Crusade P2 (Current Timeline)

The duo finally stumble onto the pier of a small town in La Noscea and another girl is already waiting on them. Star dips his head down and looks away as he begins to make out her grumpy expression. She reaches out her hand and takes Rowan into her arms, making sure to dig a thumb into her wound.

“Nice to see you too —ouch!” Rowan tries to force out a giggle but winces in pain, “Did I come to the wrong doctor!?”

“Yes you did, your doctor in question happens to share parents with me and a love life with you…” the girl replies.

“Please don’t tell Gabriella about this cutie Be… they said something about going after the children, I need to get to the bottom of this before…” she strains, slumping over in pain.

Star scoffs and scoops Rowan off of her feet and up towards an apartment building at the top of the hill, the girl stomping closely behind him.

“Ummm m-ma’am, are you okay!?” the attendant panics seeing the trio enter the building, “d-do you need me to inform the Maelstrom guard on patrol!?”

“I’m treating her, I don’t know why you’re acting like this is the weirdest thing I’ve brought home Marianne…” the girl snaps, guiding her guest to her room.

“Is it something i-illegal again, Ms Aolani?”

“…I’ll tell you if it is.”

The girl mutters to herself as she anxiously sorts through the paperwork sprawled across the front desk, and the trio head up to the apartments.

Aolani and Star rest Rowan on a sofa in the corner, and Aolani swipes a swathe of blood from the wound with her hand and places it into a small bowl filled with white powder. The blood bubbles and separates slowly from the bright green liquid and both substances slowly separate into a collage of colors before sizzling into smoke. Aolani frowns, and turns to Rowan as she sits up.

“Take your shirt off.” she says.

“Why, you wanna see me naked you know you can just ask?” Rowan jokes, Aolani gives a blank expression and waves her hands at her until she complies. She examines her ribs and pokes deeply into her skin around the wound and along her chest.

“You have aetherial sickness… and the stuff in your wounds… is a very potent ether potion… but it shouldn’t be affecting your ability to process aether or heal yourself” Aolani says with a confused chuckle, “do you have a cold or something?”

Rowan nods her head in disapproval. Aolani looks around the room and looks to the stairs leading to the second floor of the room.

“Skyrr… are you… free?” Aolani asks, seemingly speaking to a ghost. Star and Rowan confusedly look at one another, until a rumble from beneath a set of stairs preceded an oily cloud swirling to her side. A skeletal voidsent formed behind her with a cold breath and placed a hand upon her shoulder. Star prepared to ready his gunblade and stood between the voidsent and Rowan, who simply shrunk into the couch holding her wound.

“He’s harmless,” Aolani echoed from behind her bar, “—he’s under contract so he can’t harm anyone I don’t.”

“I thought you said interactions with the void were too dangerous…?” Rowan coughed, with a troubled look on her face. Aolani placed a dusty tome on the top of the bar as well as a handful of white auricite crystals.

“Did I say that?… No… I think I said interactions with the void without research. I researched it, formed the contract, and then found the voidsent I knew I could trust —walking contradiction I know…”

“I pray you didn’t call on me to scare some of your guest?” The voidsent spoke in an eloquent tone, Aolani nodded in disagreement.

“I called you to ask a favor. I need you to siphon the aether from my friend so I can heal her.”

The voidsent fluttered around Aolani’s guests, phasing through Star’s body to get to Rowan.

“H-How much is he draining?” Star asks.

“Mmm… all of it?” Aolani says tilting her head.

“All of it.” Skyrr sighs.

He hovered over Rowan’s head and examined her from head to toe before reeling back. He swirled around Star once again before reeling back to Aolani’s side.

“You should have opened with the fact they were voidsent… or better yet, who they serve.”

“I don’t serve him!” Rowan snapped, “And Star is my childe, he doesn’t serve him either.”

“Too scared to mention his name? Really proves my point.” Skyrr taunts them as he swirls around the room again, stopping to examine the wound. He extends a claw, dipping it into the wound and examining the fluid. “I would absorb a thrall of Diabolos anytime, but this one, I cannot.”

“What’s the hold up?” Aolani sighs.

“The potion is too pure, I cannot devour it without bringing myself harm. It’s as close as one could get to absorbing aether directly from the sea.”

“Voidsent are constantly hungry, why does the purity have that effect?”

“Aether, in itself, is corrupted when outside of the aetherial sea. The process of consuming aether is one of assimilation, the more like the aetheric makeup, the greater the probability of assimilation.”

