from the back of his shoulders, wrenching them backward.

While the vast majority of devils could fly with even without wings, when they were using their wings, a significant portion of their flight was connected to them. It took a brief second for Euclid to adjust, and in that second, of light spear hammered into his thigh, nearly searing his entire leg off, as Mittelt cackled. "Oh God, I love that spell! No one ever thinks of their clothing attacking them until it's too late! Whichever wizard came up with that was a pure genius, let me tell you!"

Even as he fell through the air, however, Euclid reacted. A sphere of ice launched towards Mittelt faster than a cannonball, causing Mittelt to gasp as she raised her light spears, enlarging them and placing them in front of her in an X-formation as the sphere slammed into them. The sphere shattered as did her light spears, but a lot of the ice continued forward, still controlled by Euclid's magic to pummel Mittelt, one in particular crashing into her nose.

Another sliced across the side of her neck, not deep enough to be a mortal wound, but certainly deep enough to cause bleeding. The former fallen gasped, one hand going up to it. Before Grayfia once more captured her brother's attention by launching several hundred ice spears up at him, coupled with a feeling of cold reaching up to him again like two grasping hands from the ground.

Bleeding badly from the wound to his thigh Euclid was still able to duck and weave through the assault from his sister, responding with his own ice spears, hammers, and other things falling out of the sky towards her. However, he also finally was able to take in the total battle, and his eyes widened in dismay, seeing several nearby golems turning their attention towards him. All of his fellow Old Satan Bloc devils, the werewolves and magicians that had been left behind by the heroes, were all dead or captured.

That sight rattled Euclid even more than the wound to his leg. *What should I do? I should warn my Lord that all of this was a trap, but he is already trapped inside Cocytus, and I, I do not have even the shadow bracelet, which should've allowed my Lord to find his way forward through the maze. But, but if this is a trap, is even that real?*

As he thought those thoughts, Euclid had been ducking and dodging through lightning, light lances and ice, concentrating entirely on defense and dodging, which allowed him basically to keep in one piece so far, though every hit against an ice or raw magic shield drained him just a little more.

Finally though, Euclid was able to think his way through things enough to know he had to get away. If his Lord did the same, they would meet up in the mansion, whose position was still hidden behind so many wards and glyphs against being discovered that it would be sacrosanct even now.

Yet after another second, Euclid knew he could not escape. Looking to the horizon, there was no hint of the dimensional portal there. That too had been cut off. With that realization, Euclid felt despair, before a furious resolve filled him. "If my Lord and I cannot escape, cannot escape to allow him to fulfill his destiny, then I will at least take a few of you with me!"

Knowing that to challenge his sister would allow the others to attack him from behind, and moreover that he would never be able to beat her even now, Euclid concentrated on who he thought was the weakest of his three current attackers. The golems were of no consequence. Most of their attacks were simply ignored by his magical resistance at this range. It might've been different in a physical contest, but few of the golems could fly high or fast enough to keep up with Euclid.

None of them even bothered to try, instead remaining on the ground and firing at range, despite the noticeable lack of impact their weapons were having.

He lashed out and downwards towards many of the golems, his hits shattering or freezing them in place, then instead of following through he twisted away, zooming towards where Mittelt was attacking him from above, throwing Akeno off his tail. This also let him leave Grayfia behind for a second, who had been certain that her brother was going towards the entryway into the pocket dimension. Her own attacks went wide, and she was slow to redirect them.

Mittelt's eyes widened, but then she grinned suddenly, and dove towards the ground, dragging Euclid behind her. She then created a protective shield around her, taking his first few strikes. A moment later, a flame so hot and bright it nearly caused several of the devils to scream in pain as they were blinded flashed up from the entryway into Cocytus. Euclid dodged wildly and was able to put a good few yards between him and the fires, but even so, the heat coming off of that flame had him sweating, his skin prickling.

A young boy strode out from the prison wall, glaring up at him. "That is about enough! I can feel this pocket dimension beginning to collapse just like Hades did, and I have no wish to face the fate that I was rescued from then!"

With that, small heads began to sprout from the boy's arms as he began to grow, the heads growing with them, more and more, until Euclid realized who this must be. *More hands, more heads. The many headed Titan. Oh dear.*

Yet he had only a brief moment to gasp, before some kind of spell enveloped him. He began to laugh, laughing and laughing and laughing, so loud and so powerful that he lost control of his wings, crashing into the ground a moment later. He continued to laugh, and laugh, until Akeno hit him with a lightning charge, she continued this magical assault, but until his resistance finally began to fade.

Euclid then found himself frozen and Grayfia stared at where her brother was now encased in solid ice, then around frowning. "What just happened there at the end?"

Luna appeared from on top of one of the golems, her fairy wings, extra-extra-large version, flapping delicately behind her. "None of my offensive spells were getting through his magical resistance. However, the cheering charm isn't really an offensive spell, it's a spell designed to make you cheer up, and nobodies body will see that as a bad thing. Moreover, it's a wizard-type spell that is based off a sidhe version. I figured if I overpowered it enough, that laughter would be the best medicine."

"I...see." Grayfia shook her head, then began to chuckle at that, while Akeno and Mittelt simply smirked, looking over the battlefield, as the golems began to slowly pull the scattered, and very few in number, prisoners together.

Typhon watched it all, then nodded firmly from several of his heads, even as he transformed back into his human body, staring back the way he had come, a look of fear on their faces that matched very poorly to his overall size and strength. "Good. Hopefully, this means that everything else will be settled soon. I do not want to go back in there."

Grayfia blinked at that, and Typhon quickly explained, causing Grayfia to frown, staring into the prison before shaking her head. "If the underlying network of magic that created this dimensional bubble is truly becoming weaker within the prison itself, then yes, I think we should all stay out here. In fact, let's move as far away from the prison complex as possible. If push comes to shove and everything starts to come apart, I will override my husband's closure of the dimensional gates, and we can escape through it. But only as a last option."

Scene break

As the chief warden and the others turned their attention to the various brawls going on between the various devils, the battle between Harry Yasaka and their enemies had shifted in type, if not in scope. Akhenaten had thrown down more Huaca, which had basically become what Harry felt his daughter Lily would call mini spam bots. Those huaca, each of them

empowered to a degree began spamming spiritual animals or small, conjured creatures. Centipedes and scorpions both large and small skittered around the floor towards Yasaka and Harry, their pincers glinting with unnatural venom. Meanwhile, Undead, along with two full-scale mummy titans, made out of metal and bone as much as wrappings appeared. Flying lizards with horns growing out of their brows and rainbow-colored wings flew through the air, showing more intelligence than the other conjured creatures, attacking and dodging.

Akhenaten paired this with area of effect spells, trying to transfigure large chunks of the area around them in order to attack or hamper Harry and Yasaka's movements, and massive spells. Walls of water, steam, lightning, which was still his favorite, bolts of stone going at supersonic speed, Egyptian style curses and the strange howler monkey spell and others to impact the senses of Harry and Yasaka. These kinds of spells were made to basically lap around any kind of defensive spell that either Harry or Yasaka could make while also being big enough to catch them if they tried to dodge.

It didn't work so well. Oh, the spells made to attack their eyes and ears were nasty, but both kitsune and phoenix werewolf had already cast spells to protect their senses. And, thankfully, neither Egyptian seemed to think of using smell-based attacks. Better, after a bit, the damage done to the area of Cocytus the fight was occurring in had smashed enough walls down to open it up so the pair could again race around, or better, bounce up onto the ceiling and down to avoid a significant portion of Akhenaten's spells.

In contrast, Nefertiti began to teleport around the place, attacking directly but from multiple angles. She still seemed to be going for more volume of spellfire and speed over power, but with her came several enchantments from her clothing. Her legs had some kind of haste spell on them, and from her arms and mace wind spells, both blunt and cutting flared out randomly. Equally randomly, attacks would lash out of portions of her clothing. To Harry, it almost looked like each image on her Incan (or Mayan) style shirt was a different captured spirit, the spirits appearing to attack and then disappearing in an instant. These attacks came in the form of barely formed magic, like a jaguar's jaws, or a bird's beak, but hit home with enough force to cause Yasaka and Harry to defend themselves.

The combination of the two very different combat styles was incredibly hard to deal with, but in their rage, the pair's deadly coordination had begun to fail. However they had been communicating earlier it didn't seem to work so well right now, and more than once, Harry was able to close, going sword to sword with Akhenaten, while Nefertiti found herself struck more often by his and Yasaka's spells, the defensive magic of her suit being forced to take those hits.

