

I still can't draw nor am I woman.

And here is part two of this update. Nothing more to say here that I didn't earlier, so without further ado, here we go!

Chapter 26: Total War

In the city of Cairo, a gangster was walking home at around 12 o'clock at night. An early night for him admittedly. Yet given the fact he'd broken his arm after getting into a fight with several college rowdies making trouble at the bar he worked at, his boss had sent him home. The gangster was somewhat drunk and quite angry at present, but in this area, most people knew him and his gang, so walking home alone wasn't dangerous.

"Damn punks, just because they are on their college's wrestling team and they think they can get away with anything. Still, I'll remember the faces, and if opportunity comes to meet any one of them in a dark alley I..."

Perhaps the phrase dark alley had grabbed his attention, because between one step in the next, he paused, staring to the side into an alleyway between two buildings. From that alleyway, fog had begun to creep across the ground. Believing it was smoke and that someone might've set some kind of fire, the gangster, like any city dweller, instantly moved in that direction. Fire was no one's friend in a city as crowded as Cairo.

He entered the alleyway and had barely a second to scream before a massive hand grabbed him by the throat. The scream cut off into a gurgle as the gangster was lifted off the ground to stare up into the eyes of a Mummy, an actual mummy, like out of those horrible Hollywood movies. Then the hand around his neck tightened, and the man's throat burst blood splashing everywhere, as his body fell to the ground.

The gangster's body was soon pounded into a paste by still more undead who seemed to pull themselves out of the ground, shifting from incorporeal to solid as they came, walking out of the alley and out into the city.

OOOOOOO

In Zagazig, the capital of the governorate of Sharqia, Mamud, happily married family man with four children sat up abruptly as a crashing sound from somewhere nearby interrupted his dreams. "Stay here, Mina," Mamud shouted as he rolled out of bed, his eyes wide as he raced into the main sitting room. There, the couple's eldest son was also rising from his place on the couch, crabbing at a dagger set nearby in case of robbers.

Both men froze as the light outside in the hallway showed them what had smashed their front door down. The creature was in no way human. Instead he was a jackal man hybrid, with the head of a jackal, but the fur-covered body of a man, with the legs of a beast more akin to a

kangaroo than a jackal. It wielded a double-bladed halberd made of bronze and wore armor that gleamed in the lights of the hallway with the same color. And behind the creatures the shadows moved, showing others moving through the hall, accompanied by the sounds of other doors being smashed into pieces.

Licking his suddenly dry lips, Mamud knew there was no way a human could fight such a creature. "Get out, get out, the windows!"

But it was too late. The jackal-man darted forward, cutting the father of four in half, before the backstroke took his son in the chest ending father and son's life in a single breath, the pain of their wounds hardly registering before sweet darkness took them. It would not have given the father any pleasure to know that the rest of his family would die just as quickly. Nor that he would be avenged as a response team of Aurors arrived, dealing out magical death and destruction as the magicals continued to respond even as the attacks began to grow well beyond any level previously seen.

OOOOOOO

A police truck moved slowly along the nighttime roads of Marsa Aram, a town that had recently become something of a tourist attraction due to its beaches, hence a moderately decent police presence. Egyptian police traveled in groups of four, two men in front, one of them the driver, the copilot, and two others standing in the back of the Jeep looking out for trouble. That was the main job of the Egyptian police, looking for trouble, not really solving crimes per se. They did have an investigative branch, but it was small. Egyptian police were used simply to keep the peace and make sure public disturbances of any kind didn't happen.

At the moment, all looked peaceful, and the driver was looking forward to being able to get back to the station, a good patrol done and dusted when he noticed something odd. "Is that smoke?"

"Where?" One of his fellows standing in the bed of the jeep behind him asked quickly. He turned in the direction the driver pointed to where smoke was indeed boiling, seemingly to be coming up from the ground itself. Frowning, he tapped twice on the truck's roof, indicating it should stop. He and the other man in the back of the truck leaped out, moving forward with guns at the ready scanning for whoever had set the fire.

They were not ready for what came out of the fog. Giant scorpions as large as men charged towards them, appearing as if by magic, their stingers stabbing forward, as their pincers clacked. The police were so startled that before they could aim their rifles, the scorpions were on them. One man was stabbed straight through, then lifted off his feet at the end of the scorpion's tail, screaming his head off in agony from both the wound and the poison now pumping through his body. The other found himself chopped in half by a pincer.

Behind them, the man in the passenger seat saw this and stared in shock, shouting out “reverse, reverse!” As he opened up with his AK-47. the driver instantly obeyed, and they moved back down the deserted road away from the horror in front of them.

One of the scorpions went down, the hail of bullets smashing into its head and back, blowing what little brains it had out. But then, as the driver began to bark into his radio and all around them lights began to come on and houses other creature flew up and out of the fog, before diving down, crashing into the top of the truck, flattening it.

The shooter, who had been half out of the truck in order to shoot from the window had been cut in half when the top of the truck was smashed flat. Having been hunched over the wheel the driver survived, for a brief moment, to stare up into the undead eyes of a zombie Sphinx. Then it roared, before leaning down and almost daintily tearing the last policeman’s head from his shoulders. While in the background, undead and monsters started to move into the houses or down the various streets.

OOOOOOO

Although several dozen initial attacks went unanswered, in many more cases the Auror reaction team were able to get to the scene very quickly. One such group was led by the young Shinsengumi, Shen. Beyond Husukai and ten of the original Shinsengumi who had brought in by Harry from Kuoh, the rest of the Japanese volunteers had been consolidated into the Nome reaction forces. The reason for this was to spread the use of talismans around, and the fact that the Shinsengumi routinely made use of conjured Oni, which were a step above the normal kind of conjured animals or transfiguration spells that most of the Aurors had access to in terms of durability.

As a senior investigator, Shen led the Nome reaction force assigned to Giza and it’s governorate.

Now the entire force he led, a group of seventy Aurors and five other Shinsengumi raced down out of the air to counter the largest attack Shen had seen yet. From this high up, he could already see that there were conjured monsters down below. Many had entered houses, and people had begun to flee down the streets here and there. Beyond that, undead cavalry and other groups moved around the streets, with undead marksmen, the Ottoman Janissaries, taking to rooftops here and there. Although thanks to the Protego spell and other shield spells from the Aurors, they were not dangerous if you knew to prepare for them. After all, long-range warfare was where the Aurors and Shinsengumi had a distinct advantage.

“Groups of five, one man on defense, two men silence those Janissaries and the other undead with the other two working on the streets. Clear the streets and rooftops then we’ll have to clear out the various buildings one by...” Shen began to order, only to cut himself off as, from out of nowhere, a large flying creature roared towards them.

For a moment, this took the magicals completely by surprise. Never before during these battles had they been faced with a flying opponent. Always before, the conjured animals had been scorpion creatures, lots of beetles, or similar. But this was a giant undead Sphinx, and it was on them before they could blink. One of Shen's fellow Shinsengumi was torn from his perch on a broomstick and chomped in half accompanied by a despairing wail. "AAGGGGGhhhhhh!!!"

As the woman's scream tore through the night, several Aurors caught the creature with fire spells causing the undead monstrosity to scream in turn before plummeting from the sky like a comet, the Incendios turning its undead form into so much flying kindling. But other flying creatures rose from below. Hundreds of flying serpents alongside a dozen harpies screamed and squawked as they came, both they and the snakes being very much alive, unlike the undead sphinxes.

Thinking quickly, Shen ordered, "Nevermind my last order, we'll stay together, but split into three squads! Aurors, you're split down the middle. Alan, you're in charge of squad two, get high! Fire attacks and other attack spells to clear the area. Trish, you're our best flyer, you're in charge of squad one, stay in close, break the flyers apart. Shinsengumi, with me!"

With Shen in the lead, the group of Shinsengumi moved to the side and downwards, then back towards where the original disturbance had occurred. A disturbance, Shen was very disturbed to see was **still** growing, even though he couldn't see anyone conjuring the undead into being. *Shit! Potter-san was right, the enemy really can use the earth's own magical web to send their spells out further than line of sight! How much further, though?*

Undead were appearing from everywhere he could see, and for just a moment Shen thought about how his plan wasn't going to be enough before he caught sight of something that gave him a bit of hope. Banking hard, Shen raced down a road parallel to the area where the undead had first appeared. There he saw two police SUVs pulled side-on to the road. The men in them were firing at the oncoming monsters and undead, all eight of them alive and kicking while behind them people were streaming out of houses and away from the monsters. *If we can't stop this attack ourselves, we can at least help them for now while we wait for Lord Potter and the others.*

With that in mind, instead of using them on the center of the growing undead horde, Shen tossed down a series of the talisman that Akeno and her family had provided, right before the two trucks. This created a wall across the street which the undead would not be able to cross without destroying themselves, something a few learned instantly as they entered the field of magic the talismans created.

Behind him, the others followed as he peeled up and away a second later, then began roving over the cityscape, killing Janissaries and other single monsters wherever they could while making for another area where there was another street that could lead the monsters behind the police on the ground. There they dropped more talisman before banking back and around.

Shen had to twist his broomstick desperately to one side as a jackal warrior leaped up from the top of a building towards him, hacking with his halberd. One of the others hit the creature with a cutting spell that they had learned from Tonks, tearing the creature in two, its bronze armor no defense against the magical assault. Although, Shen noticed that the bronze like armor it wore did seem to stop bullets as a similar jack warrior attacked the police leaping over the undead as they disintegrated.

They didn't have any armor on their heads though, and a second later, that jackal warrior fell to a headshot from one of the policemen just as Shen ordered, "Drop your Oni!"

The other Shinsengumi with him pulled out their Oni talisman, tossing them down onto the street. Striking the ground, they glowed for a brief moment, before in a poof of smoke, a group of giant red Oni appeared. Most of them found themselves within reach of the enemy, although two of the tags that it been thrown down had been torn apart and trampled by the monsters or the people fleeing the growing undead and monster horde.

But every Oni thus trapped within the talisman had a few simple commands already forced upon them by the talisman-covered shackles around their necks. One of them was to attack anything that attacked them, and another being to not attack humans unless they attacked the Oni first or they were otherwise commanded.

The instant they appeared, the Oni began to lay about them, causing screams of consternation and shock from the civilians, but doing no harm to them. Rather, in the first two seconds of their appearance, several scorpion creatures had been squished, and a jackal man had been treated like a baseball and smashed into the air so hard that his body came apart before it even hit the ground, splashing blood and gore down onto the streets. Two undead Ottoman Janissaries died similarly and then one Mummy, whose strength was magnified by the enchanted wraps around them, blocked the blow coming towards it, managing to turn the blow before it could turn it into a so much wrap-covered paste on the ground.

It didn't dodge the next, which smashed the Mummy off its feet, and into the path of a fire spell from one of the Shinsengumi. That same fire spell, its creator now protected by his fellows, wound through the horde, burning hundreds of monsters and undead.

A second later, Shen was ordering the Shinsengumi up above and into the battle occurring in the air before they could be cut off by more harpies, while below, undead beetles had begun to appear, skittering across the ground in their thousands, dragging people down eating them alive. They headed straight for the Oni while other beasts shifted around the Oni to attack the police cars, where the eight policemen were firing into the crowd.

As he looked over his shoulder, Shen was disgusted to note that at least one of the police didn't seem to care so much about where he was aiming so long as he was firing into the crowd of undead. As he watched several civilians went down to 'friendly' fire. But then, he was up and moving around the growing air battle, noting absently that seven Aurors had fallen in

that short amount of time the Shinsengumi had been working on the ground situation, but that they had succeeded in pulling every flying creature onto themselves away from the strafing Shinsengumi and the civilians below.

Soon though, he and his fellows, were above the group, and he barked out orders. "Split into two teams and break out the carpets, Makoto, you lead the second team."

The argument between carpet and broomstick was easy to understand. Carpets could carry more people in comfort and more importantly in a fight, provide a stable platform for spellcasting. Moreover, Shinsengumi were trained to work together to create enchantments, that could have a much larger impact on the battlefield. But broomsticks were faster and **far** more maneuverable. They were also more European, which had also factored into how they had become the official choice for flying throughout Europe, and especially for officials like the Aurors. And here in Egypt, that speed had worked out very well in the past, even as the locals had provided flying rugs to the Shinsengumi when asked.

But in a fight like this, which was, Shen was dismayed to see, still spreading, carpets and what they could allow might prove to be a decisive factor. *At least, I hope so...* While the two men carrying carpets among his Shinsengumi got them out from their expanded containers, which looked for all the world like small iron tubes, Shen turned his attention to his broomstick's silent passenger. "Contact Lord Potter! We might need more help here."

The leprechaun assigned to Shen was one of the most taciturn fellows that Shen had ever met regardless of race, and he routinely said nothing unless needed. Now however, even as he pulled out and enlarged the communication button, he spoke up, staring down into the side. "I be thinkin' we might all be havin' more trouble than just this one wee engagement."

Shen took the button from him, turning his head to see what the leprechaun spotted, only for his eyes to go wide, as the light of the city below him started to go out. "Kuso!"

OOOOOO

As Shen instinctively understood, the electricity going out throughout Giza was yet another aspect of the Harrowing, the one that gave this part of their plan that name, in fact. For monsters and undead alone were not enough to cause the true, mind-numbing, society-shattering fear that Akhenaten's plans demanded. Not when there were so many magicals fighting back, and when human weapons could kill most of them. No, that final step required something else, something that was a reminder of an ancient, terrible time, even to Akhenaten and moments before Shen saw the lights of Giza wink out, he intoned, "I release the touch of Ra on the Nile. I absorb the magic of Osiris into my Ba. Let the past fears of man once more stalk this Earth!"

Reaching into the enchantments around him, Akhenaten sent his mind out past the edge of their pyramid and into the underlying magical network of Egypt. Specifically, to a Curse existing within the magic of bound within the confines of the Nile. Hidden both underneath the

Blessing from the Elephantine Triad and by the nature of deific Curses, this spell was bound up in two things. *Although at its base, it is simply fear of the dark*, the immortal Pharaoh reflected as he intoned.

This Curse was also much, **much** older even than Akhenaten and his wife. It had been a despairing strike against life in Egypt and the emerging gods by Kek. Kek had been a genderless primordial being, much like the Titans who rose later in Greece or the dragons, although the last, at least, had genders and bred like beasts instead of primordial collections of magical and deific power. Only, Kek had been more vindictive and much more magically inclined than the Titans. Kek was chaos and darkness made flesh, the primordial chaos out of which order and life eventually sprang.

Eventually, Kek had been banished by Osiris, Horus and Ra, much like the evil serpent Apep. But the gods had been unable to counter the Curse, unable to even find it beyond the impact it created. This was the equivalent of seeing because there was light, but not able to see the source of said light. Still, the gods had chained the Curse down as best they could before covering it over and then covering it again with the Blessing of the Elephantine Triad.

And like that equally ancient Blessing, the Curse was still there, still powerful, still terrifying.

Now, Akhenaten erased the restraints built into the underlying magical structure of Egypt to keep that Curse at bay. Without the ancient god's touch, the Blessing on the Nile River alone was not enough to stop the Curse of Kek from roaring out.

Instantly throughout all of Egypt, a kind of low-key, slowly rising fear began to spread from the river Nile. It would build over time, felt now only by those who were both awake already and weak-willed. At the same time, the darkness of the desert on a cloudy night poured in. Powerful, inexorable. Technology, electricity, anything which could create light or give warmth began to fail everywhere, causing chaos and confusion. Even fire spells sputtered out far faster than they should have, and light spells failed almost instantly.

At the same time, Akhenaten, with the help of Wepwawet, finalized the spell Nefertiti had created on top of his own, the god's ability as a psychopomp, a being that helped dead souls to the next dimension, allowing him to add more power to a spell that would block whatever teleportation Potter used to cross dimensions. *If Harry Potter attempts to teleport himself away through the water, he will find his way blocked. And he will be unable to break that spell without overcoming the will and might Wadjet and the shades we released earlier. He might have prevailed against Neter-Hau or even Neter-Hau and Amathaunta, but against the two of them and the protector of the crown, he will fail. Meanwhile our other servants will be able to deal with the rest of his forces...*

OOOOOOO

In the Auror office in Alexandria, bells began to toll, warning of Undead suddenly appearing. That bell continued to ring, and ring, and ring ever louder as the Auror on duty stared at the sheer number of red dots appearing throughout not only Alexandria, but every other city from one end of the Nile to the other. Then he pulled out an old-fashioned gramophone and bellowed into it. "Code Red, Code Red damn it! All Aurors to report for duty!" From one side owls, awake already of course, flew from their perches while men and women from the ready team tumbled into the office and Proudfoot smashed his door open so hard it left a dent in the wall.

All of them paused, staring in horror. "G, get a message off to Potter and the ICW. If he doesn't already know then he needs to know now! Whatever is going on, we are up the yellow river without a paddle, and we need reinforcements, ASAP!"

OOOOOO

Of course, with all this magic being thrown around, other beings in the world became aware of it quickly. But only one of those was in a position to understand what was going on and why...

This was a room that was possibly unlike any other in the world. For one thing, it was a perfect sphere in every direction, with a bed and several bits of furniture actually hovering in midair in various places. For another, there didn't seem to be any actual doorway in or out. There were feminine touches apparent alongside the masculine, a sword hung on a wall, side by side a painting, a tasteful pillow on the sofa. And everything within the room was unique, works of stones, gold and bronze that were simply magnificent, each a work of art. Mostly baroque art, admittedly, with harpies, gargoyles, dogheads, and lots of skulls everywhere.