Rowan calms her nerves at the sound of Skyrr’s protest.

“That means we’re going with a less… insane plan now right?” Rowan says nodding to Star, who mirrors her expression. Aolani snorts, grabbing the auricite and eyeing Rowan’s skin as she pokes and prods it with the sharp end of the crystal.

“Same plan, different method.” she says, finally stabbing her with the crystal. It plunges into her chest and through her heart, but no blood flows from the wound, Star looks on with a panicked confusion. Aolani impales her with two more crystals before gently cradling Rowan’s head and pecking her on the forehead before impaling one last auricite into her skull, allowing her to finally take a breath of relief.

“Uhhh… Be?! You’ve lost me…” Star stammers, “Did you kill her!?”

“Of course, my original plan was for Skyrr to devour all but her head or her heart so she could still be revived…” she flourishes a large paintbrush and paints a golden hammer in the air, “he won’t do it, so I’ll just get creative… there’s only one spell I know that drains aether directly…”

Skyrr’s milky white eyes widen as he realizes what his contractor has done. He chuckles before slithering back to the spot from beneath the stairs once again. Aolani looks back at Rowan and pulls the auricite from her head, and her eyes slowly open. She brandishes the hammer and smiles.

“I realize I don’t need this part to bring you back, so this is for leaving my hermana so uninformed…” Aolani says, bringing the first strike down. The hammer grew as she lifted it back up, causing Rowan’s skin began to fade, she brought the hammer down again. Rowan tried to speak, only sputtering out a raspy murmur.

“D-on’t… tell… h-er any— thing… yet…” Rowan coughs, her skin growing faintly transparent. Aolani raises the hammer once more as it continues to grow in her hand.

“What’s the magic word?” she replies, but before Rowan can move her lips to respond, Aolani brings the hammer down one last time.

After calming down, Star creeps closer to the table where Rowan’s remains should be, but the only thing remaining is her torso addled with white auricite. He looks to Aolani as the hammer gurgles and melts back into a swirl of paint and aether in her hand.

“How are you gonna bring her back now?” Star asks.

“She just has to feed.”

“Without a head?”

“When’s the last time you fed?”

“I think we should be worrying about Rowan—“

Aolani grabs his chin, examining his face. The dark circles around his eyes are darker and more sunken than usual, his lips are scarred and his teeth are chipped. All indicators of an all familiar hunger. Star begins to redden as she lines her thumb along his lips.

“Both of you were weakened, Rowan’s playing house with Gabriella so her issue could be sleep deprivation, helping the babies feed, anything; what’s your excuse?”

He anxiously grabs at his neck.

“Just busy I guess…”

Aolani hooks her thumb along his fangs and opens a small cut, she smiles at him when he gulps loudly at the taste of fresh blood. He takes his fill and gently holds her hand to his chest.

“T-thank you…” he mumbles, wiping the blood from his chin “…now onto Rowan—“

“—oh, I had a reserve of blood packs hidden in case of emergencies, I was just gonna give her a few of those.” Aolani laughs, skipping behind the bar.

“Then why’d you feed me… l-like that!?” Star turns back to the table to hide the flood of red spreading along his face. Then Aolani begins opening a couple of blood packs, and gently removes the auricite one at a time, pouring blood into each hole left behind. Rowan’s skin bubbled and stretched as the fluid curdled into the wounds like water going down a drain, and slowly her limbs began to form. Her body slowly stopped regenerating as fast as it began.

“Woah… my ratios aren’t off, she’s really malnourished…” Aolani says, downing an ether potion of her own. She draws more blood from her finger and adds it to each of the packs as she continues pouring them onto Rowan’s body. Slowly, her body begins to fully form again, popping and plumping back into place. She coughs up a pool of blood as she regains consciousness, and frantically surveys the room.

“Hey you.” Aolani says, fondling Rowan’s freshly grown hair.

“H-Hey…” Rowan coughs, clearing the last bit of excess blood from her throat. She looks to Star, who is bashfully standing back in the corner. “What happened?”

“Nothing—“ he exclaims.

“You’re gonna hafta give your body a few hours to remember how to use your limbs… Star’ll carry you back to bed.” Aolani interrupts, lifting her from the couch and placing her on Star’s back. He turns to say something, but changes his mind, lightly nodding instead.

“Good night Be.” he smirks as he carries Rowan out of the door.

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