But Akhenaten was tricky. At one point, he configured a specific area of the ground, sometimes hidden by rubble or away from where Harry and Yasaka currently were. As such, Yasaka found herself falling into a ditch, plummeting down into the hole. "AAKKKK!!"

"Die, fox bitch!" Nefertiti shrieked, appearing in the air above the pit.

Yasaka desperately tried to defend herself yet even so, Nefertiti's hail of spellfire caused her to scream out in pain as her shields shattered and her defensively curled tails began to burn under the blows. It only lasted a few seconds, thankfully, before Harry got a strike through Akhenaten's defense of his wife strong enough to blast the unnatural Nekoshuu off her feet, but even so, Yasaka's had taken several severe hits,

In return, Harry took several nasty curses and blows. His magical resistance was such that he was able to tank the curses, but one of them in particular, a limb exploding curse, was able to overcome that resistance, blowing his arm off in a welter of blood and flesh.

"RAGGGHHH!!" Harry hissed, releasing the first gasp of pain he'd let out the whole fight as something in that spell attempted to dig deeper into his very being. It was as if the spell had something to it that attacked his basic being, almost like antimatter would matter, or a soul-targeting spell like the Crucio or Avada Kedavra. But his basic magical resistance was able to see him through, and even as he rolled on the ground his arm began to regenerate, and he launched a wide angle attack, creating a series of large clouds of sparkling lights.

Each sparkling light exploded, creating further clouds of clinging ash and dust. With what had happened earlier with the itching powder, both Egyptians retreated quickly, but this time, in different directions. It did save them, though, as that powder exploded a second later, creating thousands of tiny explosions. Akhenaten was close enough to one such to grunt at the impact of it, and nearly lose his grip on his khopesh. That series of explosions also cleared out most of the still working Huaca he had put down and let Yasaka jump out of the pit to resume the fight.

Ironically, the backwash of being close to his own spell also had Harry nearly fall into another trap. This one was runic in nature, but he saw the magic circle just before rolling onto it and instead stopped where he was, lashing out with a series of fast and hard spells, blowing apart the last of the giant mummy titans as it reached for him.

A series of silver spears flew from one of the Egyptians, but it didn't do anything to Harry's advanced form, unable to penetrate his hide or cause him more than superficial pain on impact. More worrisome was a series of hands coming at him from above and below, followed by several overpowered attack spells, each of them glowing an added necrotic green color that forced Harry to shield, unable to dodge out of the radius of the attacks. Harry was forced to use his metal and stone walls again to defend himself, unable to do more for a second.

Similarly, Yasaka had to deal with landing in the middle of a group of recently conjured snakes that Nefertiti had left behind when she had been forced to retreat a few minutes ago by Harry. Four of her tails stiffened, stabbing down and sweeping around her even as she targeted Nefertiti.

“Au Puch’s Withering Curse!” Nefertiti responded, the curse coming from the tip of her mace, the energy, part spiritual, part magical created a wave of magic that looked like a human-sized Avada Kedavra. Yasaka’s eyes widened, but she hastily raised a whole wall of stone using her full concentration to do it, before the thing hit, and even then. The feeling of death and soul-agony washed over her defenses, forcing Yasaka to call on her powers as the Kyuubi no Kitsune. The magic of the Dragon’s Nest, which she was linked to even here, poured into her creating a visible miasma of energy around her, dispelling the wave of dark, putrid energy, and blasting through it to hit Nefertiti.

“GAAHHHH!!!” Nefertiti howled, while several of the previously glowing items on her combat suit went out, including all of the glowing squares on her shirt, the animals and magical beasts there disappearing one after another before she could teleport away.

Nefertiti appeared in the air above her previous position clinging to the roof, which, thanks to the battle, was actually the equivalent of the flooring of the floor several levels above them. She hissed angrily, then reached into her for her Senjutsu powers. Taken along with her Nekoshuu-enhanced body, Nefertiti had practiced with calling on the energy of the world around her to enhance her abilities and did so now. A reddish, roiling aura of magic surrounded her, and she dropped towards Yasaka.

Still using her yojutsu, Yasaka felt her coming and jumped back. Her own aura of power grew around her and her tails flared with light green and blue energy as she leaped up to meet Nefertiti. The two exchanged punches, kicks and even tail whips, but while Nefertiti’s leggings enhanced her speed to the point she was even faster than the Kyuubi no kitsune’s there, Yasaka had a marked advantage, in terms of tails which Nefertiti could not match. They exchanged blows and contact-based magic for several seconds while Akhenaten pressed Harry hard, but then four of Yasaka’s tails broke through Nefertiti’s defenses.

Powered by Yasaka’s yojutsu, the quartet of blows blasted Nefertiti off her feet, causing her to howl in pain as she was sent flying towards her husband. “ARGGH, you cuuunT!”

Their mental connection having somewhat recovered as their wrath cooled, Akhenaten felt Nefertiti’s pain and how she was coming towards him. Hastily halting his assault on Harry’s position, he twisted around, grabbing Nefertiti out of the air with a stone hand rising from the floor and then sending the same lightning and soul-targeting spell he had been using on Harry towards Yasaka, who yelped and jumped away.

With a roar, Harry, able to see this through a hole burned through his metal wall, apparated forward again, only the sudden pop warning the Egyptian pair he was coming. His sword lashed out even as his other hand blasted out a barely formed magical blast into Nefertiti, taking a hit to his leg from Akhenaten's Khopesh in order to land one of his own which caused more than half of Akhenaten's defensive works to burst.

A strike to Nefertiti's shoulder got through her defenses, but at the same time, the ground underneath Harry turned into acid, and he plunged in, screaming in pain as the acid ate at his legs. "YEARGGG!!!"

Only a blast of foxfire hitting the pair saved Harry for a second, followed by Yasaka hooking him with a Leviosa, pulling him up and out of the acid, where he apparated away, his legs already regenerating, fighting the acid and beating it.

With both of the Egyptians having taken strong blows from Harry on top of the hits that Yasaka had landed on Nefertiti, they couldn't take advantage of Harry's injuries. However, they did recover before Harry did, with Nefertiti starting things off by attacking Harry, who was once more forced to turtle up behind magical defenses. At the same time, Akhenaten turned his attention towards the slightly more distant Yasaka, targeting her with a few soul-attacking spells from the Mayan school of magic and two wide angle sound-based spells.

When one such spell hit Yasaka, it didn't actually do anything as she and Harry were still defended by the equivalent of a Mufilatio. But Yasaka faked it, slumping down and screaming as if she was in terrible agony. This drew an instant response from Nefertiti, who switched targets. For a second, both of them targeted Yasaka, who was hard pressed to do more than dodge and block, but Nefertiti never saw a stone fist coming before it slammed up and into her from below. It crashed into her armor with all the force of a mountain.

Although Nefertiti's armor held against the physical impact, it still flung her backward. An eyeblink later Harry once more apparated close, his blade lashing out toward her back, only for Akhenaten's khopesh to push it aside. He couldn't block a blast of raw magic that hit Nefertiti a second later, causing a large chunk of the protective wards on her armor to fizzle out instantly.

"You bastard!" Howling in fury, Nefertiti teleported herself forward with the same Hecate's Steps spell she had been using throughout the battle. Given that shout, Yasaka was taken by surprise when the other woman appeared next to her, Yasaka's own spells going through where Nefertiti had been a moment before and hitting that strange purple bubble shield of Akhenaten's.

Even as that shield exploded and forced Harry away, Nefertiti called on her Senjutsu energy from the world around her, she created the same roiling reddish aura around only her hand, creating what looked almost like a drill of magical power. Before Yasaka could dodge, Nefertiti's

punch took her in the side of her chest, shredding flesh and shattering bones, hurling Yasaka away.

However, at the same time, Nefertiti missed one of Yasaka's tails coming up, slamming her with a blast of magic that seared another significant chunk of her enchanted armors powers away.

Growling as his hasty metal wall again faded away, Harry pulled his foot away from a strange, sentient-seeming tar-like substance a part of his mind wanted to call a black slime which Akhenaten had transfigured the ground into. He barely ducked under a flashing series of all-too familiar greenish darts, only these were not just Avada Kedavra spells, rather they looked like the killing curse wrapped around silver darts.

An instant later, Harry ducked through a rain of silver spikes and spears, but one of them struck his shoulder, causing him to grit his teeth in brief pain before whatever it was exploded, as if had suddenly shifted into an explosive round.

This hurled Harry sideways into a wall, but Harry's concentration on his own next spell didn't waver. While he kept one spell chain attacking directly at his opponent, another spell from his other hand flew upwards into the ceiling above. Harry had noticed that neither of his enemies had been doing a good job of noticing things from on high before this, and now it bit them on the rear as the entire ceiling above suddenly shifted into acid just like what Akhenaten had used earlier on Harry, splashing down on both of them.