Indeed, the only thing there was more of than skulls in the room were paintings. Pictures line the circular wall, with a particularly large painting directly on the roof like the fresco of some church, complete with a dozen candles floating beneath it to light the picture. This picture was that of a woman, a gorgeous, somewhat somber brunette with smile lines around her face and eyes that seemed to gleam with life, despite this picture not being a magical one.

Most of the pictures were landscaping work of various places throughout Greece, mainly in the spring or summer, with a few in Autumn. Many of those pictures were magical, enchanted to cycle through the various seasons. Those that were not, were of the woman from the picture on the roof.

Yet for all its grandeur, it was a faded, broken kind of grandeur. The crimson sheets on the bed were frayed. The gold everywhere in the room did not gleam, rather it was dull, many of its dented or, indeed, melted. Several of the busts were smashed, or cratered, making the original heads of various animals look even more grotesque. Some of the pictures on the wall were no longer moving.

But it was the other pictures, which would make anyone looking at this room start to become very, very concerned about the sanity of whoever lived here. Because several of those pictures had been slashed to shreds. The walls too had been messages carved into them. Messages like 'down to all Gods', 'damn the Abrahams' and 'death to humanity', 'death to the church', 'death to everything' littered the room, repeated hundreds of times.

And in the center of the room, floating to one side of the bed, or rather standing in midair as if he was standing on ground, Hades, god of the Undead realm of the same name, stood.

In appearance, Hades seemed to be a living skeleton of unusual stature, his fingers slightly longer than normal, with a blue glow set deep into his eye sockets. He wore raiment that looked like a priestly raiment almost, some of the bits seemingly taken from Eastern Orthodox or Catholicism in terms of cut, the pointed hat he wore giving that impression best. However, the colors did not quite match, being gold and blue on white with red highlights. Over this, Hades wore armor around his chest, segmented and black, with large pauldrons on his shoulders, each of which had red spikes thrust out of them at odd angles.

Hades stared ahead of him, ignoring the ruin around him as he felt dozens upon dozens, then thousands of dead souls flooding into his realm. It took him a moment to understand where, after all, thanks to the natural disasters occurring around Earth, there had been a lot of people dying everywhere. And no other Death God had survived to the present day, or at least, no God had a realm like his, linked to the apparatus of soul cleansing and rebirth.

And with the death of Yahweh, Hades had been able to supplant even more of the power that should've gone to heaven with his own. So long as the souls in question had not followed the faith that they so professed to follow, those souls would fall to him. A small tithe of them to be sure, but, unlike Michael, sitting like a carrion crow on the Throne of Heaven, Hades understood and could use that power. This had greatly enriched Hades, but not enough to get over the loss of his beloved, Persephone.

Now, even as he felt those souls into empowering further, Hades was somewhat annoyed as he realized that this current flood came from Egypt.

His allies in Egypt had not been supposed to go on the attack like this just yet. it was supposed to be the end game, not when Ophis was still out there in all her terrible might. **Still, those two scavengers have their own plots. And if they succeed, so will my goals, because in so doing, they will hasten the ruin of this deplorable Earth. That is all to the good. A planet without Persephone should not be allowed to exist at all!**

And, Hades reflected, he couldn't devote much of his attention to Egypt either. He had Lucifer and his party forging ever deeper into the maze that protected his realm. That should have been impossible for the beings of another faith, even those cast in the role of villains. But

Lucifer was incredibly powerful, far more powerful than all of Hades' own servants, and Hades knew that eventually he would have to face Lucifer and his peerage.

But only on a battlefield of my choosing, Hades thought, smirking slightly. **Let them grow more confident, certain they are winning. Only then will I bring the full power of my gathered might against him, and even if I must, free my captive brother. Let this so-called Super Devil meet a monster of the Titanocracy.**

Meanwhile, the deaths of those within the borders of Egypt could be allowed to serve Aten's needs, and as such, I will prevent the splash of so many undead being called upon from going very far. That way, they will avoid attracting further godly attention. it will be interesting to see if they succeed or not, but before that, I have my own battles to see to.

OOOOOOO

While the Curse of Kek was being released across Egypt, 'Miltani' returned to the Ivory Tower. Stopping the Norwegian Ridgebacks had cost the locals severely, and her own ready force of Aurors had also been hammered, thanks in part to her subtly manipulating their orders occasionally. But they had been able to stop, kill or corral the dragons, and the German Obliviators were already hard at work covering up the events.

"10 minutes," she shouted as she stepped through the Floo. "Ten minutes to grab Pepper Up potions and get back here."

By that point, Finland and the United Kingdom had already dealt with the dragons they had been facing, turning them away and eventually forcing them to return to their original reserves. However, Sweden and Norway were still having trouble and reported that their Aurors were being overwhelmed simply because the dragons had spread out too much to let them concentrate the Aurors effectively and still defend the nonmagicals.

Ten minutes passed, and Nefertiti decided to head to Norway first. It had the larger non-magical population, and she knew that the dragons would now start to make their way towards those population centers faster than they were in Sweden. *Why it's almost as if someone was able to command the beasts,* she reflected with an internal cackle at watching everything on this side of things come together so well.

Then, unfortunately, alarms began to go off again. "What the fuck now? And will someone turn that blasted alarm spell off!" 'Miltani' grumbled, even as inside, Nefertiti did backflips, and her eyes practically crossed, with the effort of keeping her new tail from appearing. *Hmph, I can tell that's going to be a problem, but at this point, I cannot help it. The final step is about to fall into place.*

Luckily those around 'Miltani' seemed to think her eyes crossing were because of the noise, which quickly chopped off. But a second later, Neville Longbottom of the United Kingdom was back. "What now? I thought you said your dragons were..."

“Our dragons are being contained! We just got a report from Egypt! The undead attacks, down in Egypt, they are everywhere now!” Neville growled.

The magical map that Harry and the others were given a copy of was tied to the wards of Egypt, which were in turn tied into the United Kingdom’s. Hence they became the first to realize trouble was going on.

“We need help!” Norway’s Minister suddenly shouted through the Floo connection that all of the beleaguered countries had kept open up to this point. “The dragons, they are moving in a single direction, towards Oslo!!!”

“Well, Welsh Greens are known to be more pack-oriented than most,” Nefertiti murmured as if she was only half-listening, acting as if she was thinking deeply about what to do. “How many effective combatants do we still have, sixty-two?”

“fifty-seven. Five of the Aurors were more wounded than they wanted people to believe, and I pulled them from the reserve.”

That was his duty as watch officer, and Nefertiti nodded at the man before frowning. “We can’t split our forces down any further then and have any kind of impact. And we’ve already sent large amounts of reinforcements into Egypt. Plus, Potter is there. The-Man-Who-Conquered and the forces already in place are going to have to do the dirty work.”

“Weren’t you listening?! Whatever is going on down there is across all of Egypt, a nation covering more area than the entire United Kingdom! We are in danger of the Statute of Secrecy failing!” Neville barked.

“And dragons burning cities in Sweden and Norway, particularly the Norwegian capital, won’t break the Statute?” ‘Miltani’ scowled, shaking her head. “We have to decide which fires to put out, gentlemen, and we already have one of the best firemen available in Potter in place in Egypt.”

It gave Nefertiti a certain thrill to use Potter’s presence in Egypt this way. Even Neville, the Minister who was closest to that particular problem had to concede the point. However, when she went on, he froze in shock. “As to what help we can give them for now, if the problem is that widespread, we must set down the interdict over the entire country.”

Behind her, Roberto, who had come into the communications room and been dealing with the other ministers while she had raced to Germany, froze. The Interdict was a special enchantment built into the Wizarding World wards, which were almost never activated to that extent. Essentially, it raised a magical wall between the interdicted space and rest of the world, blocking all communications. In part this wall acted as a Notice-Me-Not ward which covered the Wizarding World normally, preventing people from noticing that the entire area’s communications were down. The strength of the Notice-Me-Not portion was so strong that in practice, it prevented people from even seeing the warded space. And if a magical person tried

to get past those wards, they acted almost like rubber, bouncing the mind of the sender backward all the harder.

Previously the Interdict had been used in sections of Ireland to help the Aurors and Unspeakables get a handle on things there and during the current crisis to shut down the muggle communication networks, although it hadn't been as effective in Ireland. Tonight, it had created 'blackouts' over Berlin, for example, while the battle against the dragons was going on. The Interdict worked so well that the rest of the country remained ignorant of the fiery death that had come to their capital.

But Interdicting an entire country hadn't been done since Grindelwald's War. At that level, the Interdict was so powerful it was hard to take down quickly and shut down the Floo Network simultaneously as a precaution so that whatever was going on couldn't spread to the rest of the Wizarding World. In this case, that seemed a good idea, admittedly, but conversely it meant that no aid would be able to get through until the Interdict went down.

Roberto frowned. "I will have to get together a quorum of the Senators to use the interdict that that larger level." Representatives to the ICW were called Senators.

Nefertiti scowled angrily. Looming over the older man, she growled out, "There is no time! You have the power as Chief Mugwump to use the Interdict as you see fit. You'll have to explain later, but that is for later. Even as we speak, whatever is happening in Egypt could well be spreading to its neighbors. You must do this!"

"I... Very well. I will access the wards and Interdict Egypt. But where will you..."

"Norway first, then Sweden, and then will head to Egypt with whatever of my ready force is left," Nefertiti said grimly. "And while your Aurors and I deal with the dragons, Ministers," she said, turning back to the various fireplaces. "Get with your hit wizards and your investigators. Find out what is going on. All of the Dragon reserves having been bought out and now the dragons running amok most decidedly smacks of prior planning on a large scale. Are we dealing with another dark Lord on the rise? And if so, where can we find him?"

These were questions that as the Inspector General, she would have been assumed to be asking, and Nefertiti got the proper responses, even as she exited the room, with one last shout over her shoulder to Roberto. "Don't forget the Interdict!"

He didn't. Within minutes, Egypt was under the Interdict. And like the impact of so much magic being used, the reverberations of that choice also spread beyond Egypt's borders.

OOOOOO

Elsewhere, the magical reaction teams were not as well led as Shen's team. Two of them, assigned to the Nomes that matched to the districts of the Red Sea and Qena were entirely overrun. The Red Sea commander had broken up his troops, sending them out piecemeal to deferent areas in the large governorate to try to control the initial outbreak. They

had died to a man, completely unprepared for the numbers they were facing, and more importantly, the fact they would be facing flyers this time.

Since his seat of power was located in the Minya district, Akhenaten made certain that the reaction team to it was wiped out too. He assigned more Janissaries and flying cobras to this battle, controlling it directly. Akhenaten had even assigned several of his wizard followers to this battle. With their teleportation pectorals of office, they had been able to erect a ward that blocked the wizards from using portkeys.

That was a ward that Akhenaten had been unable to translate into the medium of the Egypt's underlying magical structure, hence the need for his followers to be on site. Indeed, even the ward he had placed to stop Potter's dimensional travel from working was only able to work in a given area, and even that was because Akhenaten used Wepwawet to create and power it. Nefertiti's attempts to create a runic array to do the same thing had not worked in the days leading up to the Harrowing.

Even the leprechauns assigned to these groups didn't get away. One died to the same harpy attack that killed the reaction force's leader. The other, one of the better fighters from Tir Na Nog, fought his way out of the initial attack, tele-bouncing down to the ground only to die to hundreds of undead scarab beetles.

Other reaction teams took losses, sometimes horrendous in their initial attempts to quell the magical assault. but they eventually began to pull back, sniping away at their enemies rather than getting stuck in, as they realized that whatever was going on, it was too big for them to deal with.

At the same time, Alexandria was in no way immune to the initial assault. Indeed, Alexandria came in for what could only be called an unfair share of this attack. Because where in other cities, the monsters had appeared in their hundreds to start with, in Alexandria, they appeared in their thousands, with more appearing all the time. And thanks to the actions of the wizards who followed Nefertiti and Akhenaten, this attack was more successful than any of the defenders had anticipated. Not only were the undead once again able to appear throughout the city, but there were also far, far more conjured creatures.

The first from the Kuoh group to come face to face with the conjured creatures were Issei and Kiba. They had been there for more than an hour watching the belly dancers around them. By this point, Kiba decided he had enough and wanted to start pushing Issei and the leprechauns into leaving. This was going to be an uphill battle, he knew, but both were on duty tomorrow, and it needed to be done. Before he could start however, a belly dancer moved to dance in front of their booth, and Kiba's thoughts derailed for a few minutes.

After taking a long gulp of the local beer however, his head cleared and, rather than leaving and seeming rude, Kiba tried to strike up a conversation, following up on the idea he'd had earlier that night. "Excuse me miss, but where do you get your dresses?"

The dancers seemed surprised at first, although if that was because he was talking to her, something the majority of the customers were not doing, or because of the question Kiba couldn't tell. She then looked Kiba up and down, not stopping her dancing at all before laughing, shaking her head. "I do not think you have the hips for it, handsome one."

"Thank you for the compliment, but it is not for me," Kiba politely replied, blushing faintly at the very idea. "I have a girlfriend, and she's pretty adventuresome in terms of clothing while we are alone so..."

The dancer, a long-haired beauty with traditional Egyptian looks coupled with blue eyes, giggled again, saying something in her own language unto under her breath spell that Kiba couldn't quite catch. And Issei was too out of it simply staring at the girl. "In that case, bring her along next time, I will sell her one of my spare outfits. She will also probably need lessons, and that will be a good break from the monotony of... the..." The girl trailed off, and slowly stopped her dancing, staring at one of the many entrances to the bar.

Kiba followed her gaze, and stood up quickly, staring at the creature that had just appeared in the doorway. It was a jackal man, a man with the body of jackal, wielding a large double-bladed staff in one hand, most of its haft being a massive blade and wearing body armor covering its chest which gleamed like bronze. The creature seemed to have enough personality, if not intelligence, to be stunned by the number of dancing women around him, pausing in its long-legged strides into the bar to stare at them.

This gave Kiba a precious second to get over his shock. He leaped to his feet, as the jackal man seemed to get over his own reaction to at the belly dancers, roaring and bounding forward, causing everyone there to scream. Kiba grabbed the belly dancer, hauling her over the table, thrusting her into Issei's lap. "Best stay out of the way miss," he said politely before sliding out of the booth, his hand at his side, creating a sword in his hands via the magic of his Sacred Gear, Sword Birth.

Sword in hand, Kiba met the jackal-man blade to staff as it stalked down the aisle, blocking its first slash at one of the other bar patrons. A quick twist, a deflection and Kiba's sword hissed like a snake through the air as it drove into the jackal-man's throat. Pulling out the blade, he whipped it to one side, blinding another jackal man with the blood of the first, running it through when it scabbled at its eyes. Then Kiba was leaping over the body of the first jackal-man, racing forward to engage still more as they tried to enter from the same direction.

As he was dealing with the attackers from that direction, Issei had returned from his happy place to deal with another, who had been stopped at another entrance by two of the local bouncers. Both equally large man, they had quickly gotten over their shock at the first monster's entrance, perhaps believing it was some moron in a body suit, or perhaps just believing they had a chance to fight it, who knew. They had pulled out guns, pistols, and shot it full of lead to no avail. Whatever armor it was wearing, it certainly wasn't the bronze that it

appeared to be, and the creature's halberd had basically sliced one in half, before it smashed the other one aside.

Now it found itself stuck dropping its weapon and scratching at its rear thanks to one of Issei's 'combat' spells. A second later, two of the leprechauns appeared on either side of its head, having bounced their way across the room. Despite the drinking they'd all been doing, none of the leprechauns seemed any worse off for it, and now the two leprechauns smashed their hammers into either side of its head which exploded under the twin impact.

The two leprechauns when they appeared again were covered with gore and looked extremely angry. Nevertheless, they moved to help their fellows at the other entrances to the bar was, like most caravanserai, very open, with multiple entrances.

"No such thing," one of the leprechauns growled as they passed him, ducking under several of the dancers. Issei took a moment to think they were lucky bastards to get such a view before looking at the dancer, then standing up, moving around the table to try and cover the rest of the entrances, shouting out, "Calm down, everyone remain calm, please, the more you panic, the more you'll be in danger of getting in one another's way and causing more trouble!"

This worked, and more than a few men in the audience decided they wanted to arm themselves, taking up knives or shattering tables to get at their legs, while the dancers all moved into the center of the bar with the rest of the civilians. Two braver than average men grabbed up the pistols of the dead bouncers, while another three barmen moved to the main bar. There, another man had already pulled out a large shotgun, turning to guard the nearest doorway. A moment later he was joined by two leprechauns, while the rest spread out, with Issei moving to another door.

"Keep everyone inside," Kiba ordered the man, having gained the doorway his first opponents had come from. "We don't know what's going on but there could be more of those creatures."

"B, but you, people, those little men, what are..." The man stumbled to a halt as Kiba held up a hand. Even when magic was involved, a strong voice, and a calm manner went a long way, something Kiba had learned over the past few days. "We aren't involved in whatever those monsters are, sir. But yes, we do have some magic. Yet since we just used our magic to help save you customers, does it really matter where we came from?"

The man hesitated, then nodded, some chagrin entering his feature. A second later, it became a moot point as several more jackal men burst into the club, from the various doorways, overcoming the men who had tried to guard them, nearly kicking one of the leprechauns.

The leprechauns fell back, for a second before racing forward to attack ankles and feet, while the civilians behind them began screaming once more. But Kiba abandoned the doorway he had taken, seeing no threats there just yet, and using his Knight-given speed, he raced

towards one of them, and got to them just as the creature cut down another of the patrons. This proved to be a mistake as the shotgun man behind him found himself the sole defender of his doorway when more jackal men appeared there.

