

# Part 5

My face is flushed by a wave of heat and rage, my answers... my childish answers, turned to dust. And now my time to grieve, cut short by the man responsible. I bottle up my frustration and ask the man before me a simple question:

“Why?”

A troubled expression stretches across the elezen man’s face, and he kneels down to look me in the eyes before chuckling.

“Usually when someone comes to me with a ‘why’ it’s in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding... but sometimes it’s just for comfort.”

I feel the anger start to pull at my brow, and I continue to try and recover my strength and keep this man talking. My eyes drop to the floor as I look at the ashes of Papa spread across the ground.

“You know the answer to your question,” the elezen replies, “you just don’t like the answer you’ve already known.”

He takes a cloth from his coat and wipes my face before placing it over the horn in my hand.

“I warned you and Eldeve when you started meddling in my research, and neither of you heeded my words. So you forced my hand to take action.”

“I’ll cut to the short of things, Eldeve is gone, I sent her on a detour at sea.”

My eyes widen, I’m trying to process what this man just said to me.

“Your fathers are gone, not even allowed their aether to return to said sea.”

My face goes numb, and I feel the adrenaline surging and bouncing through my veins.

“Your mother made an... unexpected exit. But dear Gabriella has shown much more potential for her namesake.”

My fists are clenched so tightly my nails began carving into my skin.

“—she’s even bore such interesting children!”

I lunge at the elezen without a second thought, but my fist collide with something hard. The dust slowly clears revealing magenta hair, golden eyes, and a pair of shaggy Viera ears; the man flourishes an obsidian gunblade from the dust, lightly grunting as the blade rests upon his

shoulder.

“Amida, named after a Hingan folktale, meaning ‘eater of dreams and nightmares.’” The elezen man scoffs as he adjust his collar, “I began my exploration of the unknown with a few dozen children, falling upon necromancy was the train of thought that stuck... but passing knowledge onto the future under ancient teachings was not the way...” he sifted his hand through Papa’s ashes pulling a golden ring and placing it on the viera man’s finger.

“The best way is... implanting them into the future generations, whether it be through absorbing a soul crystal or absorbing their aether directly,” he playfully flicks the ashes around while standing firmly behind the viera, “that is the only explanation for the unfortunate fate of those resurrected. The barring from the aetherial sea truly serves this purpose.”

I charge toward the viera man, but he effortlessly parries all of my strikes. His expression doesn’t change, only offering a sigh of disappointment.

“Dozens of children, fed numerous souls in hopes of proving my theory. And in this one child, I’ve made a perfect warrior, all he needs is some creativity...”

I fight back harder, switching between styles, and weapons, and magic; the viera becomes visibly annoyed, slamming his gunblade into the ground creating a cloud of dust and debris. I feel a hand grab my shirt, and then see a faint cloak of fire, and then my vision blurs. I look around and then down at my feet, I’ve been slashed and burned down my abdomen. I stammer and stifle the blood pooling in my mouth, I leap back taking another swing. He redirects my strike and I lose my balance, but before I can take a breath I’m struck with another barrage of blows. My body crumbles to the floor, too weak to hold up my head, but I see a glow before me, flames forming in the viera’s fingers... a rune scribbled across his wrist in blood.

My vision continues to blur, and the sound of a bell being struck rings in my head and another cloud of dust and ash kicks up into a frenzy. I feel a different arm wrap around me as the heat from the missed spell crackles past me. I grip Papa’s last remaining horn to my chest as I fade into unconsciousness.

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