Even as both of them shielded themselves, more of their magical and physical defenses failed under the dripping impact of the acid. Yet Harry paid for it with his own defenses shattering under their combined impact as Nefertiti joined in the attack with her husband. It was all he could do to raise a few chunks of stones to intercept the incoming killing curses mixed in with the larger spells. The other silver spells slammed into him, nearly pinning Harry to the far wall for a second before they exploded, sending the same kind of necrotic energy into him.

"I hope you like the Klyki Veles (fangs of Veles) Potter," Akhenaten hissed. Any veneer of civility had long since eroded. This battle was pressing him hard, and Akhenaten, unlike Nefertiti, had never enjoyed martial pursuits beyond swordwork.

Even as he and his wife continued to pummel Harry to the point he could barely defend himself, let alone attack, Yasaka was busy. Currently hidden behind a mound of rubble, she had taken a few minutes to heal. She didn't have quite as good a regeneration ability as Harry did now, but she still had far better healing than a normal werewolf, and she had kept busy for a reason. *I don't know much about runes, but I do know at least how to make this* she thought, as one of her tails finished carving a runic array into the ground.

This runic array was simple, but very overpowered by how much energy she was giving it, as suddenly from the runic array a flashing light filled the air filling the entire level of the prison. This blinded all three of the other combatants.

In the next instant, all nine of her tails launched wide-angle attacks towards the two Egyptians, slamming him, overwhelming hasty purple globe raised by Akhenaten. Even as that shield exploded outward, A blast from Harry caught Akhenaten, pushing through his various injuries with pure willpower. The blast of magic, a simple burst of air with all the power of ballista, sent Akhenaten back the way they came.

A hasty spell that acted almost like a rope pulled the slowly regenerating Harry after him. The Russian spell they had been using on him had spread silver and necrotic energy through his body, and even Harry's regeneration was having trouble with that. But he had remembered something that even Yasaka hadn't: the basic background magic of Cocytus was still active. If they could separate these two, keep them from seeing one another, then the prison's own magic would make certain that separation became permanent. "REPAIR THE WALL!!" he shouted, even as he was pulled into the air by the lasso-like spell.

Akhenaten rolled as he hit, already launching out spells and more, but he hadn't had any spell to cancel his own momentum in midair, thus had to ride the impact from Harry's spell until he touched the ground. Now he attacked Harry viciously, using wide angle spells and the same Klyki Veles even as he shouted. "Nefertiti, to me!"

But too late, Yasaka was closer to the hole the pair of men had been sent through, and now a overpowered Repairo spell hit the area. Even as Nefertiti tried to use Hecate's Step again, the wall closed on the sight of her husband pressing Harry hard, trying to overcome his regeneration before he could fully recover. He took another blast of silver and necrotic shattered his jaw and a large number of his teeth.

Then Yasaka was grabbing Nefertiti with all of her tales and arms and hurling her away from the wall, disdaining spells for a moment.

As the hole finished closing, the magic of Cocytus did the rest. In front of Nefertiti suddenly wide eyes, the area around them shifted, a wall growing from the ground upwards to block what had once been a hallway, and replacing what looked like a prison cell for a even longer hallway leading away, from them.

It didn't look normal as it had previously, like normal stone workings, rather, in the wall looked almost sickly, distorted, a sure sign to Yasaka that there was something off with Cocytus's magic. But it was still there, and the spell connecting the minds of Nefertiti and Akhenaten died out, breaking with distance. "No!" the unnatural Nekoshuu shrieked, a blast of raw magic flashing out from her hand. "No!!"

This meant more than just being separated from the love of her life, for, make no mistake, despite having been married for literal ages, Nefertiti and Akhenaten loved one another. But on top of her worries for her husband and herself, Nefertiti also knew that this meant she was trapped. Even should she win, there might be no way back out of the prison now, shifted away from Floor Zero as they had just been.

Yasaka pushed herself slowly to her feet from where Nefertiti's attack had hurled her, hacking out blood, even as she began to glow, the earlier regeneration enchantment she'd woven around her activating again. "Now, let's see a good you are on your own!"

OOOOOOO

If Yasaka thought that Nefertiti would take time to recover from the shock of being separated from her husband she was wrong, proven an instant after she finished speaking by the sheer number of spells that Nefertiti flung out from the head of her mace. She used that mace like a wizard's wand almost, firing curse after Wizarding World style curse from it, as she had since the start of the battle. But now, without her husband around, she also charged towards Yasaka, showing a willingness to get close that the ancient Egyptian woman hadn't before.

Yasaka ducked, blocked, parried, beside her, or the floor underneath her to block incoming spells. A great deal of which were the green killing curse, something that Nefertiti had been using since the beginning of the fight. Thankfully, she didn't seem to insert Necrotic energy into other spells as her husband had. Again, however, Yasaka's ability to use each of her tails to use several different spells at a time was enough to put her on Nefertiti's level of speed and power.

The impact of the woman's mace was well beyond what it should have been, though, and Yasaka winced even as she redirected the odd weapon, nearly opening herself up to another spell from the woman's other hand. While the Incan battle club side seemed to have had a cutting type enchantment on the wicked points there, the whole thing also had some kind of impact-assisting enchantment on it.

How in the world don't those spells interfere with the spells Nefertiti's been launching from that thing? Yasaka wondered, before kicking out, catching Nefertiti in the thigh.

"Argh, you slut!" Nefertiti growled even as she used the impact of the kick to back away, flinging up one of her husband's Huaca between the two women.

"Excuse, me, bi—oh what the hell!" Yasaka shrieked as suddenly she had to deal with a dozen snakes, rattlers and boa constrictors from the Huaca. *I really don't think these two are using the proper term, there, but whatever!* She thought, splattering a rattler, transforming as she did to her full kitsune form. This covered her body with fur and added a good foot to her height,

giving her claws and a snout which she used a second later to bite one of the snakes as it tried to wrap itself around her face.

Yasaka tore that snake in half hissing as the others tried to sink their fangs into her dancing and lashing out while also needing to duck under spells for Nefertiti. Not many of those, she realized an instant after clawing a second rattler off her arm. Looking up she cursed, as Nefertiti had retreated, casting AKs at her, something that still struck Yasaka as rather horrifically strange given what she had known of that spell, along with something else, the fingers of her off hand moving in a series of twitches and flicks that Yasaka hadn't seen before. *Oh, I don't like that all!*

In defense, Yasaka shifted to the side, kicking absently at another boa constrictor as she did. "No you don't!" she growled, lashing out with foxfire and masses of cutting-force winds, creating a horrendous firestorm that filled up the entire, rather wide, hallway they were in, slagging stone and bars of the jail cells as it passed.

However, Nefertiti simply used Hecate's Step again, bouncing away and around a corner. A corner Yasaka promptly destroyed, but behind which Nefertiti had finished her spell. "Nyja's Chwytający widmo (Nyja's Grasping Spectre)!"

Instead of a direct attack spell or some kind of spell this proved to be some kind of summoning spell, but not, thankfully for an enchained god or goddess. Or at least, if it was such, it wasn't a real god or goddess, but rather the spirit of one. There was a difference although, at the moment, Yasaka wasn't certain she wouldn't have preferred to punch out someone like Sobek or Wadjet than the apparition that pulled itself out of the ground of the now quite expanded hallway.

The thing looked almost like a giant skeleton she came. It had a body that looked almost like that of a lamia, its bottom half being that of a snake, with hundreds of vertebrae and small ribs which switched into the upper body of a man, albeit one with three heads. Each of its myriad bones was seemingly chained to one another, while around its chest, it wore a large medallion, almost half the size of the specter's chest, and the only thing on it that wasn't dark grey or bone white.

The creature had the normal amount of hands and arms, but the strangest thing was its three heads. They looked alike, skeletal, but with portions of their skulls painted black. From each of their eyeballs came a cold, blue light, while from its back a giant curve of white light came, looking almost like a crescent moon. One head let out a loud screeching noise, while a second spoke in something that sounded almost Slavic to Yasaka, who had met a few Russian monsters and were-creatures who fled Russia for Japan in the past. The last head simply glared at Yasaka who had already begun to retreat, the arms coming up to reach for her.

Knowing instinctively that letting this thing touch her would be deadly, Yasaka, ducking under a cutting spell from Nefertiti, jumped away, rolling on the ground and then used an apparition spell for the first time the fight, appearing several hundred yards down the corridor in an area that hadn't yet been thoroughly trashed or otherwise widened by the battle between the two women so far.