With nowhere to go the patrons tried to back away from the doors further, while outside, Kiba could hear people screaming.

Fuck! He thought to himself, shouting out, “Leprechauns, make us an exit, Issei, Glue everywhere!”

“Roger!” Issei shouted in turn, and he turned wildly like a top, splashing his glue everywhere he could between the jackals and the civilians. Many of the jackal men fell victim to this, stuck in place and blocking their fellows from moving forward.

Meanwhile, the leprechauns charged forward, decimating a group of the jackal men coming in from that entrance, then spreading out past the entrance. “Come on, ya wastes of space, it’s better to be out and moving then pinned and dead!”

“Where are we going?” wailed one of the patrons although he also moved along in that direction, while Kiba protected the back of the fleeing group until they were outside, where he paused, staring as the lights went out all around him, leaving the night lit only by the moon and stars above.

Out of the shadows other creatures moved, while men and women streamed out of the buildings surrounding them or from further down the street, screaming in fear and pain as undead and monsters attacked with impunity. and in the air above, undead sphynx and very living monsters swooped into the crowd, killing at random.

Staring around, Kiba could barely keep himself from cursing. This was way worse than any of the other attacks they dealt with. *Could whoever is behind this have been lulling us into a false sense of complacency with the smaller attacks?* Deciding to ignore that, he thrust out his swords, the Flame Sword and Flame Delete. From their tips spears of fire and ice lanced out, slicing into monsters and undead alike. At the same time, he called upon his Sacred Gear to an even larger extent, and similar swords thrust out of walls and the road underneath several other enemies, impaling them but leaving the civilians unharmed. “Anyone who thinks they can fight, grab up a sword!”

Meanwhile, Issei began to use his armor shattering spell and his glue spell to good effect on a group of undead. They either came apart, their armor wrecked, or were stuck in place, making them easy pickings. The next group of monsters fared even worse, pausing in place, dropping their weapons and reaching behind or down to their crotches, scratching vigorously. A full twelve monsters were caught thusly, and made entirely impotent in seconds. “Yes! Perversions for the win, bastards!”

Behind them, the dancers and the rest of the patrons in the bar started to look over their shoulders, while the shotgun blasts of the owner of the bar sounded out behind them. With the area around them cleared for the moment, they moved forward, and other people moved into the now seemingly protected zone, shouting questions and demands for answers as to what the hell was going on.

Hearing those questions and wondering how widespread this was, Kiba looked around, unable to think for a moment as to what they should do, but then felt his ear getting tugged by one of the leprechauns. "I've got the Laird Potter on the line."

"Good thinking, because whatever is going on, it is past time to pass the buck to a higher level of command," Kiba responded, leaning in to speak into the large button.

OOOOOOO

For her part, Yubelluna had been watching the map at the same time Shen and the other Aurors around Egypt went into action, her eyes narrowing as she noticed that the number of magical sightings hadn't decreased or stopped as normal. When monsters appeared in the belly dancing club and Proudfoot was woken from his rest by the ringing of the bell in the Auror's offices, Yubelluna stood up and opened her mouth to shout as the scattered red dots became an ever spreading-rash of red dots almost filling the map from one end to the other. Her cry of, "Everyone get up, there's something going on!" was drowned out as the alarm on the magical map went off. "ARRROOGAAAA, ARRROOGAAAAA!!!!!"

In seconds, everyone boiled out into the main sitting room, where they all paused, staring in shock. As they watched, the magical map actually overloaded, thousands of growing red dots appearing before the magic in the map simply fizzled out, overwhelmed.

"Oh... that can't be good," Padma whimpered, understanding exactly how much input that it would take to break those enchantments.

Harry didn't bother replying, racing out onto the suite's patio, where Tiamat and the dog were up as well, staring around at the cityscape surrounding the hotel. At that point the screams outside were joined by shouts and gunfire from close by, and the rest of the suite's current inhabitants boiled out onto the balcony to join Harry and the two animals to stare out into the city.

"SHIT!" Loup growled, standing in a pair of boxers as he stared down at the streets below, where the attack had come in the form of several Jackal-headed men, groups of Mummies and what looked like swarms of beetles.

"All right," Harry snarled in turn. "Let's start doing something on that score right now..." Harry trailed off as he felt a surge of something, a magic he instantly understood to be some deities curse in action. From the startled, horrified gasp Tiamat released, she realized it too, but there was nothing they could do, and an instant later, every light they could see went out. At

the same time a lot of the background noise Harry and the others with sensitive hearing had heard, the hum of the air conditioning, the cacophony of dozens of nearby car alarms, all stopped one after another.

Behind them, Akeno had pulled out her laptop, intending to see if she could discover what was going on in other cities, powering it up only to yelp in shock as it began to spark and short out in front of her. "I didn't do it!" she shouted, receiving a few deadpan stares from the others. "Really, I have far more control over my magic than that," she said pouting at them all.

"I believe you," Hermione answered, frowning at the computer in some consternation. she and Akeno had talked about the various grounding enchantments she'd put on the computer so it could be around high concentrations of magic, and, like her wife, Hermione knew on the Arithmantic level how much power that would take. "So, was that directed at us, or..."

"It doesn't matter," Harry interrupted, sending his old friend a glance that mingled apology with worry before looking back across the city. "Loup, Suzaku," he ordered, pointing down, which he knew would be all Loup needed as Harry turned away, looking at the others around him on the balcony. "Tiamat, Kala, Akeno, take to the air for now. Tiamat, keep the air around us clear of threats and if you see groups of conjured beasts of undead where you can flame them without harming civilians, do it. We can put the fires out after. Kala, Akeno, guard Tonks until she's over Lighthouse Lane and give me an idea of what the rest of the city looks like from above. If that map's last gasp was accurate, there's been at least a dozen attacks across Alexandria, and we'll want to know which areas have been hit worst before doing anything else."

While Harry continued to organize, sending Hermione and Padma out to wake up Husukai and the remaining Shinsengumi and getting in contact with the local reaction teams as well as trying to get Kiba and Issei on the Leprechaun Line, Loup nodded once then leaped out over the side This caused Suzaku to gasp, staring down after her lover. "Ooh, That, that idiot male! When I get him tied to the bedposts again he's going to pay for this!"

This caused several of the others to pause in their racing off to give the Himejima matriarch a look, but Suzaku ignored them, pulling out a talisman and tossing it out on to the air, where it glowed, and then burst to reveal a flying carpet. No broomstick for Suzaku, she thought those were the most undignified manner of magical travel that she had yet to see.

"What about me Harry?" Yubelluna questioned, looking guilty about not having anticipated whatever was going on. she had been the one on duty after all, and she should have noticed something.

That feeling faded as Harry turned to her, reaching out to touch her cheek tenderly, looking into her eyes. That look seemed to both acknowledge and forgive her. Then Harry did something he had never quite done before, he deliberately called upon Yubelluna's connection

to him, his voice slipping into an almost formal cadence. “Bandrui Yubelluna, by my command, I give of my power to thee. Protect the people of these lands and bring destruction to our enemies!”

Harry knew that a lot of Yubelluna’s powers as a bandrui came from her connection to him, her ‘worship’ of Harry after he had used a Blessing to bring her back to life. Most of the time Yubelluna called upon that power through the medium of song while taking part in a larger ritual, in a somewhat controlled environment. Now however, in the midst of a battle, there was no time for Yubelluna to call upon his power slowly. He just hoped that giving her an order like this would be enough to empower her. *This is too big, and we need someone to concentrate purely on defense, which Yubelluna’s powers make her ideal for.*

Yubelluna’s eyes widened, and for a moment, Harry didn’t feel anything different, then, he slowly felt a tiny stream of his power trickling into that subtle connection that existed between the two of them. Yubelluna’s eyes widened still further, and then began to close, as energy crackled up and down her body. Then, she quickly backed away from Harry, kneeling on one knee, words coming almost unbidden from her mouth. “As my Lord commands, so shall it be.”

With that, she was on her feet once more, moving faster than she had ever moved before, leaping up and over the balcony, falling gently through the air after Suzaku.

For his part, Loup had not just leaped from the top of the hotel and assumed his werewolf factor would allow him to survive the fall. Instead, Loup hit himself with a Leviosa halfway down, slowing his descent. Then he very carefully picked out a target, before coming down with both feet slamming into the face of a Mummy, a second after he had canceled the spell. The Mummy’s face disappeared under his weight, and Loup howled as he used a cutting spell to sever another Mummy’s hands, right before he could tear a man in two.

Unfortunately, the civilian in question died a second later to a jackal-man’s halberd. But that that jackal-man rocked backward as Loup, now transformed into his werewolf form slammed into it bodily, lifting the creature up and hurling it into a group of four others, before twisting around, smacking aside a scorpion sting. Grabbing the scorpion’s tail, he hefted the creature up off the ground, and using it like a flail, smashing several others to the ground.

One of the jackal-men roared, cutting at his back having ducked under his attack, but Loup simply let his makeshift weapon go, the scorpion flying forward to smash with chitin shattering force against one nearby buildings, causing screaming to erupt from within, but no real harm as Loup turned. The next strike came, and Loup took it on his shoulder. A second later that same arm reached forward, grabbing the shaft of the halberd right behind where the jackal was holding it in both hands.

The jackal-man was no match for a werewolf’s strength and Loup wrenched the halberd out of his grip, belting it across the face with his other hand, breaking the jackal-man’s jaw.

then he growled and changed, becoming a werewolf as he barreled into another of the creatures, taking a slice on one shoulder, which began to heal almost at once. His next blow crashed into the creature's chest, hurling it backwards and causing it to release its halberd.

Grabbing at it, Loup cut down another of the creatures, before whirling and blocking the blow from another. Now armed with a halberd in either hand, Loup hacked down several more by the time Suzaku and Yubelluna joined him on the ground. Above them, several of the Shinsengumi flew their carpets in close overwatch, raining down death directly onto the heads of those below.

Behind him, several of the undead beasts went up and flames as Suzaku tossed down a talisman between them. Suzaku clapped her hands together, and several other talismans rose from around her waist, launching themselves forward in a specific pattern. "Come forth, dearest Zhūquè (Vermillion Bird)!"

The talisman all burst into fire, the fire reaching back to Suzaku, connecting to her like chains, then seeming to almost pull a bird made of fire out of her chest. Three times as large as a normal phoenix, with much larger talons than a normal bird, it twisted around, reaching down to nuzzle her cheek as the summoning spell ended.

The touch of the talisman's fire should have burned her, let alone the touch of a bird made entirely of fire. But the Himejima clan were very distantly descended from the Shinto god of fire, and Suzaku had been chosen by Zhūquè as head of the clan because she embodied that connection better than any living member of the clan, including the former head.

Now Suzaku smiled, reaching up to scratch under the bird's chin for a brief second as if it was a favored pet before gesturing with her other hand. "Defend the people," she ordered.

As those selfsame citizens looked up in shock and growing wonder, the giant bird burst forward in a sheet of lightning and a battle cry that would've caused any gryphon envy as it crashed into, and through a series of the scorpion monsters, frying them in place. Better yet, its very presence made the undead creatures back away, while the undead scarab beetles everywhere started to combust, the heat coming off the fire bird destroying them without direct contact.

With the spirit beast doing his best to guard the people all around her, Suzaku turned her attention to laying down additional talismans, tossing them in front of the hotel's entrance and those of its nearest fellows, where they rested on the ground and began to create anti-undead fields in front of the building entrances. "Into the hotels!" she shouted in English, grateful for once that she had gone to high school and learned that language before entering the family business because she had completely forgotten about casting a translation spell. "The hotels will be defended against these beasts!"

Several of the people around below Suzaku heard that and moved in that direction, shouting out her words in turn. But there was still too much panic, and far too many of the

attackers in and among the civilians, killing with impunity. There were even too many people around Loup for Suzaku to dare to use any Oni. There didn't seem to be enough space on the now crowded street to conjure any of them into being.

A second later, her carpet shifted, and she quickly twisted around, a spell on her lips as her fingers began to form the gestures needed to fry whatever beast had decided to attack her, before she paused, staring at Yubelluna. Yubelluna nodded to her, reflecting dryly, "When you have a chance Suzaku, you might want to get dressed. Honestly, I can see where Akeno's tendencies come from even clearer now."

Those words brought Suzaku's mind to the fact that she was running around in... well an extremely sexy bondage outfit to be frank, a latex outfit that covered her large bust and stomach like a second skin before narrowing to almost resemble a particularly tight swimsuit below, her nipples and camel toe on display. Beyond that she wore fishnet stockings, stiletto heels, and fishnet gloves. So yes, it left very little to the imagination, showing exactly what kind of fun she and Loup had been having earlier.

But that thought didn't stay in Suzaku's mind for very long, as Yubelluna gestured with both arms. Energy seemed to crackle all around her, and as Suzaku watched, small, delineated squares appeared all about the heads of several of the jackal man, the bodies of the giant scorpions, and even the Mummies and other undead monsters. The beetles who had survived the sacred beast seemed to be able to move fast enough to not get caught in whatever was going to happen, but the others... "Image Bomber!"

One moment, the crowd had been trying to push forward, the only clear zones around Loup and the sacred beast aided by the areas where Suzaku had launched her talisman to keep undead at bay. The next, throughout the entire street there wasn't a single enemy beyond the scarab beetles as everything in sight lost their heads or simply exploded into bloody chunks. The people on the street were still terrified, and more than a few of them were now splattered with gore, but they were alive.

Instantly, Suzaku shouted out, "What are you lot waiting for, get moving!" This seemed to galvanize the crowd, and they surged forward into the various hotels, most of them having the wherewithal to avoid stepping on the talismans on the ground, which were still glowing with stored energy even after having destroyed so many undead.

To one side of the now-cleared street there was a circle where four different streets, two of which were pedestrian only streets, met. In the center of the circle was a tree and a tiny park. While Suzaku got the civilians moving, Yubelluna turned in that direction, her eyes beginning to glow. A second later, as monsters and undead attempted to attack from that direction, the tree came alive, its branches reaching down to smash, grab, toss or otherwise destroy any monsters within its reach.

Seeing this, Loup moved forward, holding an area to one side and at an angle from the tree, which held the center of the area. Nor was the tree the only danger within that small park. As soon as any creature stepped onto the grass, the grass beneath them shot upwards, grabbing and cutting. The scarab beetles who passed through it were speared to death by the grass while monsters or undead found their feet becoming tangled. And while they were caught, Yubelluna's Blast Touch attack struck via the medium of the nature. This left Loup to defend against a horde of undead animals, particularly crocodiles and lions, coming from the other direction.

With Yubelluna and Loup holding one side of the street, Harry directed a third of the newly arrived Aurors to the other side of the street in front of the hotel. He then tasked Hermione with creating barriers, thick transfigured walls of concrete, to protect the backs of the buildings while Tonks led a team of five leprechauns down through the hotel to make certain it was clear of undead. With them went the dog, who seemed just as eager to take the fight to the attackers. They would then do the same for the other buildings Suzaku and Hermione had turned into refuge zones.

With this creation of a protective zone, the people began to calm down, clearing the streets. This allowed Suzaku to lay down further talismans, while several of her other family members arrived. This, and the looks she was now getting from the still panicking people below caused Suzaku to retreat for a time to change her outfit.

By the time Suzaku came back out dressed more normally in a Miko outfit, which was her equivalent of a battle suit, many of the people below were beginning to ask questions, although those questions were worded very politely and very low to one another, as out past Yubelluna and Loup's screen monsters and undead were still trying to get past them. Worse, those undead were no longer the monsters of before. Where they had been limited to animals and Mummies, now they were Ottoman janissaries armed with muskets, who took to the rooftops, or went to one knee to fire at the tree or the werewolf. Neither the tree nor Loup cared, but those musket balls were still killing civilians.

And from the other direction, the Aurors were not doing nearly as good a job at defending the muggles as they should've been from the monsters who made up the majority of the attackers on that side. There, people were dying to spellfire, just as much as they were dying to the monsters. Those monsters were also continually being reinforced by more monsters appearing wherever the mind behind the fog covering the ground of the city wished them to. But seeing people entering the hotels, the civilians from out beyond this street were still moving forward.

Idly, Suzaku wondered why there were so many people out on the streets, until she saw to the Auror side of the defense several monsters bursting out of one of the buildings, their weapons stained with blood. *Oh yes, I did hear the others say that the monsters seem to have a predilection towards entering buildings.*

That caused a shiver to go down Suzaku's spine as she stared at the buildings around them. At this time of night, the majority of the people in the city were asleep, and so there was no way to tell just how many must have died already in this attack. *If this attack is really citywide...*

But the sight of a group of leprechauns being flown across the street to the buildings on the other side caused Suzaku to rally. With that, she began to direct her clan members forward, ordering several to set up a defensive line with the Aurors using their summoned Oni. As the red monsters began to appear and smash their enemies to the dust, Suzaku directed her own spectral beast to help clear the side streets, and then move up into a guard position above them, having seen harpies appearing in the air above. "This is going to be a long night..." she reflected aloud.

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As Kiba and the leprechauns with them began their frantic report and Loup, Yubelluna and Suzaku began to fight against the tide of attackers around the hotel, Akeno and Kala came down from on high, shaking their heads. "There doesn't seem to be a large force in the air yet, but that can only be a matter of time. And Harry, this attack is citywide!" Akeno reported grimly. "There's not a single power source anywhere to be seen, and when we flew lower, both of us heard fighting and combat everywhere."

