

The tail struck at twelve o'clock. A brief shower of pale feathers marked the next stage of the Arbiter's Council. With the introductions out of the way, they could move onto the agendas and other topics brought along by all parties of the Council.

Each party would be given a turn to be heard in full. The issues and whatever topic they introduce would serve as the main focus for all members to discuss potential resolutions.

Their issues were collectively shared more often than not, so the topic may regard the safety of an Atelier rather than the action against the source, either because it was not worthwhile, an egregious waste of resources, or frankly impossible.

Frost dared an Atelier to utter the excuse of 'a waste.' She was already in the Second State. Another fit of fury would immediately send her into the Third State.

The Arbiter then announced a statement as Frost stared at the cracks of light seeping through Magus' fingers.

"The Main Rounds of the Arbiter's Council will now commence, beginning with the Golden Index. It will be moving in a clockwise rotation. Time Reverberation will go last regardless of position. The eyes of many Archetypes watch over you now. Be not afraid.

There are those of you who are confused as to why the Golden Index did not introduce themselves. Magus. Would you kindly explain?"

"With pleasure. We at the Golden Index are undergoing major challenges with the destruction of Carpalis' Faustian Bargain. I am freely discussing this on these grounds between the finest of gentlemen and women in these lands. Dare I say this world."

Magus spoke pompously, throwing his chest out before he suddenly slumped forward, leaning against the table as a serious aura radiated from his shoulders like a flame.

"Meaning my trust in everyone present is immense. I am telling potential enemies that the Golden Index can fall in one fell swoop now that Carpalis is severely weakened. I am *offering* any enemies a one-way ticket to murdering Carpalis. It would be easy. But it has not happened. Not that this is new news. You already knew this."

The contrast from his usually upbeat self was powerful. He trusted the Beholders on the mere merit that none had attempted to kill Carpalis.

*The Impuritas desperately wanted her out of the picture. Because she can bypass Marduk's replication.*

*"The Beholders could have easily murdered her. Even by accident. It is safe to assume that there are no moles amongst the Beholders."*

*He's put an awful lot of trust on the Moons and Stars too. But it's not like they can touch a Beholder to begin with.*

"Ahem. Pardon the darker tone of my voice. As you can see, the Golden Index is in a precarious situation. Also add that we are now gathering a very large number of new members and are leading the investigation into the Atelier Sectors of the City of Spades.

Very risky business. There is little else to say, aside from our Guilds and treasury. A perk of having an Archetype on one's side. And an added bonus of being a friend of the Amalgam!"

Evergreen couldn't have looked any prouder, elated to hear that her beloved Carpalis' Atelier was well-trusted by the Amalgam, and even had an Archetype affiliated with them. Still, Evergreen couldn't completely hide her worry regarding Carpalis' health.

If she died, then hundreds of thousands, to even a million would. Her life was intrinsically tied with theirs.

"Without further ado; Oboros Infinitas has brought the topic of the Coins to light. I shall leave that to them. Counterfeit items are a major worry, but I believe we have other larger issues at hand. In my hand, more specifically! Behold, my Beholder friends!"

His hand released what appeared to be a harmless golden seed. The Beholders were not sure what to make of the object, but Satania immediately recognized it and began to growl.

"They found it already." She murmured. "You lost, Galaia."

Galia was not surprised by this reveal. Neither did she react. She simply accepted this as a fact as if she had known all along.

"... a seed?" Enoch shuffled a little closer, trying to get a better look.

"*The Seed.*" Magus corrected. "Stemming from the Advent of Judgement. The Garden of Paradise. Or so we believe it's called."

Indeed. The Arbiter only knew its name from the previous world, or at least a variation of its name. All she knew was that it was a tree of some kind, capable of producing the Apples; and from the Apples came the Seeds.

"The many lights that destroyed Caldera Industries' array of Eyes above the Nex Megalopolis were directly caused by the Seeds. They're only active when consumed, so fear not for it is safe here so long as no one swallows it."

"*That* tiny thing did that to my Eyes...?" Beholder Knalzark was at a total loss for words.

"Impossible. I want to believe it is, but if an Archetype says this is the truth..."

"The Seeds caused it. We were there when it happened." Jury claimed. "They feed on Nex and were powerful enough to compete with a Nex Accumulator."

"I should be impressed that you can detect that. Reminds me of the Orange Disruptor's power." Satania spoke fondly of that Color. "Such a tormented soul."

"They turn individuals into living weapons, I take?" Beholder E. wondered, eager to understand this mysterious Seed.

"It largely depends on your interpretation. That beam is a byproduct of the transformation process the Seed induces. Amalgam. I believe this is where your expertise comes in. Your eye is the only one capable of seeing the truth next to the Arbiter." Magus announced.

Frost cleared her throat as she gazed at the Seed in utter contempt.

Then, she disclosed its malevolent power.

“The Seeds induce a forced Corrupted event to those that consume it. How much Nex they require to activate isn’t known, because the Advent of Desire was also competing for Nex. But don’t let the Seed fool you. Its power is unstable. It induces a false Corruption and transforms those that consume it into Impuritas.”

Frost then stared at the only two Impuritas present.

“Please do not take this the wrong way, Evergreen, and Promised Oath. Those that consume it become what you are. The Impuritas. But they are the degraded type. Worse than the Impuritas from the Hearts. I watched one corrode into a parody of itself. As we’re aware – the Seeds have been distributed at large.

And we only have Iscario to blame for this.”