The creature continued to reach for her however, somehow following her even as she teleported away, remaining within reaching distance causing Yasaka to yelp and twitch out of it's way. *"What the hell!?" Thank Amaterasu it isn't very fucking fast.*

Actually, the spirit of the ancient Polish deity of death was moving quite fast. It was just that Yasaka had been using the spell to enhance her movement speed and reaction time to keep up with the two Egyptians and was still doing so. This gave her already superhuman speed enough of a leg up to keep away from the creature for now.

Yet even a faint nail moving through a portion of the fur on her forearm had Yasaka reeling, so badly she was hit by a simple Bombarda which caught her in the side. The explosive spell set her through the bars of one of the jail cells nearby, and Yasaka rolled with it, blasting out the other side of the jail cell and out into the hallway a bit over. *Fucking hell, that nearly had me screaming, what, is it's fucking touch like an attack on my spirit!?*

"Do you like the touch of a Death God? Oh, and keep running, please, it's hilarious! Niyi's ghost will not disappear until it has feasted upon the life energies of its target," Nefertiti shouted, even as she followed Yasaka, blasting through another jail to come face to face with the kitsune again.

This time, she wasn't hurling out any specific spells towards Yasaka, as the apparition was right behind Yasaka, and even as she tried to put more distance between herself and the thing behind her, it seemed to Yasaka as if the woman didn't want to attract the phantom's attention. Instead, Nefertiti was targeting the ground walls and so forth.

Stone fists came out, hammered into dust by Yasaka's tail even as she kept dodging the spirit's touch. The ground underneath her began to turn into ice or reach up to grab her legs, only for Yasaka to tear her legs out with ease, cancelling the spell a second later. This almost opened her up to the spirit, but Yasaka use her tails almost like a pogo stick for a moment, bouncing away down the hallway as she considered what to do about the separation, feeling the specter following her.

Looking at Nefertiti, it was clear this spell had taken a good deal out of her, but it was also very clear that it would take a good deal out of Yasaka if that creature got her it's grips on her. *I wonder why she's no longer using the killing curse? But honestly, it doesn't matter right now.* Wait, life energy...

“Well, if that’s what it once...” Yasaka mused, pulling up her yojutsu powers again. She then whirled around, and concentrating, sent out a stream of that life energy into the creature’s chest.

The apparition seemed to almost smile for a few seconds, then the chains binding the bones of the apparition altogether began to come apart, melting under the impact of so much life force being diverted into the creature. For just an instant, it almost seemed as if the bones began to be covered in flesh instead, but Nefertiti shouted some long string of some kind of Slavik language, looking appalled for a moment, and the creature began to disappear, banished back to wherever it had come from.

Then it was Yasaka’s turn to charge, trying to take advantage of her opponent’s momentary distraction. Whatever that had been about, she didn’t particularly care as nothing permanent had occurred. However, Nefertiti recovered quickly enough and lashed down towards the ground again. The same kind of acid transfiguration spell that Akhenaten had used against Harry, and then Harry had used against him and Nefertiti appeared again.

But Yasaka hovered in the air over it for a moment, lashing out with all of her tails in a day lunge of attack spells not bothering with defense for a brief second.

That brief second cost her as several element-based attacks crashed into her, but Nefertiti hadn’t switched back to her normal AK-heavy assault, and Yasaka was able to deal with just the element and cutting attack-type magic coming her way. The continuous impacts nearly threw her down into the acid, but she was able to get near the side of the transfigured zone of it before it could, rolling and then kicking off the wall there for a moment, flinging herself upwards into the air.

For her part, Nefertiti’s defense faltered under the impact of so many spells, her magical shield and physical shields both exploding under the series of impacts. She didn’t have the same kind of purple shield spell that her husband had, thankfully, and this forced her to use her mace for a moment to slash through the incoming spells,

The thing did disrupt the spells it hit, but even so, two of them slammed into Nefertiti and the last vestiges of magical defense on her combat vest faded, then that combat vest was shredded even as one of her own attack spells got through Yasaka’s clothing, targeting her clothing in specific. This was a variant of the spell that Mittelt had discovered in House Black’s library, a spell that caused the enemy’s own clothing to attack him or her. Unlike that one, this one transformed Yasaka’s clothing entirely into glass, which shattered, cutting into her furry body in hundreds of places.

“GWWOOOO!” Yasaka howled in pain, nearly faltering for a moment, using her tails almost entirely on the defensive for a few seconds as the pain of that technique went through her,

although she could feel her healing buff from earlier already acting to regenerate the damage. *Damn, I'm using so much of my magic I'm going to need to start pulling from the Dragon's Nest soon or else I'll be in danger of losing my tails!*

For a kitsune, the number of tails she or he had was a direct correlation to the amount of magical power and knowledge they had, built in mastering a specific element as the Onmyodo school saw things. The tails became, in essence, mobile, useable magical tanks. Yasaka could, bound to the Dragon's Nest as she was, use the power of those ley lines here thanks to a series of rituals and runic enchantments that Harry had put on her to let Yasaka travel away from Kyoto. But she had avoided reaching for that energy since the magosphere of Earth started to go truly wonky, knowing that trying to use it would be like trying to sword fight while sitting on top of a bucking bronco.

As Yasaka was slowly getting to her feet, blood dripping from hundreds of tiny cuts that had already begun to close, Nefertiti similarly had to take a moment to push herself up a wall, gasping in air as she stared down at herself, before with a growl, she reached to her upper arm and tore off the remainder of her shredded vest as it had been impeding her arm movement.

Nefertiti now stood bare from the waist up but a strange crystal-studded upper arm bracelet, showing that whatever else might have been transported onto her body earlier by Akhenaten had not included a bra. Not that she actually needed one. Thanks to her general fitness level and the fact that she had drained Kuroka of her Nekoshuu powers and abilities, Nefertiti's breasts were literally inhumanly perky despite how big they were because of that same ritual.

This was the first thing that Yasaka noticed as got to her feet wearily, really feeling this fight by this point. "Good grief, woman, put those away, you might smash someone's head in with those fun bags."

Nefertiti smirked, preening momentarily, showing that for all of her experience and love of combat, she was still deep down an incredibly vain woman. "Don't hate me because I'm gorgeous."

"Please!" Yasaka said, shaking her head, gesturing down at herself. While she was in full kitsune form, thus covering her body with fur and making her far more foxy than normal, that hadn't been the case for long. "You have nothing I can't beat!"

"Except for perkiness and height," Nefertiti shot back, sneering.

"Everyone keeps going on about height, and I keep repeating the same answer. Shorter girls have more fun," Yasaka smirked, before both of them launched attack spells at one another.

Both of them charged one another behind those spells. Glowing with her Senjutsu aura Nefertiti lashed out with her mace. That mace's Mayan war club's edge gleamed with green energy, and

Yasaka parried it away with a shield, even as she lashed out with her claws towards Nefertiti's face. Nefertiti ducked under that blow, returning fire with a spell that nearly caught Yasaka in the center of the chest. But she dodged, lashing out and down towards Yasaka's legs. *If I can keep her from moving so fast, I can dominate her in close combat.*

However, while Nefertiti had lost both her initial small buckler and now her combat vest, she still retained her headdress, and, as Yasaka had noticed, the leggings that seemed to have at least a spell of some kind of haste spell on them, the headdress was also problematic as it allowed Nefertiti to correctly gauge where Yasaka was aiming.

That was how she blocked that spell and then got in several good licks, one of which nearly took Yasaka's arm off at the shoulder and opened up a gash across her fur covered breasts that caused her to fall back howling in pain. Yasaka ducked under the following blow from the other side of the mace as it came roaring back, but was blasted away by a spell of magic that came from Nefertiti's other hand, a kind of swirling sand based attack that, it's spell an Egyptian one. "Set's tahn almawt (Set's Grinding Doom)!"

Yasaka's cry of pain from this was far **far** louder than her yell of pain from earlier as the spell seemingly tried to grind into her side leg and arm, despite having put several of her tails in between. One of those tails was itself ground to so much offal, but the last second shift sideways had saved her from an instant death.

Even as blood exploded all around her, Yasaka quickly operated away again, putting a half collapsed wall between her and her opponent for a brief second, allowing her regeneration spell to go to work. This it did slowly, and Yasaka hissed, falling back on an illusion for a moment, showing her apparating further away. As the image of herself appeared a few hundred feet down the hall, Yasaka's eyes widened. *Wait, that worked!*

Hastily, she canceled the illusion, as if the magic of Cocytus had caused it to fairy again. *That could be a trump card if--*

Before Yasaka's thoughts could continue, Nefertiti followed her with the use of Hecate's Step, her headpiece having allowed her to follow where Yasaka had gone once more. But the instant she came out of that spell on top of the rubble and her mace flashed down, Nefertiti stumbled, the strike going wide.