"We didn't get low enough in most cases to see what was going on, but the Aurors did, and they are fighting back, but it looks like the talismans we spread throughout the city were removed for the most part. Beyond that, I can't say what happened to them. There's just too many attackers and far too many people too," Kala added, her tone worried. This was reminding her far too much of her days in the Army of Heaven fighting Satan's hosts, with the added concern of a monstrous noncombatant population.

For a second, Harry's thoughts ran parallel with Kiba, wondering if the smaller attacks they had been dealing with since getting their feet under them had been to lull Harry personally into believing that whoever is behind this wouldn't perform a large-scale attack, despite what they had discovered about Maagh and how ancient he might be.

But Harry couldn't afford to dwell on his shortcomings right now, instead they had to deal with the matter at hand. "We're dealing with two different spells still, maybe four. The fog creates the monsters or at least gives whoever is behind this an area where they can be conjured into being. We're also dealing with the undead, but those can be taken care of with talismans."

At that point, Husukai appeared, leading the Shinsengumi who had been on duty here in Alexandria. Husukai was very concerned about those forces but knew better than to hare off

without a plan. Above him, the ready force of Alexandria, a hundred Aurors and Shinsengumi hovered, awaiting orders with more Shinsengumi exiting the hotel to join them.

That meant most of their ready forces were assembled here, bar Tonks, who wasn't back yet from where Harry had sent her off to find Proudfoot and the group with Kiba.

Knowing they needed more people here, Harry turned, racing into the master bedroom to the Fal stone there. An instant later, he thrust his mind down into it, connecting to the Undertaking within. But when he attempted to teleport himself back to Danan, there was no answering connection.

That's impossible! he thought, stunned. Once more, Harry reached into the Fal stone, connecting to the portion of the Undertaking within, feeling the magic within the stone respond. But there was no corresponding connection to the rest of the Undertaking on Danan. Nor even to the rest of Ireland. Instead, there was just a feeling of a line cut, physically removed from the rest of the network, somehow.

"Dammit!" He grunted, slamming his hand against the wall, leaving a hole there. *How the bloody fucking hell is that possible? Someone created a ward to block the Undertaking!? A chill went through Harry as he realized suddenly how that could have occurred. Someone has been able to observe me using it through the local magi-sphere!! FUCK! I was too complacent. This, this is my fault...*

"What is it?" Hermione asked.

"I, I can't reach Danan," Harry replied, trying to power more power into the Undertaking within the stone, trying to overwhelm the warding, guilt rising within him. He got nowhere, though, and pulled back after a moment, shaking his head. "Someone has somehow created a field that can keep me from reaching it, cutting this stone out of the Undertaking."

"Is that even possible?" Padma asked, now looking very afraid, while Hermione frowned, staring at the stone, her mind a whirl.

"Possible or not, it's what's happened, which means we're on our own."

"If they have been able to shut down your dimension walking, I would wager they have also blocked out portkeys. Although doing that over a whole nation would be incredible," Hermione muttered. "But if they could perhaps use another Blessed item, or perhaps even have access to deific magic, the incredible becomes the all-too-possible," Hermione muttered. "The Nome reaction teams, they..."

The screams from outside broke into Hermione's ruminations.

"Harry, there are flyers now, undead creatures, harpies, and those flying snakes, a lot of them. Whatever is going on out there, it's growing," Kala's voice echoed back to him. "Tiamat is

keeping them off away for now, but it's only a matter of time before they get too close for her fire to be of much use without harming the innocents below."

For a moment, Harry was torn, as he didn't know what to do first, guilt and regret building within his mind as he contemplated how badly he had underestimated the opposition, how overconfident he had been in assuming nothing could block the Undertaking from working. But there were a few things clear right away. One, they needed to organize. And two, Harry had already proven in the past few days that he could at the very least deal with the fog. That last fact gave him an idea going forward, and he smiled grimly as he threw off his self-reproach to get on with things.

"We're going to need to get in contact with the locals. We'll move out in force, head to the nearest police station, get in touch with them and use them to communicate with the rest of the police. Magic alone can't turn the tides here. We need boots on the ground. But first..."

Rolling his neck from side to side, Harry left the bedroom, heading out to the balcony once more, where he gripped the railing with both hands. And on one arm, Ddraig appeared as Harry called the Boosted Gear forth. *"Are you going to be able to help me with this?"*

Ddraig, sensing what Harry wanted and the need for it, agreed instantly. ***"Heh, while I might not have much ability with light magic, even sealed away like this, I am a freaking DRAGON, Potter. Fire is second nature to me. And I can act like a battery for at least half of this spell too. Do it."***

With a smile and a mental thank you, Harry held up Ddraig above his head. Concentrating, he reached into his Occlumentic realm, bringing down the mental defenses he had created there to keep his aura in check. The next instant, the feeling of divinity, of a being who ruled wherever he stood, crashed out from Harry.

Instantly, Hermione and Padma both curtsied before they even realized what they were doing. To a man, the Shinsengumi waiting nearby went to their knees on their carpets, even Husukai, the leprechauns mere seconds behind them while all around them the Aurors nearly crashed their broomsticks, bowing their heads in instant supplication. Kala whimpered, and Akeno trembled, biting her lip as they stared lovingly while the others simply stared at Harry in shock as the feeling of his full aura of authority washed over them.

However, that was nothing compared to the reaction of the undead and monsters around the hotel. The monsters all screamed in fury or fear, the harpies and flying cobras fleeing instantly, while the undead in the vicinity simply vanished, the power sustaining their undead forms coming apart under the sudden pressure of Harry's presence. The Jackal-men and scorpions were the only ones unaffected, simply becoming angrier for some reason.

Then, he began to mold his magic and aura into a new spell, thrusting it outwards. When his aura crashed into the fog, the fog covering the city gave for a moment, but only a bit, as this time there was another mind behind that fog directing it.

A mind that was not human. There was a vast weight to it, a feeling of age and a lack of emotion, but there was also distance. Wherever that mind was, it was a long way away from here in Alexandria.

But that gave Harry more power to a point. Even an Egyptian god, with a natural and long-perfected connection to the background magic of Egypt, could not bring their will to bear as well as someone at the point of contact.

“GRAAAAAAA!!!!!!” With a roar, Harry lit up like a light-based bonfire as he combined his aura with the Patronus spell, pushing hard against the mind within that fog.

The mind empowering the fog didn’t give away. Instead, it stubbornly clung on, defending its working. But Harry’s will and power were stronger, and the fog around the hotel began to dissipate, the area ever increasing.

The effect was immediate. Where before monsters and undead had been able to spring into being anywhere on the battlefield, now no further enemies were spawning. Yubelluna, Loup and the rest down below instantly took advantage of this, wiping out many of the monsters there and then pushing forwards, while above them Tiamat and the Aurors also took advantage, pushing back the hordes of flying snakes and harpies. In this way, they created a free zone around the hotel, and Yubelluna began to urge anyone still on the streets into the various hotels.

But Harry wasn’t done. Even as he kept on pressing his Aura out through the city, pushing back the fog and creating an area where undead could not exist, and new monsters could not appear, Harry was creating a spell in his mind. *The darkness is going to be a major problem, best to solve it now.*

Over the next few minutes, Ddraig and Harry had created a new enchantment. Essentially it was a mix between Patronus, Lumos, and creating a Blessing out of Harry’s Aura. Combining them and then pushing in as much power as he could into the working took Harry some time, but eventually, it was finished.

From the Boosted Gear’s palm flashed a ball of light so bright that no one, not even Harry, could look at it. “**SOLARUS!**” Harry and Ddraig bellowed as one before Harry hurled it upwards.

A moment later, a new sun rose over Alexandria, turning night into day and shattering the power of the Curse of Kek wherever its light shone. This new sun, which glowed yellow and silver in a rolling mass of magical power, contained a portion of Harry’s Aura. Diffuse it might be, but as long as Harry continued empowering it with a smidgeon of his core – much like he could Yubelluna – it would keep the Curse at bay. Beyond that, Harry had also included a Patronus-like effect, hoping that it would help the men and women of the city fight through this.

After getting over their shock, the Aurors and Shinsengumi raced off in different directions, pushing out into the rest of the city as they began to take the battle to the horde of flying cobras and harpies who had retreated earlier from around the hotel. Others started to strafe the ground here and there, slaying monsters on the ground while Harry stumbled back, nearly going to his knees as he grabbed the balcony railing.

Kala and Akeno raced to his side, barely beating out Hermione, but after a moment, Harry waved them off before raising his hand to his throat, murmuring, "Everyone, you might want to cover your ears."

Everyone there obeyed with alacrity, watching as Harry began to shout, his voice now amplified by a monstrously overpowered Sonorous, booming out over the city. **"Alexandrians, men and women of this magnificent city. You are facing a crisis of such size and horror that none of you have ever dreamed could exist, but you do not face it alone! Do not give in to fear and panic. Obey the local police wherever you are, arm yourselves and fight! My name is Harry Potter, and I and my allies are with you. Set aside any questions about what is happening or why, deal with the problems in front of you, protect your homes and your families, and we will all get through this together!"**

Ending the Sonorous, Harry turned to his friends and loved ones, about to issue orders only to be interrupted by a querulous, shocked voice from the air to one side of the balcony. "P, Potter, what do you think you're doing!? We have to contain this, and you're making it worse!?"

As Harry had cast his Solarus spell, Proudfoot and Tonks had arrived, and now Proudfoot was looking at him, aghast.

Harry reached over and grabbed the man by his robes, pulling him in and glaring at him as he gestured down to the street far below. In the now cleared area, dozens, perhaps as many as a hundred or more bodies, could be seen lying unmoving on the ground, while dozens of wounded were being helped by men and women from the crowd of civilians who had just found themselves in the center of a warzone. "Contain what?!"

"The, the statute of secrecy, we can't just spout out about magic like that. That would be the end of us, whatever's happening..." Proudfoot babbled. He'd done alright up to this point both as a combatant and as the local Auror commander, but the sheer scale of what they were facing now had unmanned him. "We, we need to contain it, the Wizarding World, we won't survive if the nonmagicals learn about..."

"Look around at my party, Proudfoot. What do you see?"

Proudfoot did so and, for the first time, realized that many of the people Harry had brought with him into Egypt were not human. Kala stood to one side, her light gray wings flapping in preparation for taking off once more. Tiamat had momentarily disappeared behind a skyscraper but was now fully visible in the light of the artificial sun, her dragon form cutting

through the hordes of snakes and harpies like a battleship through a shoal of fish. Close by, Akeno, with her hybrid angel/devil wings out, waved at him cheerily, in a very good mood. Being near Harry when he was all commanding was a monstrous turn on even if Akeno knew now was not the time for such thoughts.

“I’m not going to go into it now, Proudfoot, but realize there are other magical communities out there. Communities that I have befriended, which could be impacted by what is going on here. Then look out across this city, where men, women and children are dying, dying because we failed to suppress whatever this is. Containment has failed! Now we all need to stand together, or millions are going to die!”

Proudfoot still didn’t look convinced. Belief in the Statute of Secrecy was almost a religion in the Wizarding World in its own right. But right now, he knew this problem was way too big for him to deal with. Afterward, maybe they could try to put the cork back on the genies’ bottle. Yet to do that, they had to survive, and if Harry was willing to take the heat for whatever happened, Proudfoot was more than happy to let him. “Wh, what would you have us do?”

Nodding once, Harry turned to one of the leprechauns, all of whom were women, most of the men had gone with Issei and Kiba when they went out earlier. “Ysabel, work with Proudfoot here to sound the recall. We can’t afford to let our smaller detachments be ground under by whatever is causing this. We need to consolidate here in Alexandria, work with the locals and then spread out once more in an organized manner. Any Auror task group which isn’t able to create a defensible zone is to pull back to Alexandria.”

With that, he turned to Tiamat, shouting out, “Tiamat!” he waited a second until the massive chromatic dragon turned her head towards him before continuing. “We need to bring in the nonmagical military. And with this many Aurors, we don’t necessarily need you to achieve air superiority. Head out to the nearest Army base and convince them to pull back to here. Maybe they could even have some communication equipment hardened enough that it’s survived the Curse we felt earlier.”

Tiamat nodded at that, also knowing that doing so would make her a target for the enemy. *Let them come and face my fires!* She snarled to herself, turning on her tail and flying higher into the air, pumping her wings strongly and heading away.

“Kala, Akeno, you’re in charge in the air. Proudfoot, when you’re done issuing the recall order, grab whoever is in charge of the medical side of things, make certain Lighthouse Lane is secure then shift them to here,” Harry ordered, pointing downwards. “Once you’re done with that, find me. We’ll be pushing out to the nearest police station. We need them to start getting organized...”

While Harry continued to bark out orders, the magical sun continued to have an impact. Suddenly, with monster losing the ability to appear anywhere their summoners wanted, the

defenders throughout the city could create a functional front line to combat them. The fog that had been the visible sign of the Army Breaker's spell area started to disappear, retreating almost like an invading army being pressed back. Undead could still appear, but only in shadows away from the direct impact of the magical sun above them. This made being inside even worse, but there was nothing Harry could do about that.

Yet, for all the magical impact Harry's aura had, his words and his pushing back the Curse of Kek with the sun's radiance seemed to have even more of an impression on the civilians and police of Alexandria. Outside Lighthouse Lane, people throughout the city had been panicking, scrambling away from the horrors among them without rhyme or reason, terrified and afraid. But as the sun appeared in the sky and his voice burst out over the city, Harry's words acted like someone had just shoved a steel bar up their spines.

As Suzaku watched, astonished, several of the humans near the front of the defensive line of Loup and the tree grabbed up weapons, some makeshift, some having been dropped from the conjured beasts and moved to defend themselves and their friends. The same happened at the other intersection, and at the entrances of two restaurants she could see from here. Near that portion of the battlefield, several policemen had been part of the mob trying to escape from further away in the city into this area which seemed to have mystical defenders protecting it. Now, they turned, one of them having had the wherewithal to at least keep his pistol. He began to lay down covering fire while his fellows grabbed up halberds and began to fight back

As she watched this, Suzaku smiled, shaking her head. "Mah, Akeno-chan, your new husband certainly likes to make an impression. I think we might have a chance to turn this around! Around here, anyway." *I shudder to think of what is going on elsewhere.*

OOOOOOO

Akhenaten shook his head in shock. *How by the names of every dead god in existence did Potter do that?! Potter's power I can comprehend, at least. But the ability to use it and pure will to just push both Curses and Blessings out of his area of control? That shouldn't have been impossible! And the creation of that, that thing, that sun? While he couldn't 'see' anything through the background magic of Egypt, Akhenaten could feel it when a large amount of magic was being used, and the amount Harry had just used was horrifying.*

After a moment of staring into nothing, Akhenaten recovered some of his poise, realizing that Potter's area of control ended at the outskirts of Alexandria. *And he can't get through our warding against his strange method of transportation. While we might not have been able to block all portkey travel, we were able to block that. And I can still sense what is going on within the city, whereas he has no idea what is going on in the rest of Egypt. Where things are proceeding much more satisfactorily.*

OOOOOOO

The Aurors stationed in the Asyut governorate (or Nome to the wizards) heard the recall order, but the officer in charge shouted out, "NO! We have to contain this."

To his credit, the officer in charge, a chief inspector from America, was not thinking about the Statute of Secrecy. Instead, he was staring at the slaughter of the civilians going on below in the city of the same name. He and his men had been doing all they could, but they were losing ground, or rather airspace, badly. And he had lost twenty men so far, with more wounded.

"I understand ya, laddie," the leprechaun assigned to him said. The short being's hammer was matted with gore. Indeed, his entire body was covered in blood so much so that he resembled nothing so much as a mound of blood and pus stuck on the front of the commander's broomstick. "Yet that be the order and tell the truth, inspector. Can we win this?"

As the leprechaun asked that, another Auror was torn from his broomstick by a harpy who had somehow dodged around a bowel exploding curse, his wand falling from his nerveless grasp. The harpy didn't live for more than a second afterward and wasn't even able to tear the Auror question apart. But none of his companions could get to him fast enough to save him from the fall. His dopplering scream ended in a meaty smack below as he crashed into a crocodile below. The fall killed beast and man in a moment of quintessential irony that only the leprechaun could smile at.

"...No," the American, whose name was Steve, ground out. "I don't think we can win this. Pull back," he ordered, "Gain altitude and away," he shouted, using a Sonorous to make certain his voice reached all of his men. "Retreat to Alexandria."

Some of the reaction teams couldn't get away. They were too embroiled in their separate battles, unable to gain distance. Others refused the order. Even the leprechauns who could, possibly, have gotten away decided to stay with them. The leprechauns were not rats. They were not going to leave these sinking ships.

In the dark skies above Giza, Shen stared at Leopold, his eyes wild. They weren't winning here, but he had been given an extra portion of talismans, and that had helped tremendously. Moreover, he had raced down and gotten in contact with a few policemen below. And despite all the concerns Harry and the others had about them, they had started to even use the monoliths as protection points.

But he couldn't argue with the fact they were still losing here. And his men were paying for it. Whoever was behind this was now learning how to fight a magical force like them, and that basically meant flooding the airspace and attacking from multiple angles at once with a force consisting of around four flying cobras to two harpies, with sphynxes to attack from above occasionally.

"All right," Shen snarled. "We'll pull back and up by teams, doing as much damage as we can before we port out. I need to go and tell the police down there that we're pulling back."

Leopold, still his normal taciturn self, patted Shen on the knee. "It's war, laddie," he said gruffly. "Sometimes, hard choices need to be made."

Shen nodded, staring down into the darkened streets of the city, lit only by random fires, the distant gleam of a monolith and the flashing of guns. "I thought I knew war," he said to himself, even as he began to leap over to his broomstick, with the other two Shinsengumi with him doing the same. "I was part of the battle against Kokabiel and his legion. And I am a senior investigator. I thought I knew evil. Turns out, there's always more to learn."

The leprechauns snort rang in his ears as he descended towards the police cordon, shouting out over the turmoil of gunfire. "Sergeant! Sergeant, you're not going to like what I'm going to say, but..."

All told, only about three-fifths of the reaction teams began to pull back to Alexandria. And all of those who had already arrived, thanks to portkeys, had taken losses. But they were still obeying the recall order, and in so doing, creating a force that could perhaps start to fight back against whoever was behind all this.

OOOOOOO

While Harry's actions had destroyed the power of the Curse of Kek and badly weakened the initial assault on Alexandria, beyond his area of control, that was definitely not the case. Even beyond the environs directly around the Nile, undead, monsters and more were being seen. Creatures out of myth, crocodile or jackal-headed warriors, massive scorpions and hordes of scarab beetles joined Janissaries from the Ottoman Empire, cavalry from the Mamluk Empire, and Roman legionaries in assaulting the living.

The lack of power, light, electricity and so forth combined with the night itself to become another weapon of the Harrowing. Darkness was perhaps the oldest fear of mankind, and tonight that primordial fear was back, stalking the streets of modern metropolises in all its terror, the full power of Kek's Curse screaming its way into minds throughout Egypt.

Across the nation, other officials, mostly police and local Mullahs, tried to create similar pockets of order but with scant results. Egypt's population was too centralized in its cities, and there were too few police for the number of people who suddenly found themselves awake and fleeing for their lives from undead and monsters. As a result, order in Egypt collapsed with minutes of the Harrowing's beginning.

The military bases closest to Alexandria were no exception. Several were overrun right away. Others were able to survive a bit longer...

General Sala De Mar, the commandant of Base Epsilon, Northern Military Region, stared at the communications officer who had just been barged into his room, slipping out of bed with a glare on his face that meant trouble for the younger man. While deep into his middle age, Sala was, while heavy-set, still strong and spry on his feet. If the young idiot was doing this as

some form of hazing, he'd find that out to their cost. "What do you mean, our electronics are malfunctioning?" He gazed over at his clock, frowning as he noticed it wasn't on and that none of his lights were apparently working anymore either.

"Er, as you can see, sir, the, the electronics aren't working. There was a surge that shorted out the communication equipment. I, I thought it was just us sir, and had come to report to the duty officer that there had been a surge, but, but sir, I haven't seen a single light on my way here."

"And what of the Duty Officer, Colonel Ramses?" Sama asked, getting over his habitual anger of being woken up as quickly as he could. "and what about internal communications? Surely the old-fashioned lines still work?"

"The duty officer is unconscious, he, he was wearing a headset at the time, and its shorting out seems to have knocked him out. A, as for the base internal communication system, sir, it's gone too."

"That's impossible. Our communication inside the base are LAN lines officer," the general grumbled. "Even an EMP wouldn't do much." While nowhere near as well-trained or as technologically advanced as the more powerful countries of the world, Egypt used some of the same terminology, and every country knew about what an electromagnetic pulse could do to un-shielded technology.

"The connections might be good, sir, but the systems at either end are out," the man said, calming down in the face of the general's calm questioning.

Screams began outside, and the general moved to his window, staring out into the near-black expanse of the base, thankful that there seemed to be a full moon out tonight. This let him see that several hundred men had come out of their barracks buildings, shouting and milling around.

Beyond them, near the tank depot, Sala could make out a few dozen more men. They had to have been doing some late-night work on one of the vehicles. Sala remembered reading a report on that before heading to bed. Now he could barely make out their movements in the dark. No doubt, he thought, they were arguing on who would take the blame for what had happened.

Yet as Sala watched, a fog of some kind came out of the darkness, and from within that fog, monsters roared.

Sala stared, watching as creatures out of legend appeared, attacking the men he could see outside. A few in the group around the barracks had flashlights, and he watched as they fell to a group of jackal-headed warriors. The men by the tanks were slightly better off, one of them being an officer with a pistol. A few shots rang out over the slowly rising clamor of battle as he

fired into what looked like undead by the light of that group's own flashlights, and then the gun fell silent.

Yet watching his men fight and the sight of a few of the attacking monsters on the ground let Sala rally his scattered wits. Whatever was causing this, he had to deal with it. "All right!" Sala bellowed at the top of his lungs, keeping his voice calm and controlled, not allowing a hint of the near-histrionic fear he was feeling to show. Right now, his men needed that calm, and by Allah, he would give it to them. "Let's get organized here."

"You," he growled, turning to the coms officer. "Find six other soldiers nearby. I need runners. If we can't use our electronics, we need to trust word-of-mouth." He turned to another officer nearby, one who had been running towards his office air, then his secretary, who had had a house nearby. "You," he said, pointing at the secretary. "Fetch me a loudspeaker. Let us hope that whatever is happening with our communications and electronics hasn't spread that far down the technological chain. You," he went on, turning to the officer. "once you have those runners, gather 10 men with you. You're in charge of my protection detail."

He turned to face the booming noise of an APC's mounted gun. Nearby in the other direction towards the nearest small arms weapons lockers, he could hear more firing. Good, that means we might have a fighting chance. "Rally, rally on the armory!" He began to bellow, trying to make some sense of this chaos, trying desperately to keep his men from panicking, even as he knew that his command was coming apart at the seams.

OOOOOO

Nor did the nation's capital somehow prove immune to the Harrowing. And there, unfortunately, the locals had no force of wizards to defend them. Instead, they had to rely on their own resources and the exorcists and Aza'imi under Dulio's command.

Xenovia, Dulio and Irina were staying in a simple hostel run by the locals. Both girls had still been awake at the time of the attack, discussing, for the umpteenth time, whether or not Dulio was wrong to turn down the idea of working with Harry. When the screams began outside, both were quickly up and moving, coming face to face with a cavalry charge of Mamluk warriors wielding long lances and their distinctive yatagan: short, curved sabers. But of course, living people would not have had holes in their bodies or bones showing.

"By His name, where are they all coming from! Excalibur Explosion!" Xenovia shouted, bringing her blade up and around into the first such charging horror. The undead creature exploded, the bits hurling back into its fellows, smashing aside horses and undead men alike.

Irina was a bit more surgical in her attack and far faster than her taller fellow. She raced forward into the horde of undead cavalry, slicing at the horse's legs with her own Excalibur fragment, Mimic, the sword shifting from one type of sword to another. The horses tumbled,

tangling up their riders here and there, where they were struck more indiscriminately by Xenovia.

The hostel had put the two young women on the far side of its environs from the male segment. The followers of Islam believed in segregating men from women even when they acknowledged both could be equal in their devotion to Allah. But the battle had come to that area too, and now Dulio burst out from the compound, leading the others. "Come on," he shouted to the two girls, his normal affable, almost lazy attitude in stark abeyance now. "We need to get out there!"

The group of exorcists began to push out of their compound, while above them, storm clouds began to gather, a sign of Dulio's Longinus-level Sacred Gear, the Zenith Tempest, which had appeared around his forearms in the form of halo-like circles of power. Lightning arced down under his command, and portions of the earth rose to spear this or that undead at need, but his attacks and the forward momentum of the exorcists halted as they burst out of their compound, staring in every direction they could see from here, on the corner where several streets came together.

It was all they could do for a second to stare in horror. For one thing, Cairo's electricity was out. What few lights they could see were from scattered makeshift torches wielded by people who hoped the fire would work on undead. In the distance, a low keening wail of fear had begun to rise throughout the city, while in front of them, masses of people, both dressed for sleep and dressed like normal, were screaming and running away, trampling one another in their effort to find some kind of safety from this nightmare come alive.

Irina and Dulio both simply stared, aghast for a moment, while several of the other exorcists opened fire, slaying this or that undead they could see among the mass of people. But with the enemy so interspersed among the locals, there was scant little they could do right now.

Xenovia didn't panic. Instead, she grabbed Irina's arm, pulling her back, then shouting out, "Onto the roof! We need to get higher."

"Agreed," Dulio announced, staring all around them seeing more enemies appearing behind the initial rush of civilians and moving past their secret compound. Three scorpion men moved down the streets, slaying anyone who entered their weapon's range. They each wielded a scimitar in either hand while lashing out in every direction, crushing bodies with their claws or poisoning with their stingers as they came. Alongside them strode several crocodile men, wielding long spears.

Scowling, Dulio gestured, and lightning fell in a wave of light, crashing into these enemies. *At least they aren't as mixed in with the crowd as the undead and others are.*

Thanks to the light from Dulio's attacks, many of the exorcists began to lay down holy fire on anyone they could tell was undead. Since all Undead were particularly susceptible to

Light Magic, just like Devils, the undead came apart at even a grazing shot. Although those ricochets caused some carnage among the civilians, the exorcists continued to shoot.

The one scorpion man who Dulio had missed proved to be more durable. Light magic didn't do anything to it, but enough bullets did, and it eventually fell, several feet away from the exorcists. But behind them came more and the background screaming was now a hammer to their senses.

"We need to get high," Xenovia repeated, gesturing up to the roof. "Come on!" Quickly, all of the exorcists leaped up onto the rooftop of the one-story building, where they stared around in growing concern. The entire city seems to be under attack. The undead and monsters could be spotted on every street. It might have begun by boiling out of the Nile, but it was now literally everywhere they could see.

"Fear and panic," Dulio grunted, biting his lip as he stared around them, his fingers flickering and sending blasts of air down to hammer this or that monster. An attempt to separate a group of fleeing civilians from a few of the monsters to the left didn't work. He was able to bring up the wall of dirt to block the group, but another group of attackers, this time jackal men, leaped down from another building, slicing into the civilians with wickedly sharp halberds, their jackal-like cackling rising.

Dulio was an extremely experienced, powerful exorcist. He had been in night battles numerous times and was used to the frenetic flashes of light, violence, and the sheer chaos that fighting at night entailed. But never had Dulio seen a battle like this, and never had he been forced to use his Longinus powers on so small a scale to avoid killing the very people he was supposed to save. *Battles should be out in the open away from cities, not like, like this!* Nevertheless, "I'm not certain we can stop this."

"W, what you mean?" Irina gasped as she pulled out a pistol. She fired down into a group of what looked like giant snakes writhing down the street. Light bullets crashed down, doing scant damage until she switched to normal bullets. "We, we have to! We are His holy warriors. We cannot just retreat and let these people to their own devices!"

Xenovia grunted agreement before she heard a sound from behind them. She lashed out instinctively and cleaved what looked like a miniature undead sphinx of some kind into pieces.

"There are too many people, too much panic. If there was a single area of organized resistance, perhaps..."

Then we create one!" Irina shouted, "We can't just do nothing!"

Still wielding his power with all the finesse of a doctor with a scalpel all around them, Dulio frowned in thought, one hand coming up to his rosary for a moment as he prayed for

guidance. Irina's right, but what can we do if we do not know where this spell is coming from!? Oh Lord in heaven, give me some guidance here!

It was as if that prayer had acted like a lodestone. Suddenly Dulio and the others could see dozens, then hundreds of monsters turning in their direction. Many ignored the civilians around them, which proved to be a mixed blessing as they now charged at the rooftop where the exorcists were. Dulio instantly took advantage of this, bringing down his powers on them even more, freezing dozens in place, burning others into ash, but still, the people were getting in his way. "A city is an awful place to fig..."

He never got to finish as, from the back of the compound, several dozen scorpion men began skittered their way up the walls and onto the rooftops.

"Half of you with me," Xenovia ordered, lashing out at a scorpion man and slicing him in half. The rest of you keep firing and beware above!"

Any differences between their religions were set aside now as the men around them obeyed Xenovia's command. The Aza'imi moved forward, wielding their jambiya or guns against their enemy. One man fell instantly, pierced through and raised up over the battle by a scorpion man's stinger screaming as the stinger pumped poison into his already ravaged body. Another man fell screaming a moment later, his arm chopped off at the wrist. But the enemy was losing far more people than the exorcists were.

Other Aza'imi, with Irina helping them, fired into the air above them, where undead sphinxes and some kind of flying snake tried to swarm them, only for Dulio to wipe them out by creating a very controlled, localized tornado above them. Irina and the others instantly turned their attention to the other sides of the compound, defending their rooftop position.

Their defense faltered once more as, with Dulio now concentrating on the airborne threat, another group of undead was able to flank them. Musket balls crashed into and around them, with devastating results. More than a third of the exorcists were knocked to the ground, although thanks to their training, the exorcists had become more durable than normal humans and could survive the impact of the relatively slow-moving muskets. But broken bones and shattered arms were enough to cost many their lives to the swarming scorpions before Xenovia, who had used a Scorpion Man corpse for cover, could finish off the last group of the scorpion men who had made it to the roof.

Turning from his work protecting the air above them, Dulio saw the source of the firing were groups of Ottoman janissaries standing on a nearby rooftop with their distinctive trench guns. Some were even hurling grenades down. Putting the janissaries down took him no time at all, but even Irina knew they were losing this fight even as the attack on them ebbed away for a moment.

Grunting, Dulio gestured them away over the rooftops. "Move! We have to link up with some other local forces. We are too few to fight this ourselves."

“But, but!” Irina stared down into the streets of Cairo below them, tears in her eyes as the fearful masses of people spread out. “But...”

Keeping her own face stoic with difficulty, Xenovia took Irina by the shoulder and pulled her along, looking at one of the Aza’imi, her voice taut with fury and growing grief. “You all know this city best. Where should we go?”

Nodding, the man gestured to the south. “Over there. If we keep going and don’t get bogged down, we should find an ancient mosque. There, we should be able to find clear areas and a place we can defend from.”

Dulio grimaced but nodded. “I need to get some space to really let loose with my powers. There are too many civilians around. If we can organize them, get them out of the way...”

Shivering slightly at the idea that this young but insanely powerful Sacred Gear user hadn’t yet used his powers to their fullest, the man nodded and moved on. But he didn’t comment on what Dulio had said, knowing that any attempt to control this madness was a lost cause. Not unless they could find a place safe from the monsters and undead.

The next twenty minutes was a nightmare for Irina as they made their way through the city, sometimes using the rooftops, sometimes fighting through houses or buildings, then along streets before once more trying to hide from groups of flying enemies. Dulio was now conserving his power, hoping they could find a place with natural defenses or at least find some organized resistance.

And everywhere Irina looked, they saw bodies of the dead, young, old, children, adults. Some had tried to fight back. Others had been crushed in the mad rush to escape. Here a few police officers had fought to the end, using their car as a bastion. Here several men had joined together, trying to fight back without any weapons. There a mother had tried to shield her children, barring the way into a house only to be cut down. The bodies of the children tore at her heart the most, and for a time, Irina could not stop weeping.

As they ran, Xenovia tried to compartmentalize what she was seeing. She could break down later, not now, and there was something strange about the carnage around her. *Though it makes my blood boil to say it, there aren’t nearly enough bodies. Could, could there actually be some places where these attacks aren’t happening? It isn’t city-wide, or...*

Xenovia’s thoughts cut off as she saw a bright light ahead of them. Then, turning around a corner, they started to see people ahead of them once more. “What is that?”

The people ahead of them had begun to calm down, and there seemed to even be some kind of order to the crowd now. A man shouted over the tumult of the city, “Children and women to the center, near the light. Men and those willing to fight stay near the back. I repeat...”

Given the maze-like nature of the streets of Cairo and the crowd, none of the exorcists could make out what was causing the light, but they were all glad to see some organization in this nightmare. With Irina and Dulio leading them, the exorcists took to the rooftops once more. From there, they could see over the crowd what was causing the light.

This turned out to be a pillar of ancient-looking stone. About nine feet tall, it sat close against a much newer-looking building. It was covered with hieroglyphs, but here in Egypt, that wasn't saying much. Indeed, but for the bright sun-like glow coming from it, it would have been almost blasé.

From above them, a screech of a sphinx's warcry sounded out, and dozens of the undead monsters and the flying snakes dove down on the crowd. At the same time, a group of Jackal men and Undead Cavalry charged down an open lane towards a group of civilians fleeing towards the crowd from the other side compared to the exorcist's position.

Shots were fired from several armed men and a few women on rooftops nearby. The exorcists also raised their weapons as Dulio prepared Zenith Tempest.

But before he could do anything, the undead seemed to breach a ward line. Each of the charging Mamluks was instantly turned to ash, the same occurring above the crowd to the sphinxes. The monsters, too, were turned to ash or turned aside, many of them dying to the shots from the crowd and more to Dulio's attacks.

He smiled, shaking his head with a laugh. "Well, if the Khaos Brigade, or whoever, has found some ancient magic to create these monsters, then it seems as if the ancients created protections against those very things. Come, my friends, we need to use this, admittedly heathen, monolith. Indeed, there might be more such columns out there. We can use them as protected zones, and..."

Even as she listened to Dulio's plans, nodding as they made sense, Xenovia was somewhat uneasy. Using a heathen religious object struck her as wrong, on the one hand, but there was something else too. Something was niggling at the back of her mind.

But whatever it was could not come to the foreground and then was pushed away as Irina volunteered the two of them to lead a group of exorcists around the area while Dulio spoke to the locals. There was work to be done, and dawn was a distant dream.

OOOOOOO

While the impact of Harry's magical power was most clearly felt in his direct vicinity, the impact of his words and his pushing back against the fear that the Curse of Kek was creating spread throughout the city of Alexandria. Combined with the light from the artificial sun he had just created about the city, it gave people throughout the port the most tremendous gift possible at a time like this. It gave them hope.