Yasaka rolled away, watching as Nefertiti stumbled down to her knees where Yasaka had been lying a moment ago, not able to do anything for just a moment due to the pain she was in. Indeed, one of her tails was already fading, the magic within going to work on healing her body. It was going to take her years to build up her magical powers and abilities again to the point where she would be a nine tailed fox once more, she'd used so much of her own magic in this battle already.

The gleaming orange and dark brown Aura around Nefertiti that had been a sign of her stolen Senjutsu powers faded and one of her tails, much like Yasaka's, faded out, leaving her with only one tail rather than to. Her other cat woman features remained, about the sage skill had seemingly faded out entirely. "What, what the..."

"Ha, hahaha, using Senjutsu powers, it takes a lot of training, a lot of time to get any good. You took a shortcut to being able to use it at all, and you been using so much of it here," Yasaka snickered, wincing at the pain that caused her. "There isn't enough life here to renew your Senjutsu, you stupid bitch. We're probably the only living people for hundreds of miles. You done fucking goofed!" She snarled, pushing herself into a somewhat ragged charge.

Grunting with effort, Nefertiti recovered, but not before nearly losing an arm from the elbow down to one of Yasaka's attack spells. She nearly also lost her hold on her mace, but still sent attack spells back Yasaka's way, ducking under a kick aimed at her face.

Once more, the two women were soon locked in a deadlock, until a spell from Yasaka targeting one of Nefertiti's legs got through. The defensive matrix on her leggings went to work, but the attack spell overloaded it, and when that defensive matrix went, so too did the haste spell on that particular leg. This was followed by a hit to the helmet as Yasaka leaped up her legs outstretched in a mule kick. Raw magic exploded from the point of contact, and the defensive matrix on the helmet which had already taken a lot of hits earlier in the battle, shattered. The physical portion of the headdress also broke in places.

This caused Nefertiti to nearly stumble, but she hit back hard. "Storm av stål (Storm of Steel)!" She shrieked, and from above and all sides came thousands of needles of metal and iron. Even as she teleported straight upwards, something she hadn't done before, the spell crashed down on Yasaka below as Nefertiti clung to the ceiling.

Yasaka yelped, and quickly covered herself with her tails, but was perforated from every side. More of her tails disappeared, and then as Nefertiti gestured a massive bolt of metal from the floor nearly caught her in the neck.

The next second, Nefertiti was beside her, having used Hecate's step again, lashing out and catching Yasaka in the stomach with her mace. The cutting spell on it was still active, and it carved through Yasaka's form, sending her stumbling backwards, then going to her knees. Gasping out blood, Yasaka's hands grabbed at her stomach, trying to hold in her intestines.

"Hah, hah, I might not be able to get out of here, but at least you won't live to see me—" Nefertiti began, raising her mace again, before a tail from behind stabbed deeply through her stomach and out the other side in a welter of gore like a massive spear.

“Wh, what?! H, how...” Nefertiti began, gasping, drooling blood down as she stared at the diamond hard furry appendage that had just stabbed through her guts. She tried to raise her hands, tried to reach for the crystal and gold bangle on her upper arm, but that arm was grabbed, completely wrapped by another tail, which wrenched her arm backward, as a voice spoke up from behind the ancient Pharaoh who had hoped to become a goddess.

“Given how quickly you could use that teleportation spell of yours, I needed you to buy in to your victory entirely, and, well... You got a little too confident there,” Yasaka said appearing out from behind an illusion spell of the regular corridor behind Nefertiti.

Nefertiti gagged more blood, then realized what had happened as she turned to look at her killer. “M, my headdress! When you used illusion magic, you canceled it, it wasn’t the prison here that...”

“Exactly. It was a gamble on my part that it would work at all even if I took out your headdress, but it worked,” Yasaka admitted, shaking her head as she shifted to stand in front of Nefertiti, her other tails gripping Nefertiti’s mace hand hard enough to break bone, causing the weapon to fall to her feet. “I’d say something about asking you to surrender or something, but frankly, I don’t give a damn about taking you prisoner.”

Nefertiti growled, pushing through the pain in a way that Yasaka had to mentally nod her head in respect. Whatever life Nefertiti had been leading for the past few thousand years, it certainly hadn’t been an entirely soft one. Then, her belt glowed for a second, as her eyes and mouth began to do the same, and Yasaka grimaced, feeling as if the wounds she had just stabbed through the woman were trying to heal themselves despite her tail being in the way. Another one of her tails stabbed forwards, shattering the belt, and burying itself deep into Nefertiti’s guts.

At that, the light from her eyes and mouth faded, and more. Slowly, her ears and tail faded out as well, as Nefertiti’s body returned to its normal, pre-Nekoshu form. She was still attractive, Yasaka acknowledged, even if she had lost a few sizes in the chest department and in hips, and Nefertiti’s hair didn’t look quite as lustrous, her skin not quite as soft, as the woman lost what had been so unnaturally taken.

The woman was no longer looking at Yasaka. Indeed, Nefertiti was no longer looking at anything. Instead, she was staring at the far wall, a sad, almost whimsical smile on her face. “M, my love, I, I’m sorry I’ll not be there w, with you to ascend. G, go, b, become what we were...”

With that, the woman’s head slumped to the side, the last vestiges of life leaving her as Yasaka continued to watch, shaking her head. The no-longer Kyuubi no kitsune really wanted to gloat a little bit about the victory, but that last line from the woman had robbed her of any real joy. /

suppose even evil people can come to love someone she thought, before yelping as nefertiti's began to turn to decompose.

Soon, nothing remained, nothing but the woman's mace, and even that slowly started to come apart, as if it had been tied to her life force in some fashion. Yasaka's stood there for a moment, before she took a few steps away, shaking her head. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and unlike a Phoenix, you're not going to return from that I don't think..."

Yasaka kept her eyes on the pile of dust for a few seconds despite her words to that effect, but when it became clear that she was correct in that the woman wouldn't be coming back from that, Yasaka slumped, her fur disappearing as she reverted from her kitsune form to her half form, completely uncaring of the fact that this left her naked, as she fell back on her rear, then slumped onto one of her tails, her all too fluffy, comfortable tails.

"I'm, I'm going to just rest here for a bit. Tails, so much effort, just need a few minutes," She muttered, her eyes still latched onto the ashes of her opponent until they finally closed in exhaustion.

OOOOOOO

Back in the control room, several of the devils stared. Nearly all of them, even several who should've been monitoring some of the other fights had turned the screens on their consoles to what amounted to a almost literal catfight between the two women. They were devils, and power was equally attractive to men among their race as it was to women, and the duel had been amazing to watch. The scope of the magic used, the speed of the formed magical spells, something that few devils really bothered with in battle, it had all been amazing to see.

To a few of them however, the battle itself didn't matter so much as the fact that it ended, and the warden in particular breathed a sigh of relief as two more people stopped throwing around so much Maou-damned magic in his prison! The very magical under pinning at the dimension was still going haywire from how much magic was still being tossed about, and watching areas of the prison disappear, even areas where they had recently moved prisoners to, was troubling in the extreme.

He'd even lost a few of his own people, not to direct enemy action, but because the very framework of the dimension came apart around them.

Of course, simply disappearing like that was extremely mild in comparison to what could occur in an area saturated with so much magic. The command center for example was dealing with a smell of rancid strawberries, and several of the consoles having been replaced with Lego bricks, fog, and further strange and unusual constructions. One of which had attempted to eat its

controller with a mouth that seemed to be created by multiple smaller mouths taking the place of teeth.

That was the problem with raw chaos, i.e. magic. It could be literally everything, and if it could be everything all at once, it wouldn't be anything for very long.

Still, with that and the battle between the Hero Faction and Yubelluna's attack group, the fighting outside having been finished, that leaves...

The warden's thoughts broke off as the door into the control center opened. Ajuka and Sairaorg entered, with Sairaorg dragging his former opponent, a beaten and bloodied mass, but still alive. Ajuka's opponent was nowhere to be seen, but the warden didn't particularly care about that, only that two more battles had finished.

Ajuka strode over towards the central pillar that contained the map of the prison complex, his Kankara Formula flaring all around him for a second in a series of magic circles, wild numbers, and strange symbols only someone who had studied high end mathematics would recognize, before funneling into the creation. This is not something that any other magic user could have done, but Ajuka's specific mathematical base magic allowed him to see the underlying structure of the dimension.

A frown creased his features and Ajuka winced. That power needed to be grounded somehow, but even Ajuka had no idea how to do that just yet. *Shifting it around, though, I can do that... spread the load... let the matrix absorb what it can...*

Slowly at first, then faster, this began to work as he patched up some places in the dimensional matrix, learning more in the doing than he had ever thought he would. *Ironic that the damage done to the array has given me a way to analyze the dimensional bubble more than I ever was before.*

Eventually, he knew he had done enough to make certain the dimension didn't decompose around them. With only two fights still throwing out large amounts of magic, the rest of the dimension could settle down a little bit, could absorb the magic from the rest of the area. The effort was taxing, but Ajuka knew he was making headway thanks to Kankara Formula.

As this was going on, Sairaorg turned to the warden, smirking a little as he held up his prisoner. "I didn't know if anyone else has actually been taken prisoner just yet, so I figured I should at least try to bring this one alive."

"Actually, we already have one prisoner," the warden said, pointing to a corner of the room, where Roygun lay, completely bound by anti-magic cuffs from head to toe. "Considering that she still has one of the King Pieces within her, taking Roygun prisoner was the best idea. It'll have to be extracted at some point."

Sairaorg nodded with all the air of someone who looked upon that kind of thing as if it was the most egregious method of cheating that had ever existed, a wholly undevil-like attitude, but one that was well in keeping with the young man's attitude in general. "So, do we go to help Sirzechs and Harry or..."

He looked towards one of the monitors, then flushed a little at what was being shown there. Which was, at present, Yasaka, wrapped up in one of her tails and sleeping on the floor completely bare-ass naked. "And, um, , given what Rias-chan's told me about her husband, you lot might want to not look at Yasaka-sama like that, yeah?"

Many of the monitors viewing Yasaka turned off quickly, something Ajuka noticed even as he continued his own work. "Okay... I wouldn't recommend any of your people leave this room or come in from outside the real prison complex, but I can keep the dimension in one piece for now. Which is a good thing because we were about twelve minutes or so away from completely fraying into chaotic goop." he announced. *Damn, I can barely follow the dimensional formula here. Ironical that this pocket dimension would suffer from the same problem that Earth's facing now, except here, there's no 'natural' physical substance to act like a grounding agent, making it far worse, far more quickly.* "

"You mean the dimension was, right?" The warden questioned, looking at Ajuka with slowly dawning horror.

"I know what I said." *Honestly, I have no idea what'd happen to us that weren't caught up in the primordial goop, but I have to think we would have to be very lucky to find ourselves in the Dimensional Gap. That math does not add up.*

Seeing the warden's look of horror, Ajuka relented. "We were very lucky and very unlucky at the same time. We'd hoped to capture one group of these enemies, we captured them both, about the strain on Cocytus is underlying magical network was severe. If we could have moved even one of the main fights outside of the dimension we would've been safer, but as it is until the strain of the magic being thrown around is completely dispelled, we're still going to have issues."

He shook his head. "For now, staying out of the remaining fights is the best for both of us. Although I doubt either Sirzechs or Harry would like us to but in on their fights, anyway."

OOOOOOO

Actually, while Ajuka was probably right about Sirzechs, if anyone had asked him, Harry would have been more than happy for some help right then.

“YARRGGGHHHHH!!” He roared, pulling his arm out of a vice that had clamped onto his arm from the wall, a silent transfiguration spell having slipped past his senses for a moment when he had thought he’d finally broken Akhenaten’s defense.

His eyes widening, Harry rolled along the floor, then jumped up to the ceiling, pushing off it and hovering in the air for a brief moment, avoiding several curses, Egyptian, Wizarding World, and Mayan that Akhenaten had just launched his way. Having hit on the fact that soul-targeting spells were the way to go, Akhenaten had begun to either show more of such he’d learned over the ages, or making up some on the spot. Harry didn’t know which would have been more horrific, nor did it matter, as at the moment, Harry was being hard-pressed.

He wasn’t the only one though, and as he used Mannannan’s fog to obscure where he was, Harry also launched several arcing spells towards Akhenaten. The Egyptian blocked most of them, but Harry was able to teleport to one side, coming out of the fog even as the magic on Samael’s prison finished tearing it apart, his next spell penetrating the hasty Protego that Akhenaten tried to block his spell with. The spell, something like a drill, shredded the shield and slammed into Akhenaten’s side, sending him hurtling away.

He didn’t stay down for long, but as the ancient Pharaoh pushed himself to his feet, his eyes were wild under his headdress, his teeth gritted in a rictus snarl. “Why won’t you die, Potter!”

Again, as he had since the beginning of this fight, Harry disdained ‘witty’ repartee, simply attacking, throwing out large-scale spellwork, Wizarding World magic, and more. He even lashed out with another deific-based spell, which caused Akhenaten to roar in fury even redirected spell with his own hasty runic energy trap just long enough to use Hecate’s Step to jump out of range of the spell, returning fire desperately, charging forward.

Akhenaten had built his entire combat style over the ages in on the supposition that he would be fighting alongside his wife. He didn’t actually like direct confrontation, outside of one-on-one sword duels, which had been something of a fad of his both in their lives as pharaohs, and then became something he picked up whenever such swordfights became in vogue again among the rich, for whatever reason.

He had never intended to fight someone like Potter one-on-one unless he had an overwhelming advantage, and that was something he’d never had in this fight. Akhenaten might have discovered how to truly hurt Harry, but he hadn’t been able to put him down, and slowly, Harry’s endurance was winning out.

After taking in the power from the Nile on top of his becoming High King of Danan, Harry’s reserves of magical power set him at a level beyond even someone like Sirzechs, or even many of the remaining gods of India. That allowed him to keep fighting even as his opponent attempted to attack his soul and body at the same time with spells that ignored or simply broke

through many of Harry's defenses. Harry had also learned that closing with Akhenaten had been foolish in the extreme. The man's swordsmanship was superlative, beyond anything Harry had ever seen before, and he had proven better than Harry at multi-tasking, as if his swordsmanship was simply raw training and instinct.

Another spell got through Harry's defense. Instead of being aimed at his center of mass, as Harry had anticipated, the spell diverted at the last instant, smashing through the wall Harry had raised slamming into his leg even as Harry had been shifting to the side. The spell hit like Akhenaten had created some kind of wind-based attack spell mixed with a Crucio. Despite his magical resistance, Harry's leg was shorn off at the hip and Harry bit his lip to not scream as the spell attacked his soul.

It was insanely painful, but Harry bore through it, his teeth being almost ground down to the point where they needed to regenerate, but he still launched his own spell-chain at Akhenaten. The series of spells crashed into Akhenaten's defenses, being absorbed, redirected or simply blocked. The same purple magic shield absorbed only two of Harry's spells before exploding in every direction, but Harry rode that explosion, putting some more distance between them at an angle that Akhenaten hadn't expected.

This allowed Harry's next transfiguration spell to get through to the ground beneath Akhenaten's feet, the man having been distracted as Harry had been. The bear trap he'd conjured out of the ground didn't do anything, it's teeth unable to get through Akhenaten's leg armor, but it kept him in place long enough for a high-powered water spell that, although it hadn't the touch of the Nile, was still more than powerful enough to punch through the physical shield Akhenaten tried to raise.

A segment of the runes on his armor faded as he was hurled backward, his leg breaking a second before the bear trap shattered. Akhenaten rolled, and a portion of his armor, thin lines on his thigh and upper arm, glowed, magic going to work repairing the damage. But another drilling spell crashed into him, nearly shattering the ancient Pharaoh's headdress. He protected it just enough, though, and returned fire, a series of lightning axes, sand-fists, and dark curses flashing out in a prepared spellchain.

Harry, his leg only just having finished regenerating, couldn't dodge fast enough. His magical resistance allowed him to tank most of those hits, but the lightning still sent his nerves to jangle, causing his own spells to falter long enough for Akhenaten to once more attack him with an overpowered spell that looked like a huge demonic flower of some kind, it's tentacles reaching for Harry, it's petals marked with hundreds of venom-dripping fangs.

The thing grabbed at Harry, trying to tie him up, to eat him, and he barely dealt with that before a series of Avada Kedavra's came his way, along with cutting spells and more lightning attacks.

His legs and arms still tingling and feeling as if someone had stuck him full of numbing agent and itching powder at the same time, Harry desperately used a Blessing once more, simply wishing he was **AWAY** from where he stood even as he created the same fog he'd used several times before,.

The Blessing took him over toward Samael's prison, again, and he stumbled there, his body already recovering, lashing out toward Akhenaten.