The same reaction that Suzaku saw in the crowd below her occurred throughout Alexandria. Men and women grabbed up weapons, turning and fighting to defend themselves, their neighbors and loved ones. Children, who had been simply screaming for their mothers or running and hiding, now turned, stomping down at the edge of the scarab beetle swarms, attacking the smaller undead beasts or racing away silently, allowing their parents to fight as best they could.

Most couldn't fight all that well, of course. These were civilians, and gun laws in Egypt were quite severe (and riddled with government-backed corruption), so the best weapons to hand were mostly knives, gardening or construction tools.

In many cases, that didn't really matter. A butcher's cleaver will cut just as well as a combat knife in the hands of a professional cook. A billhook used to grab at and direct crates coming off a ship will cut or grab a living opponent just as easily. Yet those were exceptions, not the rule.

But far better than the civilians standing up for themselves was the reaction of the police force. Where before they too had been panicking each station and indeed each small patrol cut off and on their own among a sea of monsters, now those still among the living started to fight back, rallying the people near them even as they couldn't communicate with anyone out of vocal range, their electronics still not working. Harry's power couldn't do anything about that aspect of the Curse, the damage having already been done.

Normally, most Egyptians viewed the police with some measure of distrust. They knew that the police were primarily a force of suppression and peacekeeping rather than the defense of the people. Yet now they and a few natural leaders among the people began to organize, creating defensive bulwarks against an enemy that could no longer simply be reinforced from anywhere.

The same thing was happening on the magical side of things, Lighthouse Lane already being secured against further undead attacks. Leaving Gabrielle to defend the house, Bill, Fleur and Charlie had quickly stepped up to the plate there, coordinating the defense. By the time Proudfoot's chosen cadre of Aurors returned to organize the locals, they were already using spells and transfiguration to wall up the magical quarter as Fleur led the anti-air defense. But they were being hard-pressed, and no further aid would come from that sector for now.

For now, though, Harry had to move forward with his plans regardless.

Having canvassed much of the city before this, Harry and the others knew where the nearest police station was. So once the streets around the hotel were cleared and guarded by Yubelluna, Suzaku and Husukai leading Aurors, Harry led the others out toward it. But even with Harry with them, it was hard going. While people were now fighting back, others, mostly the young and elderly, were still trying to get away, and as they moved, the group attracted refugees and monsters both.

“Thankfully, whoever is behind this seems to have missed the memo on why guns replaced swords,” Harry mused aloud as Hermione used the spell she had created to lift a mass of civilians into the air. They had just boiled out of a side street and into their small band, with dozens of monsters after them. Those monsters, who had been attacking illusions Harry had created to cover this upward movement, fell seconds later to Harry and Loup’s attacks.

“True,” Hermione murmured, her tone almost clinical as her brain once more slipped into a combat mindset, a mentality that she had hoped never to need again. “Cityscapes are deadly because danger can come from any corner, but if the danger has to close, that does make it a bit easier to deal with.”

Harry wordlessly conjured a shield above them as a group of flying cobras made a divebombing run, spitting poison which Harry had seen activate on contact with the skin. He would have then used a bone exploding hex to blast them out of the air, but behind the cobras, a group of Aurors plummeted down on them, burning or exploding them in turn before heading back up into the skyline of the city, dodging through the fire from several Janissaries. In turn, those Janissaries died from the spell Harry had previously prepared for the cobras, the rooftop they were standing on erupting like it had been hit by a bomb. “Yes, only the Janissaries and cobras have any long-range punch, and it seems that Maagh has a finite number of them to send in at any one time.”

A jackal-man launched himself out of a fourth-story window, but he was caught in midair by another spell from Hermione, which made his bowels burst out of his stomach, reaching up to strangle the creature. At the same time, more monsters came out of other buildings, only to be met with Loup and a group of Oni, who moved through the crowd of civilians, holding the monster’s attention while Hermione twitched around, using her specialized levitation spell once more. Finally, when the civilians were in the air and safe, Harry lashed out with an Onmyodo-style lightning spell, which leaped from attacker to attacker.

In the distance, the sound of more combat could be heard, and Loup motioned with one hand down the street to the next main intersection, his werewolf face twisted in a snarl. “I can smell Kiba in that direction.”

“Jim, Rufus, you’re on defense.” Two of the Aurors with them nodded and moved to shout out instructions to the civilians. Their calm words and the utter destruction of the next group of monsters to attack them kept the civilians calm, while Harry moved forward to join Loup at the front, seeing that the other werewolf was right, Kiba and Issei were indeed leading a group of civilians towards them.

Meanwhile, the dog raced to the side, entering the building the jackal-man had leaped out of. Ysabel and a group of the lady leprechauns went with him, a few leprechauns actually riding the big beast’s back. Others were also nearby, having entered other buildings. Where humans would have had trouble maneuvering inside houses, office buildings and what have you, the dog and leprechauns had proven to be extremely good in the enclosed spaces.

“Ho there!” Kiba shouted, to Harry and Loup, gesturing to a large group of several thousand civilians towards them. “Good to finally see some more friendly faces.” he clasped hands briefly with Harry, before turning his attention to a nearby window out of which a crocodile man attempted to fling a spear only to fall back, one of Kiba’s conjured blades in his neck.

Chuckling wryly, Harry nodded. “True, and at least we were able to meet up as planned.” The two of them had been in nearly constant leprechaun-assisted communication to set this up, but even after the past hour of relative order, having something go well was still an immense relief. He looked past Kiba to the men and women with him, many of whom were armed with double-bladed halberds, makeshift weapons, and even a few police guns, although there weren’t any police among them. The leprechauns who had gone out with Issei and Kiba were all there as well, although they were looking both worse for ware, covered from head to toe in blood, and sheepish as they looked at a few of their female counterparts.

At the back of the group came Issei. Behind him, however, were several dozen monsters, all dead, mostly hacked to pieces, although the men and women who had done it were now giving Issei a wide berth. And from where he was standing, Harry could smell why. “Issei, you, you didn’t use that spell, did you?”

“Heck yes, I did! My Itchy spell, my rectal prolapse spell, even my Stripping spells have all come in handy tonight!” Issei announced proudly, completely oblivious to the faces of the people around him as they moved down the street.

“Well... I suppose all’s fair in war,” Harry murmured before shaking his head, looking at Kiba seriously. “We need to break through to the nearest police station and find someone who can liaise with them, but we also need to retreat with this lot and get them better armed, get the people who can’t or won’t fight behind Yubelluna and Husukai’s defenses. Are you good to head forward and meet with the police without us for now?”

Harry whirled and once more created a shield above the heads of the large crowd, protecting it from another strafing run from a group of cobras. The next second as Harry dealt with the attackers, the dog and the female leprechauns leaped out from the building they had entered. The leprechauns moved on to the next building on that side of the street. At the same time, the dog landed in a backyard garden, bursting through its short fence to crash into a group of scorpions who had been moving through the back alleys, and tearing them apart. However, one got a blow in on his side which hurled the dog against the wall, but didn’t seem to bother the dog much. At least judging by how the dog bounce right back and tore the scorpion creature to pieces.

“See what I mean?” Harry quipped before he conjured up several hundred pikes, almost as long as he was tall in his human body. “Form an ovoid, children to the center, wounded with them, women and men capable of fighting, grab up a pike. Use these to keep the enemy at bay. I’ll mess with their senses and they won’t be able to see you”

With the Aurors chivvying them along, the civilians obeyed, many of them looking grimly satisfied at being armed or swapping out their makeshift weapons for the conjured ones. Several of them were looking at Harry in confusion, recognizing him from a few of Yubelluna and Akeno's impromptu concerts, taking some comfort in that recognition, as well as courage in his presence and the sun above them.

"I can... but Harry, I think I have an ability that will help us tremendously. It's an advanced version of my Sacred Gear, one I developed while you and Lady Rias were in Ireland," Kiba said, even as he lashed out with one of his demonic blades, freezing several crocodile men in their tracks as they came down the street, chasing a much smaller group of refugees.

"Show but don't tell," Harry said, waving him off with a smile. "Rias has told me about your Balance Breaker Kiba. If you can use it, do it." He turned away, shouting to Issei, "Issei, start using that Prickle-prickle spell of yours on every building we pass. We can always cancel it later, but that will let the leprechauns clear the buildings all the faster."

"Right! And the monsters seem really susceptible to it too." Issei answered with a snicker, although inside, he was wondering how the heck he was dealing with all the death and destruction around them. *Is it because I'm a Devil that so much blood and death doesn't bother me? Well, whatever, I suppose it's a good thing either way.* "Just point me at one without any leprechauns in it already. I don't want those nasty little bastards to get pissed on me, particularly the girls!"

"Go, Kiba," Harry ordered, turning just enough to nod at the younger man while sending out a Boosted Gear blast of magic into a horde of Harpies above them, demolishing the building they had been trying to hide behind to close. Meanwhile, the other defenders dealt with more monsters as the civilians sorted themselves out under the Aurors direction. "We've got this."

Kiba nodded and, leaving the beleaguered group there, raced off, his demonic wings appearing from his back as he leaped up onto the nearest rooftop. The last thing he saw before the buildings blocked his view was the dog, its tail wagging, charging into a group of undead romans with all the appearances of enjoyment.

Of course, on the rooftop, Kiba was an even better target for the harpies and flying cobras, who instantly began to swoop and attack him, as well as small pockets of Janissaries. But the Aurors under Proudfoot had already been reinforced by the nearest Nome reaction teams, some of whom had already been falling back before the recall order went out. They were now attacking any enemy they found on the rooftops and fighting a vicious dogfight that slowly spread in the sky above, pushing out from the protected zone Harry and the others had created. Kiba dealt with the few who got close to him, although one lucky grenade from a Janissary made him leap backward to another rooftop for a moment.

In such a way, he found himself near the target police station. The police had already set up a large defensive area around the precinct and were busily gunning down any monster or

undead they saw. They used the same weapons and having some of the same training as the army was coming in handy now, and with Harry's morale boost, they seemed to be fighting back as best they could.

But there were too many people getting in the way, and the police didn't seem willing to shoot through the crowd to get to the undead or monsters. That meant that the barricade of vehicles they had set up was really the only thing that was stopping them from being ground under. Even so, dozens of civilians died as Kiba took stock of the situation. The police were unwilling to let them pass but unwilling to shoot through them to the real enemy.

That was enough of scouting the situation, and Kiba jumped down, his devil wings disappearing as twin swords appeared in Kiba's hands. He sliced into several of the undead from behind, then cried out, "Stupefy!" sending the red-tinted spell in every direction around him. The spell did nothing to the monsters and undead, but the wide-angled spell was enough to knock out a large amount of the crowd on the street around the Knight. This put them on the ground, and out of the way of the gunfire.

Many of the police stared, horrified, believing the unconscious civilians had died. Others were more trigger-happy and simply opened fire instantly, not just on the undead and monsters, but Kiba himself. Not that their bullets were much of a threat to Kiba, who deflected or dodged them as needed, using the crowd of attackers to shield himself as much as possible. *That's rather ironic, frankly.*

Kiba finished the job of clearing out the attack on this side of the precinct by slicing the head off one of the scorpions before stabbing a crocodile man through his mouth up into his brain. Then, pulling out his sword, Kiba leaped up onto a police vehicle over the continuing fire from the police. There he made his swords disappear, holding out his hands in as friendly a manner as he could contrive. "Well met. I am Kiba of Harry..."

But the police were not the ladies of Kuoh Academy to be taken in by his good looks, and after seeing his earlier spell use were in no mood to listen. Every policeman there pointed their weapons at him, their eyes wild, their faces grim. "Kill him!"

"Wait!" Kiba shouted before ducking back down the side of the jeep he had been standing on. "Wait! They're not dead!" he shouted quickly, "Don't worry! They are just unconscious. That spell will not..."

"Spell! You are, you are a magic-user. Is this what is going on, magic!?" a policeman barked as he climbed up the truck to get a bead on Kiba.

"It is, but not of our making," Akeno answered for Kiba as she landed nearby, her hybrid wings flapping idly behind her. The Gremory Queen's beauty caused many of the policemen to blink in astonishment, and some lowered their weapons. That allowed her to keep talking to, gesturing, and quickly using her magic to slowly raise one of the civilians from the crowd, hefting his body over the police barricade before placing him in front of the man who had been

speaking. "Please, feel free to check. He's simply unconscious, not dead. We don't mean any harm."

"So you are behind this!" the policeman who had been speaking shouted, waving his rifle at Akeno.

"Not at all. Just like there are good and bad people, there are good and bad magic users," Akeno answered with aplomb before letting out a fetching giggle. "I don't know about you, but I would assume that the ones trying to help you are good, and the ones who just unleashed undead and monsters into your city are extremely bad. Wouldn't you say the same officer?"

The man grunted, but one of his fellows pushed his gun down, nodding his head to them. There was no love in his eyes either, but at least there was some understanding. "Fine, we are all in this together then. But what can you do for us?"

Breathing in deeply, Kiba reached inside of himself, whispering out the words, "Balance Breaker, Glory Drag Trooper!"

Kiba had not been idle after Harry, and the others had left for Ireland. Indeed, he had hurled himself into training, mostly against Sirzechs or members of his peerage. Fighting such monstrously talented and powerful opponents had forced him to realize something: his Sacred Gear, was actually only half of a greater whole, the Sacred Gear, Blade Blacksmith. Sometime in the past, it had been broken in two, creating two lesser Sacred Gears, Sword Birth and Holy Sword Creation. This had been the Sacred Gear of Jeanne, the reincarnation of Joan of Arc, who Harry had killed before she could even use her Sacred Gear effectively.

When Jeanne died, much of the potential of the combined Blade Blacksmith had become Kiba's. It had merely taken being pushed to the brink of death numerous times a day, (Kiba honestly lost count of the times he nearly died in training before Rias and Harry had returned) to access it.

Now he called upon not only that but the Balance Breaker version of his new and enhanced Sacred Gear. All around him, suits of armor appeared, complete with swords in their hands. The suits of armor looked vaguely draconic in appearance, thin helmets, long, winglike-ears, reptilian red eye slits, and with armor that looked vaguely like scales. The suits filled the area behind the barricade, forcing the police and civilians to back away with shouts of surprise.

At Kiba's gesture, the helmets shifted upwards, and the front of the armor opened up, the helmet shifting to a shoulder, the chest plats disappearing for a moment. Where before there had been two dozen suits of faceless, fearsome armor, now they waited, open and inviting any to step into them.

"While normally I would simply command my army to move as I wish it to, I think here we need as many living people fighting with the best weapons we can give them. These suits of

armor and weapons deal with any magical threat and are almost immune to superficial damage. So, what do you say? Are you willing to work with us?”

To Kiba’s surprise, the first person to step forward was the man who had been threatening Akeno and Kiba a moment ago. He did so with trepidation, but he still entered the suit of armor, and soon enough, all the police in front of them were streaming into the armors. When the last one placed his helmet back on his head, Kiba flipped down the visor of his own and spoke, his voice carrying to all the nearby suits. “Can you all hear me?”

“By Allah! Communication as well?! That could prove even more important than the suits!”

“I am not certain of that but will bow to your opinion on the matter,” Kiba answered grimly. “But you all can communicate like this, simply say one another’s names or shout, in which case it will go to everyone. Now we should get your people out of that precinct and into more armor. We need to spread out and start pushing the attackers further away from your precinct.”

The police obeyed, and soon enough, teams of five armored warriors were moving around the precinct, speaking to the other police, taking over the area's defense. Soon that area began to grow, the teams becoming more varied. Five armored warriors were soon paired with twenty policemen with guns, each holding one of the larger streets leading to or around the precinct. This freed up the other armored troopers to move out into the buildings around them, clearing them out in turn.

This wasn’t a slow or bloodless process. Just strapping on what amounted to a magically run armored suit didn’t mean the individual within became a close-quarters veteran. But it gave the police the means with which to combat the enemy in close range, which they hadn’t previously had. And men in armor like this could also ignore the beetles too.

Nor did this solve the most important issue: there were **so many** noncombatants in the war zone. There were simply so many people in Alexandria that keeping a cordon around the precinct was difficult in the extreme. At this point, with so many people fighting back, it wasn’t as horrifying a problem as before, but there were still too many children, elderly and others who couldn’t fight taking to the streets.

Any free, protected zone would be discovered quickly simply by the drifting movement of the crowds moving through the city. Already, Yubelluna and the others were running into this problem in the protected zone that they had created. They had been forced to start expanding before Harry and the ever-growing group of refugees he had been forced to guide back reached them.

But eventually, Harry and the others were able to push forward to reach the police cordon. Kiba had, up to that point, been using Stupefy to get the noncombatants out of the way in as crude a manner as possible, Stupefy being one of very few spells he had learned and could

produce given how much of his Devil-style magical core was tied into his speed enhancement as a Knight and his Sacred Gear.

Seeing a mass of humanity, both those fighting back and those not, being lifted out of the streets, was something else. Seeing those people then being surrounded by individual bubbles of magical energy, which protected them from a few flying cobras and a single undead sphynx, won a cheer from the defenders. This was nothing compared to the cheer they raised as the undead and monsters attacking them all died in the next few seconds.

As Hermione and one of the Aurors lowered the civilians back to the ground, Harry canceled his mass Protego, striding forward between the slowly recovering people then hopping up onto a truck at the center of this segment of the barricade. He smiled grimly at the police, while behind him, Hermione, Loup and the others started to help the civilians forward as best they could. "I'm Harry Potter. Who's in charge here?"