Twisting around in shock Akhenaten grunted in pain as he found himself launched away, rolling as he hit he nearly lost his grip on his khopesh, and the next blow almost took his head off, a cutting curse fit to cut a mountain in half slamming into his neck. His armor held, but more of its magical defenses collapsed, and it was his time to bounce away, leaving a cloud of something behind before it could touch him.

Opting to try and play on Harry's undoubtedly very built up paranoia, Akhenaten lashed out with hundreds of color changing charms along with his other spells, trying to get Harry to use up his magic more. Harry canceled or dodged them all, returning fire, showing no hesitation, nearly pinning Akhenaten in place. In so doing, though, Harry once more missed a spell that wasn't aimed his way. Rather, it was aimed at the ceiling above. That spell created a mass of falling bugs, creepy-crawlies and more, all of whom gleamed red.

Harry flinched, and spent a moment trying to cancel the conjuration, but Harry couldn't to it fast enough while also dodging low-effort attacks from Akhenaten. By the time Harry was clear of the bugs, Akhenaten had been able to finish the real spell he'd been working on with his other hand. A wild madness was in his eyes as he pointed his khopesh at Harry, roaring out "Am-heh's alghadab (Am-heh's Wrath)!"

From the tip of his khopesh his came something that, if pressed, Harry would describe almost like a sand-based fiend fire, but wasn't. Sand erupted in a torrent, unending, flowing up and around, with various types of mouths, hands, glaring eyes, and all manner of weapons forming and disappearing around a central maw that looked like that of a dog of some kind. With it came a sound like a thousand souls screaming, shattering the magic Harry had been keeping on his ears up to this point, while the whole spell gleamed green, as if the god whose name it invoked had somehow been called upon from wherever dead gods went when they died to try and pull Harry down.

Once more, Harry pulling on his connection to the Nile, to the faith of those who believed in the Nile, and pushed it out. It wasn't quite a Blessing, and it wasn't quite a spell, but it formed up in front of him, a glowing wall of golden light shimmering like the water of the Nile as the sun rose. The strange sand assault crashed into the shield, and both magic began to fight there in the

middle of the massive room, sending searing blasts of watery light and sand touched with what looked like necrotic energy every which way.

Snarling in a mixture of anger and disbelief, Akhenaten watched his spell crash into this magic, crashed into it, and dissipated. The two forces completely cancelled one another out, the attack doing nothing, draining more magic from Akhenaten as the contest continued. Desperately, he kept up the spell for a few seconds, then with a roar realized that it wasn't working.

Nothing is working dammit! Fighting Potter's like fighting a God, or at least someone on that level of power! I, I am being overwhelmed! That spell had been something of a last gasp effort, not quite, but close enough. Harry's reserves seemed bottomless, and having to divert so much of his effort to his own defense had badly hampered Akhenaten, along with the overall impact to his style. More spells had gotten through since that separation than before, and nearly all his prepared magic was gone. It was only a matter of time before Harry overwhelmed him.

All his plans lay in ruins, and now he was faced with a man who had almost achieved everything that Akhenaten and his wife had worked towards for literal ages of the world. Oh, Harry hadn't achieved the full might of a go, nor had he supplanted all others as Nefertiti and Akhenaten would have after dealing with Ophis, but he had become a deity, while their process to do the same had failed thanks to Harry's interference. And now that same man, that same thorn was like a wall blocking Akhenaten from both victory and his final goal.

Desperation filling him, Akhenaten began to cut off that spell, weaving another one entirely as the deal memory of Am-heh kept the spell going for him on it's own for a time. But it wouldn't last long, but it would last long enough. *I cannot overcome Harry Potter*, he thought, the thought both desperate and dark with fury and jealousy. *I must overcome him in another way. And while his soul and body might be able to take the punishment, can his mind?*

Akhenaten had attempted to probe Harry's potters mind at one point during the earlier battle, but that had been a probe of one wizard to another, the use of Legilimency against Harry's Occlumency. No, this called for something else entirely. *And there is no mind on earth that defend itself from the great judge!*

Between one second and the next, Akhenaten began his next spell.

As Am-heh's spirit finally began to fade away, Harry blitzed forward the instant the riotous cascading energy faded away from these twin spells, another spell already on his lips, but he was too slow. Even as a powerful Bombarda Maxima and cutting spells hit his body enough to cause still more of his defenses to fail, Akhenaten shouted in ancient Egyptian, "The Judge of Kings, Osiris's Scales!" as he pointed towards Harry.

A beam of multicolored light lanced out from Akhenaten to Harry. Even as Harry tried to dodge, the energy moved with him. A Protego did nothing, a conjured wall of steel was similarly bypassed, the energy simply flowing through them. Harry tried to Apparate away, opening, ironically, a last desperate lunge for Samael's jail. But Akhenaten hadn't moved, and the energy simply whipped through the air on a new heading, coming at Harry again. A second later, the energy, whatever it was slammed into him, and the world disappeared.

If Harry had attempted to use living matter, matter with a soul perhaps, it might've worked to block Akhenaten's spell. It wasn't really a spell meant for outright warfare, but rather a final recourse between two kings or generals.

But he didn't, never having used that kind of defense outside a few times he'd summoned doves to absorb the killing curse. Now, he stiffened at the same time Akhenaten did. Both of their eyes remained wide open, but they were no longer seeing the world around them as their entire bodies were suddenly blazing with a corona of light and their consciousness was pulled elsewhere.

The next second Harry knew, he stood on nothing. He was back in his normal human body, somehow, and when he tried, he couldn't change back to his phoenix werewolf form. Setting that aside, Harry gazed all around him.

There was white in every direction including underneath, the ground was similarly nothing, for all his feet were pressing down on it. He stared all around him seeing nothing but whiteness all around them. The only thing visible was Akhenaten, standing across from him by a good few yards, wielding his blade in one hand.

At that sight, Harry pulled the sword of Manannán Mac Lir to him, scowling. When he did, He and Akhenaten alike froze as if the gravity around them had increased a thousand fold. A huge, looming statue rose from one side, or perhaps formed out of the whiteness? Harry wasn't sure.

He felt a tug on his being as the thing appeared and judging by the grimace on Akhenaten's face, he felt it too. The statue began to shift from white to other colors, green, blue, yellow, gold. Eventually, as the colors stopped running, the statue was revealed to be that of Osiris, holding out a set of scales on which two headdresses, a Pharaoh's crown lay. The Crowns were empty, only outlines, but Harry instinctively knew that they represented Harry and his opponent.

"Okay, what the hell is this!?" Harry growled, speaking for the first time in this fight to Akhenaten directly.

"This is a battle of the minds, Harry Potter. Here we stand on the mental plane, our minds connected. We will be judge here, not through past deeds, but through the same judge of kings

that has been the arbiter of winner and slain since the start of time. Battle. We fight here, our minds given these single forms, without magic, without aid.”

Akhenaten strode towards Harry, his head held high. None of the injuries Harry had done him or even his armor were visible now, and he looked as if he had strode from the pages of an ancient Egyptian story, an ancient Pharaoh, head held high for one last roll of the dice. “Can you beat me like this? Sword to sword? Mind to mind?”

Harry’s eyes narrowed, and he realized that Akhenaten wasn’t using the term mind like the common usage would make it. Rather, he had said something else, the ancient Egyptian words *sḥ-shm* blended together. *spiritual form and power*? Another word for willpower. At that, he began to calm down a little, smirking just a little even as he raised his longsword into a guard position. *Okay. As one last chance, this takes some beating. But if I have to beat Akhenaten like this, so be it. “We’ll have to see, won’t we?”*

Akhenaten smirked, something like respect glimmering his eyes for a moment before that expression shifted back to one simple hatred as he charged forwards. Egyptian khopesh met longsword once more, and the duel began.

For several moments, they were locked in battle, with Harry’s greater speed and agility, something he’d always had even as a child, allowing him to move and shift around Akhenaten. but Akhenaten’s own movements were fluid and certain, his far vaster experience allowing him to both keep up and press Harry hard. The khopesh, too, was still giving Harry some trouble, the curve of the blade halfway up its length and the hook difficult to keep track of, even if Harry’s blade caught the curve correctly, which was not often. Only his longsword’s reach kept him from disaster a few times, and even then, Akhenaten’s skill was superlative.

And this was why the first cut went to Akhenaten. Even as Harry parried his blade, a quick flip and drawing back of the khopesh set the hook into Harry’s upper arm, cutting. It wasn’t deep and should not have hurt much at all, not to Harry. But it did.

It was as if alcohol or sulfur had been poured directly into the wound. Harry howled, falling back, barely able to get his blade up in time to block the next strike. Harry stumbled, and Akhenaten drove in, cutting again and again. Each new cut hurt just as bad as the first, and Harry, who had pushed through the pain of having his very soul tortured during their battle before this found himself barely able to concentrate through it, He lashed out with a kick, and Akhenaten blocked but was sent skittering back, letting Harry regain control.

Looking down at his wounds, he saw he’d been struck in the pec, the shoulder again, and the forearm of his other hand. And none of them were healing. Instead, they were all bleeding copiously, blood traveling down Harry’s arm in drips only to disappear before they hit whatever it was underneath the combatants.

“You aren’t going to heal here, Harry Potter! Your regeneration means nothing, not in the plane of the sḥ, not in a battle of sḥm. Here we are judged, and should we fall, only our khet (physical body) will remain. Nothing more, always empty,” Akhenaten said, twisting around and coming in again.

Harry blocked, and as he did, he glanced to the side, where he had heard a small noise a moment ago. One side of the scales had shifted. The image of a crown placed on the platform had filled in a tiny bit with what Harry knew was his blood, which here, represented something else entirely.

A second later, his moment of inattention cost him, and even as he yelled in pain, Harry watched as blood again appeared in the headdress-like container, further lowering his side of the scale.

“Yes! You understand Harry Potter. The more I bleed you here, the weaker you become,” Akhenaten crowed, pressing in hard. “Out there, I cannot match you any longer, but here? Here I am the master!”

Harry blocked three more strikes as he tried to work this out. He wasn’t healing, and that meant a lot more than just the pain of his injuries. That meant that here, if he took any truly crippling blow, he might well die. But he quickly realized, as his enemy knew, that Akhenaten had the upper hand in the straight sword fight. The man was a master with the blade, shifting it this way, that, fast, fluid, pressing in hard, forcing Harry to defend himself ever more desperately.

Luckily, the arm that had already been hit several times wasn’t his good arm, and he sacrificed it twice, grimacing at the agony of the wounds. But even as that pain threatened to unman him, he still pressed forward, hard. At one point Harry was able to get underneath Akhenaten’s guard, not blocking but instead dodging the blow, cutting at the Egyptian Pharaoh’s side, cutting through his clothing and along his ribs.

Akhenaten howled, backing away rapidly, staring down where his thigh had been cut, then glowering up at Harry as the judge’s scale shifted, Harry’s coming up, and Akhenaten’s going down a little. “You will pay for that!”

Harry did, taking three more strikes from Akhenaten before he could get in another one. As he did though, Harry could feel himself weakening. Each hit did indeed weaken his sḥm as he thought of it, his movements becoming sluggish and less controlled.

Yet Harry pushed through it. He had felt weakness before. He had felt pain before. *When you can’t come right down to it, I’ve felt pain since well before learning what magic was* he thought, pushing the pain and weakness to one side enough to get in a punch that rocked Akhenaten back, shattering his nose and indeed flattening it across the man’s face.

He got in another strike to his side, before Akhenaten recovered from the pain of that, and ate a strike to the side of his temple, driving him back. Harry could have recovered, but a sudden wild idea struck him, and he allowed himself to flail, as if he the pain and weakness that was getting to him, and Akhenaten struck. His khopesh's side dug into Harry's side right below the armpit of his injured arm.

Harry allowed that arm to flop down, trapping the blade there. Akhenaten had a second for his eyes to widen as he realized he'd walked into Harry's trap, before the blade of Manannán Mac Lir took him likewise in the side. Harry couldn't pull his arm back enough for a stab, but that was enough, and Akhenaten yowled in agony like Harry had several times before this.

Ignoring his own pain and growing weakness, Harry grinned at the man through blood-speckled teeth. "I found out the secret, I think. It's not just who hurts the other the most, who weakens the other person, it's about facing the pain of having our will torn away, little by little. It's the pain that's the real thing, it'll break our s'h long before we lose our s'hm."

"The trick," he began, pushing his sword deeper into Akhenaten, grabbing his shoulder with his other arm even as Akhenaten his blade out and began to cut downward again. "Is to push through the pain, keep fighting through the weakness. For all you've done, for all the fights you've had, the secret wars and bottles you've waged, I wonder, exactly how used to being weak, to being in pain, are you?"

Akhenaten flinched but his blade still came in again, forcing Harry to block, but instead of following up, Akhenaten was staring at Harry wildly and Harry was grinning. "Let's see which of us can work through the pain longest, shall we?" Harry murmured, raising his blade and attacking.

Back in the real-world Harry and Akhenaten stood, their bodies facing one another, connected by that multicolored ethereal glow. Their bodies showed the damages their mental selves took, blood beginning to run down both bodies in rivulets, yet still the fight continued. It took them so long that the fight between Sirzechs and Rivezem finished. It took them so long that Ajuka finished repairing the dimension, the prisoners were put in cages, and the prison once more connected to the rest of the Underworld. It took it so long that Yasaka arrived from her own fight, having had time to conjure up a change of clothing.

She watched, tense, joined by Sirzechs and Ajuka, as whatever was going on continued, not wishing to interfere, for fear of what might happen with the two souls and minds that had suddenly been joined by this strange spell. That, and neither Devil could even detect what was going on. Whatever it was, the spell was almost like a deity's Curse, hidden from them.

Even Yasaka, with her greater ability to feel out magic thanks to her Sage abilities, couldn't tell what was going on there. Right up until the magic faded, and Akhenaten's bloodied, gore-streaked body fell, like a puppet with its strings cut.

At the same time, Harry's body stumbled, but his regeneration almost instantly began to work once more. Yasaka grabbed him, staring into his eyes, wordlessly checking to make sure the one who was behind those eyes was her lover. Harry simply looked back until she smiled, then he pulled her into a tight hug as she did the same, turning to stare over Yasaka's head at the now vacant body of his enemy.

"I win, you arse." He muttered, as Sirzechs turned Akhenaten's body over, so that it was face-up.

As Harry had expected, there was no light there, no light of mind or soul left. Osiris's scales had spoken, and it had been Akhenaten who had been found wanting.

Still leaning heavily into Yasaka Harry moved forward, taking the Pharaoh's regalia from Sirzechs as he held it up to the other man. "So, what was all that about?" the Maou asked brusquely.

"I, I was slowly winning a battle of attrition here, on this plain. So Akhenaten wanted to challenge me on a different one. I don't really know what the spell did even now, but it connected our minds and willpower almost as if we were soul-linked like in one of those silly stories that are so much a fad of women in the wizard and world. And then we fought. I won... eventually," Harry said, shrugging shoulders, his gaze going vacant for a moment before he shook himself. His body had healed by the time Yasaka was certain Harry was the one looking back at her from his eyes, but the impact of that pain, that fight, was one Harry knew was going to going to stay with him for a while.

"It's over, for now. We won." He looked over at Sirzechs, who nodded back, turning away and pulling up a communicator to inform everyone else still within the prison of what had happened.

Suddenly deciding that standing was too much effort, Harry turned, looking into the cell that held Samael as he slid to his rear, taking a unprotesting Yasaka with him. As he sat there, Harry turned his attention to the creature in the cage, staring in to it for a moment.

"What are you thinking love?" Yasaka asked, leaning her head on his shoulders.

Harry didn't respond at first, but when he did, he pulled her into his lap, his arms tightening around her as he smiled at her, looking at her fully for a moment as he did. "I love you, you know. Your sense of humor, your attitude, how strong you are, your sense of duty and everything else about you. And I love the idea of making a big family with you and Rias adding to our clan in the future."

Yasaka nearly whimpered, her mind going elsewhere for a moment as her own arms tightened around Harry, his current form and his words making her randy as all hell. Yet Harry's tone was just a bit off, something in his voice, the attention that he had previously given Samael told Yasaka that now wasn't the time for that, even if she could ignore the fact that Sirzechs was nearby and they might well be interrupted any moment now by Akeno and the others. "But?"

"But, yeah. In this one battle, we've dealt with three groups of enemies all at once. But we still have our own Undertaking on Earth to deal with, bigger by far than the one the Tuatha de Danan created to go back to Danan. We still have Ophis as a threat out there, too. And now... faced with it, I am wondering if the thought of weaponizing Samael is inherently wrong, and I only objected to the people doing it."

At that, Yasaka hummed thoughtfully, twisting around until she too could look into the cage for a few moments, staring at the misshapen creature there. "I suppose that the question then becomes, how exactly do you weaponize someone like that? And at what cost?" she mused.

Harry nodded at that, taking in her words for a moment, before standing up, his arms going underneath Yasaka easily, lifting her into the air easily. "In that case, I think we have some questions to ask. This battles over, yet as satisfying as that was on a personal level, we still have the next one to plan for."

End Chapter