The police there all looked at him for a moment, then one smartass answered before anyone else could. "You?"

"Quite probably," Harry laughed, causing the police, who to a man were now overawed by his arrival and aura, to laugh with him. "But perhaps I should say, who is willing to speak for the police?"

"And why should we work for you anyway!?" A new voice, a hard, angry one, came from the direction of the precinct, and a slightly older but still fit man walked out, his face hard above his short, well-groomed beard. "You, you and the rest of you magic users! You are either causing this, or you should have warned us this was coming!"

Harry calmly stared back at the man waiting until he was within talking distance, which, with the ongoing sounds of violence and the shouts and cries of the crowds around them, was at bare arm's length. When he did, Harry finally replied, his voice calm and thus cutting through the tumult. "I would say rather that magic is just a thing. We too, like you, have both good and evil men among us, those who work for the good of society and those who want to tear it down or rule it."

Around them, a few police nodded, having heard the same words from Kiba, and Harry continued. "Now, could we perhaps have warned you that this was going on? If we had a hint that this," Harry gestured around them, "was even a possibility, we would have. But magicals, regardless of their society, believe that hiding away has always been better for everyone concerned. Look me in the eye and tell me that you would have reacted well to the idea that magic exists."

The man scowled, but Harry could tell he was thinking, and he seemed to have the respect of the police around them if the nods and salutes his way when he came out was any indication. That was really all Harry needed right now.

“Now, we are in a crisis. Not just here, but throughout Alexandria, throughout Egypt perhaps. We all need to band together, or we will surely hang separately. This is no time to place blame, only to fight and survive.” Harry waited a beat to let that sink in, gesturing to Kiba and the armored men moving around the barricade, then up into the air, where the ongoing aerial battle could be seen. “Now, are you willing to work with us?”

The man opened his mouth, but unfortunately, at that point, Proudfoot arrived, coming down out of the air. It was obvious the man had been in the thick of it, as his broomstick looked like it had been clawed numerous times, and there was blood leaking from a few tears in his Auror’s robe. But the first words out of his mouth ruined the good opinion his appearance might have gendered. “Potter, I’ve got news, although I still think we need to talk about this some more. I’m still not certain we should be working with these muggles, particularly the police or other officials. They are far too likely to find a way to record us using magic somehow and get away with it.”

“Obliviate is it!? A word I have never heard but can guess the meaning of. So, you are one of the magic users who have kept this from us? Are you so fucking stupid, or do we nonmagicals just not register to you? Damn it, we could’ve prepared if you had not been hiding like cowards!” the policeman Harry had been talking to growled at Proudfoot, fingering his pistol.

“I said recriminations later,” Harry barked, getting between the two men and staring Proudfoot into submission. “I will say it again, Proudfoot. There are far too many enemies here for us to fight and then contain this secret. Worry about the Statute afterward. Unless you’re going to tell me that several thousand Aurors and Hit Wizards are on the way?”

Proudfoot hesitated, then shook his head. “No. I don’t know what’s going on elsewhere to cause this, but Egypt... the entirety of the country, is under Interdict.”

“What the hell does that mean?” The policeman asked, and even Harry looked confused.

He looked over at Tonks, who had been added to their group when they returned to the first protected zone. The Metamorph frowned, then paled, her skin turning the same color as chalk. “Oh, those bloody idiots!”

“Tonks?”

“It means that the ICW believes the Statute of Secrecy is broken here in Egypt, throughout the nation. The Interdict, I don’t know if it’s just wards or enchantment or what, but it will keep anyone from even thinking about Egypt more than the bare minimum of ‘oh, it’s a place on a map’ level. So, we’re entirely on our own until the ICW, the International Confederation of Wizardry, has gathered enough forces to come in and reinstate the Statute en-masse. Until then, Egypt won’t even exist as far as the rest of the world is concerned.”

"T, that's impossible," the policeman barked, his face turning ashen. "There's the Internet, it isn't available everywhere here in Egypt, but it's accessible in enough places that we're connected to the Worldwide Web. There are our geographic neighbors, ships out to sea coming in all the time! This is a, a fucking port! Planes, tourists come and go every hour of the day. You can't just..."

He trailed off as Proudfoot slowly shook his head. "Tonks is right. The Interdict works along the same scale as the wards that separated the Wizarding World from you nonmagicals." Harry had a second to reflect that at least Proudfoot hadn't used the derogatory term there, thankfully, before the man went on.

"It will basically make anyone coming to Egypt forget about it or avoid coming here. Those strange flying things you muggles use will divert to other airports. Ships will go to other ports. When they arrive, a mere mention of Egypt will make the people there understand instantly why. As Tonks said, 'oh, that place is just a place on a map', so why would someone go there? Anyone in communication regularly with Egypt will find reasons not to bother or worry. The Interdict is that insidious and powerful."

All the policemen within hearing range looked aghast at that, and Harry very carefully kept his own cursing about this internal. *Old men, Old ignorant men making choices! They have no idea about technology, about how this kind of thing can and will be circumvented by computers and video cameras and other technology! And if there's too much evidence both within and without Egypt, and too many dead, there's no way we'll ever be able to reestablish the Statute of Secrecy. Oh buggering fucking shite, I knew it would be bad, but this...*

Yet right now, none of that was important, not even the fact the Interdict might mean even the Devils wouldn't be able to back them up, and Harry spoke up once more. His tone told everyone there what he thought of that idea, which in turn calmed the policemen down somewhat and his words once more concentrated everyone's mind on the most important thing: surviving.

"Fine! So we are on our own. Perfect, whatever, we still need to concentrate on what we can do, not what we wish we had access to. Now, are you willing to work with us so we can all get through tonight alive or not?" he asked once more, then paused. "Ah, my apologies, I seem to have forgotten my manners. What is your name?"

The moment of courtesy seemed to throw off the angry officer's building diatribe. "Ah... I'm Farouq N'masta, Senior Inspector of this precinct. Our Captain and the rest of our more senior officers were off-duty, and none reported in before the lights went out." He grumbled at that point, shaking his head with a scowl. "I suppose that was caused by magic, too." his face softened as he stared up at the sun. "That, and, and your earlier words, Lord Potter, those helped. And are why I'm willing to work with you now."

“Good. Get your people out here and continue to armor them up,” Harry said, gesturing to where Kiba stood, at the head of a growing number of sword-wielding suits of armor. “You’re in charge of their positioning and how we move on from here. You know the city best. We’ll need to create strong points, then slowly move the people through into preprepared defensive zones. I have people guarding one such already and linking up with that position is the only real order I’m going to give you.”

“Beyond that, Proudfoot, the currently busy Kalawarner and My Akeno are in charge of the air,” Harry finished, turning to Akeno, looking at her in concern, wondering why she had come down. “

Akeno inwardly preened at being called ‘My’ by Harry, something she was still getting used to (and enjoying doing so) while nodding at Farouq. “We are facing a near unending mass of flying cobras, harpies, and undead sphynx, coming in from outside the city. As we get out feet under us, men and women of my family, the Himejima clan, are preparing massive numbers of talismans that will destroy any undead in the vicinity. But, thanks to my husband~,” She couldn’t stop herself from near trilling, “we don’t need to rely on them to block the enemy from respawning their undead creatures.

Despite the violence and carnage of the night, men were the same everywhere, and Akeno’s joy at the term husband brought many a smile. But her next words wiped those smiles out like they never existed as Akeno became serious, her face becoming taut and strained. “I wanted to tell you that we just received our first reinforcements from the Nome reaction platoons. They came from Aswan and Asyut and lost a little over a third of their number, including all their Shinsengumi, before they were able to use portkeys to retreat. Ysabel’s in contact with many of the other teams, and they are all retreating here, although only a few are apparently able to use portkeys. Hermione was right about the enemy being able to block most portkeys. Even worse, the enemy has flyers everywhere, and it isn’t going to be easy for most of them to retreat by air.”

“Shit,” Harry grumbled. *I’d hoped that the reason why we hadn’t seen flyers in the small skirmishes before this was because they couldn’t create them in large numbers, and they were just tossing all they had at us here in Alexandria. Damn me for a bloody fool for hoping for the best, I suppose.*

While the people around them realized anew the full horror their nation faced, Harry concentrated on the here and now. “Alright, keep the Shinsengumi in defensive positions. The Aurors, you and Kala are in charge of pushing out our area of control in the air. Whatever you have to do to give us aerial superiority, do it.”

Tonks spoke up then. “We should also pull out any Aurors who have taken crippling wounds or whatever to here. I imagine that having access to people who could conjure bullets into being for them would be a big deal to the police.”

“That would be putting it mildly,” Farouq answered instantly, smiling now. “We have been going through our ammo far, far faster than any police force is supposed to.”

Proudfoot scowled but nodded. “I’ve been ordering our wounded to fall back to Lighthouse Lane, but we can do that too, so long as their wounds would keep them from the fight and aren’t the kind Medi-witches or wizards can heal fast enough to get them back into the fight.” He hesitated, and then with a glance Harry’s way added, “I was also bringing out volunteer medical personnel, and we can put them at the service of the other defenders.”

Farouq nodded, then asked Harry where his first defensive zone was set up. After that, he frowned, thinking hard before demonstrating his masterful understanding of the cities different streets, roads, and alleyways. He then explained where they could set up defenses and pointed out the most difficult buildings to clear out.

“All that sounds good, and like I said before, you’re in charge of where to put our defenses on the ground. You’re our liaison with the police, and I’ll expect you to oversee the non-magical of our defense as we push out into the rest of the city,” Harry announced firmly.

He then turned to his followers. “Kiba, Hermione, you’re in charge of supporting the police as we spread out. Loup, Tonks, Issei, you and the dog will go wherever the battle is fiercest for now, along with, well, me, although I will split off eventually to attack another objective.” Normally Harry would have used Kiba in Issei’s place, but as disgusting as they were, Issei’s area of effect spells were great against the conjured monsters they would be facing since he could use it on midair enemies or buildings where no one human was left alive without needing to enter them. And Kiba was needed here to keep creating armored suits for the police. “Akeno, tell Suzaku to spread those runic arrays around as quickly as possible. I want our protected zones completely protected against any kind of summoning, and that protection carried forward with us as we expand.”

“All of this sounds good, and I don’t have a problem with organizing any police that joins us. But, beyond that, we might run into trouble if someone in authority has survived up to this point, especially from the Northern Military region’s headquarters, if it’s survived up to this point. But I don’t have enough people to even begin linking up with your own defensive zone,” Farouq admitted.

“Ask for volunteers,” Harry answered firmly. “We need every willing hand on deck for this if we are not only going to reclaim the rest of Alexandria but also the rest of Egypt.”

“We have incoming!”

Harry turned in the direction of that new voice and saw a flood of scorpions and lizardmen racing towards them from another direction. Ahead of them was a large group of people, and Harry growled. He raised his hands, reaching out with his magical powers, and first covered the crowd with an illusion that seamlessly took their place as he levitated the crowd

into the air. The next second, a blast from the Boosted Gear turned the incoming monsters into so much ash on the wind.

On the heels of the blast, Kiba raced forward, with several of the now-armored policemen following. They formed a guard detail behind the rush of civilians against any further attack as Harry let the civilians fall lightly back to the ground. As he did, Harry used another Sonorous to be heard over the renewed tumult. "Whoever wishes to fight for themselves and their families, raise your hands and moved to the side! You will be given weapons to fight these creatures. Children and anyone else who doesn't wish to fight, move into the police precinct for now."

He looked over at Farouq, one eyebrow rising. "Well?"

The man nodded and asked politely if someone could cast the same spell on him. Hermione did so, tapping him on the neck, and an instant later, Farouq's loud voice began bellowing out orders. He quickly got the police and the new refugees organized. Several dozen men came forward from the crowd. He quickly handed them over to Kiba, who gave them access to some of his armor.

With that under control, Harry turned away and began to move back the way they had come, clearing the way for the defenders once more.

OOOOOOO

Sala was beginning to feel something far too close to despair for his liking. Fighting at night was something most Egyptian military training centers merely nodded at since most modern militaries had access to night vision goggles. But those goggles didn't work, having shorted out like everything else based on electricity. So even seeing the enemy was troublesome at times, forcing his men to light fires or use flares in order to see.

The fact that the undead and monsters seemed able to come out of anywhere made any kind of defensive position almost untenable. So, Sala had pulled his whole command into a series of concentric circles, or as best Sala could, using what buildings and jeeps he could to create a defense. The outer circle defended from exterior threats. The second circle was more diffuse and faced the circle's interior, defending against any monster or undead who appeared within. Sala and his command staff stood at the center around the entrance to the armory, along with the men who had bazookas or mortars.

They had been able to fall back to the armory, which was a true lifesaver now. But even so, the men were in danger of breaking every time they took losses, and few enough of Sala's men had survived to regroup. Originally, the base had housed a full division of infantry and a brigade of mechanized armor. Sala had lost maybe half up to this point of the infantry and men of the mechanized armor division stationed in Base Epsilon before this. That was just a guess, though, as his officers and men had all been dying at the same rate.

The base's armored brigade was useless. Whatever EMP-like thing that had occurred, it had slagged too many of the vehicles' electronics for the base's resources to repair. The same was true for every other jeep, truck or APC in the base. Normally, they would contact Headquarters in Alexandria for parts, but that was impossible under the present circumstances.

The worse thing, though? that was the fear. The fear of the unknown, the fear of the dead, of the darkness out past their makeshift fires. Sala could feel it, clawing at his mind, trying to drag him under, a fear worse than any Sala had faced after a lifetime of being a soldier and not always in peace either. Sala had fought in the last two major clashes with the Israeli Defense Force. But he had never felt this kind of slowly rising, gnawing fear.

He knew his men felt it too. The fear had already caused men to break and run. Most of the army's troops were conscripts, serving out three years as mandated by the state. They weren't as professional or well trained as the militaries of nations like the United Kingdom, America, or Israel. The fear tore at their minds as the attacking monsters and undead tore at the army's lines.

Still, Sala kept on giving orders, determined to go down swinging. He was still doing so, ordering a group of the inner line's machine guns to turn their weapons upward when suddenly a roar crashed out over the night. "GRRAAAAHAHHHHHHHHH!!!" This was followed instantly by fire lancing down out of the clouds, burning through several dozen flying snakes, creatures who had cost Sala several men before his platoons had brought out some anti-air guns. Which, thankfully, still worked, just like the cannons on the tanks. Only the electronics didn't work.

But this was nothing compared to what happened when that tongue of flame hit the ground. It crashed into and immolated a large horde of undead in front of the outer circle of Egyptian troops, doing no damage to the men beyond causing them to back away or cry out at the heat. Then the fire moved this way and that before coming back, creating a circle of fire around Sala's remaining command.

As this was going on, shouts and screams abounded around Sala from men not looking at the fire, instead of pointing upwards at the... "Is, is that a dragon? Of course it is, because why not," Sala grumbled to himself, shaking his head. Dragons were not a normal part of Egyptian mythology. The evil serpent Apep was the only thing that could be called dragon-like in their mythology. Yet, it would be very hard for any human being to not know what a large flying lizard with four arms, wings and the ability to breathe fire was.

Moments later, the dragon in question landed, and Sala realized that his thoughts on how large the creature was had been very much off the scale. *It looks as large as the Sphinx in Giza!*

A second later, Sala and every man still alive in the base got the surprise of their life as the dragon spoke in a deep rumbling voice, but which one was also decidedly female. **“Who is in charge here?”**

Sala gulped but moved forward, leaving his command crew. None of whom, he wryly noticed, tried to stop him, being far too busy looking around for places to hide. *Smart of them, I suppose. But frankly, after the past few hours, death by dragon-fire sounds like a release.* As he passed through the second circle, he raised his voice over the noise of the fires and the muttering of his men. “I am. General Sala De Mar, at your service. Might I ask who I am addressing?”

“My name is Tiamat,” the dragon replied, sounding amused or pleased by his respectful manner. **“I represent a group of... call us magic users, I suppose. Before you insult me, know that we were not involved in this outbreak of monsters and undead. If you insinuate that we are, I may eviscerate you. I was a personal friend of several Sphynx clan chieftains and seeing so many undead sphynx infuriates me.”**

Sala gulped, knowing the beast was not joking at all on that score. “I, I see. So then may I assume that your, your group is working against the forces behind this?”

“We are indeed. That is why I have come. I am going to canvas the bases within the area of an hour’s flight from Alexandria and then help you all move to the city to help defeat...” Tiamat interrupted herself, turning to the side and breathing out fire on a group of undead Mamluk cavalry who were in the process of pulling themselves out of the ground. **“As I was saying, these monsters have appeared in numbers in Alexandria as well, and we need to consolidate.”**

“Are you saying we should retreat?” Sala questioned, although in his mind he was going, *yes, please!*

“I would not think of it as a retreat as positioning to gain a strategic advantage,” Tiamat answered mildly, allowing her lips to part in a smile that very carefully hid her fangs from view.

The general chuckled at that, then shrugged his shoulders. “Heh, I suppose it can’t be any worse than staying here.” The very idea frightened him pissless, in fact. “However, I have to warn you, we don’t have...”

Sala was interrupted as Tiamat twisted around, as lithe as a cat, breathing fire directly behind where she had been facing. The generals and the men with him flinched away, and when Tiamat shouted, **“Back away!”** they obeyed with alacrity.

To either side of Tiamat, and directly above, other... beings... appeared suddenly, the force of their presence dropping thousands of men to their knees, some even cowering as their eyes widened in shock.

The beings were huge, the two humanoid ones standing around twenty-four feet high. Both were males, wearing a variety of noble garments for men in ancient Egypt. One had a jackal head on a mostly humanoid body, while the other had a crocodile head, but seemed to stoop, his arms longer than a normal human's, his shoulders broader, his back covered by crocodile scales. The last was a cobra, a king cobra female of massive size, equaling Tiamat in length. Her hood was large, and from her back wings appeared which were a riotous kaleidoscope of colors, green, blue, orange, purple and red, and her fangs were at least half the size of a man.

Wepwawet, Sobek, and Wadjet had been held back up to this point, unlike Metni, who Akhenaten sent to defend the ocean side of Alexandria just in case Harry Potter attempted to just retreat out to sea. Now, having felt Tiamat leave the protected zone around Alexandria, they were unleashed to overcome the second most powerful of Akhenaten's enemies.

Wadjet attacked from above Tiamat, spitting out poison at the dragon, who ducked out of the way and Tiamat was able to redirect a blow from Wepwawet's sword while charging forward, nearly beating Sobek stabbing at her with his spear. Even so, Tiamat felt her scales cracking at the point of impact, causing her eyes to widen. In contrast, the cobra could barely get her teeth into Tiamat's scales when she slithered forward to meet the dragon. The next second, Wadjet found herself hurled off and slammed by a claw that sent her into the ground.

The blow was so powerful that the ground underneath Wadjet shattered, cracks appearing through the concrete in every direction. Sala stared at that and then shouted, "Retreat, retreat! Get some distance. Get under cover!"

Flame roared out toward Sobek, who quickly dodged to one side. Magic began to pour out of him, covering the crocodile-headed man in green energy, protecting him from the flame for a brief moment as it followed him. The next second, Sobek disappeared to reappear elsewhere, his hand cocked back and spear flying. **"Die, dragon!"**

Tiamat's eyes widened, and she hastily ducked away. The spear flew just between her shoulder and her wing to crash into a building behind where she had just been, blasting through the building and out the other side, the whole building exploding from one end to another from the impact.

Wepwawet attacked her from behind, sword crashing down on her flank with a force that caused Tiamat to wince. But unlike the spear, whose power Tiamat could now feel very clearly, the sword was empowered only by Wepwawet's combat magic and strength, not deliberate enchantments to make it an exceedingly deadly weapon.

Regardless of the pain of the blow, Tiamat lashed out behind her with her tail, catching Wepwawet in the chest and hurling the god off his feet. A second later, the spear flew through the air, returning to Sobek's waiting hands, while Wadjet also seemed to glow with a deep

purple energy, growing exponentially. Now much longer than even Tiamat, she hurled herself forward, trying to grapple Tiamat into her coils.

Tiamat met her with fang and claw. The two beasts grappled, crashing around on the ground, shattering it further, creating small craters whenever they rolled, while Sobek and Wepwawet attempted to stab. Their ally's coils stopped them from stabbing for a time, and then Tiamat's tail caught Sobek, hurling him through the air. So strong was the blow he flew almost over the horizon before stopping himself in midair, dropping to the ground, his previously green covering of energy having dissipated somewhat under the blow but looking no worse the wares than that.

Wadjet gripped Tiamat ever tighter in her coils, trying to sink her envenomed teeth into the dragon, but was foiled by Tiamat's scales. Then the dragon bit down hard on Wadjet's side, causing the defender of kings to scream and release her hold on Tiamat, her scream causing deafness in several hundred of the cowering, fleeing men of Base Epsilon.

Before Tiamat could push her momentary advantage, Wepwawet sliced down at her head. A quick flinch saved her eye, but as the jackal-headed god pressed her, Tiamat was forced away from Wadjet, who slithered away. Then Sobek hurled the spear forward from his current position, hissing in fury. The spear, which Tiamat recognized was magically powerful enough to be one of the level of a Longinus, caught her right behind her right forearm.

The spear's tip stabbed into her, puncturing her scales like they were merely mortal armor instead of fueled by Tiamat's vitality and power. She cried out in pain, falling to her side as her limb refused to obey her.

A moment later, Wadjet bit at her wing, tearing through the wing, as Wepwawet did the same, his sword slicing into her other wing. Both flinched back a moment later, purple and black energy shielding them as Tiamat twisted around, sending flame every which way.

Luckily, Sala and his men were already well away from the point of conflict. Although Base Epsilon was taking quite a beating, with cracks, craters and fires abounding everywhere.

Gnashing his extremely impressive teeth in annoyance, Sobek raised his hand forward, using the spell he had been able to figure out on the foreign weapon his vile captor had given him. Sobek could tell there was another spell on the thing, but not how to use it.

Pulling the spear out of the wound, for all the fact that Tiamat's blood flowed out of the dangerous wound enough to drown a man, was a mistake. Tiamat was a Dragon, and for all their animal nature, Dragons, especially Tiamat who had once been worshipped as a goddess, had far more in common with primordial beings like Titans than with mortal beasts. So, the wound started to close, slowly but surely, although her arm was still useless.

She ignored the pain, launching herself forward, flame encompassing her entire body as she crashed into Sobek. Her claws raked at the God, despite his best efforts to block or redirect

her strikes, which caused deep furrows in the ground around the impact point. Then as the other two tried to attack her from behind once more, Tiamat's wings flapped once, and she was in the air, her wings beating hard as fire flared down at Sobek.

Desperately, Sobek used his magic to defend himself from the flame. A second later, Wadjet flung herself into the air, going after Tiamat, spitting out a stream of poison that nearly caught Tiamat in the chest. But the dragon dodged so that it merely grazed her side, gaining height at the same time.

With the flame dying out around him, slowly, Sobek leaped clear, breathing a sigh of what a mortal would have called relief before raising his spear and hurling it upwards. So fast did it fly that Tiamat barely dodged it despite being nearly half a mile in the air by that point. Hissing, Tiamat turned back down, a tongue of flame shooting down like a falling star.

Sobek once more was forced to dodge as the fire crashed down, so hot the concrete bubbled and hissed, melting as the sand around the impact point, near the edge of Base Epsilon, turned into glass for several hundred feet around them. Then once more, he raised his hand, hissing out a demand for the spear to return. Meanwhile, Wadjet attempted to strike once more, wings appearing from her side as she flew up to engage Tiamat in the air.

Tiamat dodged the bite, but the snake goddess wrapped herself around Tiamat once more, her wings disappearing to be replaced by arms, her fingers ending in claws. Fang met bite, and the two of them roared and bit and tore at one another as they plummeted down. When they crashed, their descent caused an earthquake that broke all the remaining buildings of Base Epsilon, creating a crater measured in dozens of miles.

But the one who was on the bottom was Wadjet, who screamed in agony, disappearing between one moment and the next. She had taken too much damage, and the watching Akhenaten had pulled him back.

The next second, Wepwawet's blade found Tiamat's side, tearing up and into her wing where it met her body, while Sobek's spear nearly took Tiamat in the chest, slicing a deep furrow through her scales. Yet even as she was wounded, Tiamat was turning, throwing the war god off with such force that his landing created another crater. Her flames once more reached out, crashing into Sobek, holding it there even as Wepwawet attacked once more, smashing his blade into her tail.

Sobek's magical defenses finally gave, and the crocodile god screamed before he too was recalled, popping back to the hidden temple to recover. Akhenaten refused to lose his greatest tools without getting anything in return.

With Sobek and his deadly spear gone, Wepwawet also disappeared, his jackal-like face sneering as he did.

“Now, I wonder how all three of them were able to do that? I don’t recall teleportation being a common power among the Egyptians. Not that I am looking a gift horse in the mouth at the moment. Although I might eat a few later,” Tiamat muttered, laying her head down as she concentrated in word, trying to heal the wounds that she had been dealt.

Hearing the sound of feet coming towards her, some running, others walking, Tiamat wearily turned her head, grateful that it was the human soldiers, not undead and monsters, although she could see many of them attacking elsewhere. Recognizing the general she had been talking to before, Tiamat allowed herself to smile, carefully hiding her teeth. **“Well, as you can see, our enemy can hurt even some as doughty as myself. So I trust there is no further question that gathering together is a good idea?”**

The general slowly nodded his head, taking in the utterly changed landscape, the shattered buildings, the wrecked and buried men and vehicles, then gestured at the tremendous wounds the Dragon and taken from those three... things. Even though he recognized at least two of them from mythology, his mind rebelled at calling them deities, whispering the holy name of Allah in his mind. as he asked, “Is there anything we can do for you, miss?”

Tiamat snorted. “You have any food fit for one of my stature?”

The general was about to shake his head when one of his people spoke up hesitantly. “There’s a tourist trap near here, along the road to Alexandria, which specializes in camel rides. It’s about five miles that way,” he said, pointing in that direction.

The gurgle of the dragon’s stomach resounded, and Tiamat slowly nodded her head. “I’ve never eaten camel, I understand they’re rather vile, but I won’t turn away any kind of meat at the moment.”

“Take a company and see if you can round those camels up,” Sala ordered, turning to his remaining troops. “Take as many weapons as you need. I want us gone within two hours.”

There were some protests at that. A somewhat mangled and disorganized division of troops ready to go in two hours? Impossible. Even getting the wounded ready would take longer, plus there were still attacking beasts and undead to consider. Although there weren’t many of them now, and with all the fires still raging, it was almost as bright as day right now, but even so, they were a big threat.

“We have no tanks, only a few trucks can move, anything and everything mobile must be going!” The general shouted. The engineers had been able to use spare parts to get a few of the trucks working, but nowhere near enough to move even a quarter of the men Sala had left. “Besides,” he gestured across his ruined base. “I don’t think we have anything left here.”

“Actually, I don’t think you’ll need to worry about transportation. And you will be getting some more aid against the monsters too,” Tiamat mused, looking up into the sky,

where her night vision had allowed her to pierce the smoke and haze from the nearby fires to see more than a hundred people on broomsticks high above them.

Moments later, the leader of the Matrouh reaction force and Sala reached an agreement, and the wizards got to work with repair spells as best they could. While those didn't work for the electronics, the damage was too severe and had also damaged the internal programming, the engines of the trucks were easier to repair. It took Sala longer than he wanted, but soon, Base Epsilon's shattered remains were left behind as Tiamat, now in her human form, rested in one of the trucks, the Aurors flying around the convoy as it moved off towards Alexandria.

OOOOOO

Throughout the city, Harry's faux sun pushback against the fog from which the conjured creatures could appear was starting to make a difference. Scarab beetles, after all, were very flimsy creatures when stomped on, and the others, for all of their ferocity, found themselves outnumbered by the locals, who were now fighting back everywhere they could, their hope and courage buoyed by Harry's words. Many, indeed, thousands, of people were still dying, but the conjured monsters and undead were paying for it.

The main problem for the Aurors was protecting against aerial assault. Unfortunately, the numbers of aerial attackers hadn't declined as badly as the land forces facing the humans and their allies. And aerial units could be conjured into being directly outside Harry's area of influence and instantly enter the battle, unlike the land forces. Since, at this point, the outer areas of Alexandria were already dead zones, meaning reinforcements like that would have to travel through the city before hitting the defenders.

Better on that score, one of the largest military bases in Egypt was within the city, the headquarters for the Northern Military Region. Tiamat had helped them out on her way out of the city, creating a fire break around the base, and the military had quickly been able to clear out the monsters and undead within the base. As one man remarked, "At least these undead freaks don't turn their victims!"

They didn't have enough manpower to push out into the city, thanks to the size of the fort – which took up a lot of manpower to defend - and the losses they had already taken. After all, it was nighttime when the attack began, and much like any office building, the majority of the officers and workers assigned there had off-base living quarters. This was an organizational headquarters, not a full army base. But the base acted now almost like a forward position, drawing in most of the land-based attackers conjured outside the city from the south and southeast.

But the enemy was learning as well. In the beginning, the attackers had consisted of an even number of flying cobras and harpies. Now there were far more flying cobras than harpies.

The poison spitting cobras were even more agile than broomstick flying Aurors, and their poison spitting was deadly.

"We need to organize ourselves better!" Kala shouted even as she swooped around and back down on an undead sphinx as it attempted to attack her from behind. Her light spear crashed into and through the back of the creature's skull, and the undead beast disappeared.

"Right! We need to start doing the same thing that we did in the battle against Kokabiel and his horde!" With an adroit twitch of her wings which Akeno would never have been able to muster up as recently as a few months ago, she dodged between several poison-spitting cobras, not a bit of it landing. Pinpoint wizard-type spells sliced each of them in half while not hurting the surrounding Aurors, and then she lashed out with a lightning blast to one side, catching several harpies who had just torn an Auror into bloody chunks. That had removed the only friendly in that bit of airspace, allowing her to fry a dozen of them at once.

Hearing the screams of agony from the harpies as they were fried to ash, Akeno bit back a moan. She knew that mid-battle was not the time to give in to any of her urges. But darn it, those screams sounded so delightful! *Besides, these things are trying to tear apart both the normal civilians of this fair city and my family. Feeling joy in their slaughter is fair enough, I think, even if my joy is a bit more hormonal than most.*

Nearby, Proudfoot swooped in shouting over the tumult of battle as he evaded poison left and right, his own attacks precise and varied. "Do either of you ladies have large-scale attacks that you can direct into a combat area with allies in it? If so, if you pull back and up, you might be able to get some distance!"

While he still detested the need to work with the muggles, Proudfoot had accepted the idea of Kala and Akeno representing a nonhuman community of magic users quite easily. The fact both of them were death on wings was much more important to him. After all, what to do about other magical communities and even how to restore the Statute was something those with older, and therefore wiser, heads would have to decide.

Both Kala and Akeno nodded, pulling back away through the air to put a few streets between themselves and the outer defensive shell. As they did, they saw more Aurors arriving, dropping down into the dogfight from above. Many of them paused, staring at Kala and Akeno, who were flying under their own power rather than with a broomstick or carpet.

Akeno ignored that, putting all the authority of her position as Rias's Queen into her voice as she shouted out orders, taking this opportunity to try and organize the aerial defenders as Kala had pointed out the need to do. "Shinsengumi into the center cleared zone! Your job is to provide air cover for those below and keep that zone cleared! Report to Master Husukai, or Suzaku-anee, er, sama, and they will assign you positions. Aurors, stay in groups of five, do not get bogged down in the dogfighting, and always remember to watch your back!"

As Akeno had said, none of the Shinsengumi were this high up in the sky, having been relegated to defense. The carpets, while decently quick in a straight line, were nowhere near as maneuverable as the broomsticks, and with the enemy aerial forces already in the air, they had all feared the carpets would become a liability. So now, groups were providing cover fire for those below while others worked to help push out the defensive zone or guard groups of refugees as they were spotted moving through the city.

The Shinsengumi obeyed instantly, heading down into the cleared air space. Seeing this galvanized the Aurors to do the same, and once more, the greater skills and magical abilities of the Aurors started to tell. The wizards and witches were quick and agile in the air, and the speed of their spells proved deadly to the harpies and cobras. Most particularly, the ability to cast *Protego* quickly enough to defend themselves from being swarmed was a lifesaver.

Kala and Akeno used the cleared air zone to climb higher into the sky until they could see a large segment of the city, including the growing dogfight at the outer edge of the defensive zone. *Proudfoot might be a boor in some ways, but at least he knows not to let the Aurors spread out too far*, Kala reflected. Because past the dogfight, the only zone that didn't belong to the attackers was the headquarters for the Northern Military Region. Even from here, the 'crump, crump' sound of anti-air fire could be heard from over there.

"You take the north and west. I'll take the south and east," Akeno suggested, to which Kala nodded, gesturing to either side. Over the next few minutes, small forearm-sized light spears began to appear, each of them shooting downwards spear a specific target in the dogfight below. Dozens of the enemy began to die as more appeared, obeying her mental commands. "Come on, you fuckers, die!"

In contrast, Akeno used wizard-type spells for a few seconds as she got out the Lightning Rod. Her mother's heirloom was in a specific talisman, which she kept strapped to the inside of her thigh, which proved to be quite hard to undo while flying.

When she had the lightsaber-like hilt in her hand, Akeno funneled a bit of her power into it, creating a multi-pronged whip made of lightning come out of the end of the cylinder. With it, she directed bolts of lightning out of the blue down onto the enemies below them. Her attacks were not quite as easy to aim, but there were fewer friendlies on this side of the conflict for some reason. *Isn't that the port out there?*

Remembering Harry's injunction to head in that direction if they could, that did not make Akeno pleased. *It seems as if the enemy knows we could just head out to sea far enough to get away from whatever ward is cutting off the Fal stone from the rest of the Undertaking.*

Indeed, as she moved in that direction, Akeno's eyes widened in horror, and she quickly pulled out the last of her little Oni. The others she had already conjured and enlarged to help the battles down below. The last she had seen of them had been when they had been helping a band of refugees, carrying many of the wounded. Being smarter and less frightening looking

made them a hit with the civilians, quite unlike the hundreds of Red Oni the Shinsengumi had conjured into being.

Not that any of that mattered at present, not against the terror pushing into the city from the port. "Tell Suzaku-anee-san and Yubelluna to build up the defenses towards the port! We have incoming!"

With that, she swooped down, dropping the Oni onto a rooftop within the defensive zone before twisting away, heading toward the port. "KALA!" she shrieked, using a Sonorous to be heard over the wind and the sound of the battle. "We have a problem!"

Kala twisted away from her gatling-style sniping to look at Akeno, and beyond her, she saw the same thing that Akeno had a moment before, her eyes widening.

Standing on the quay near where the passport check station they had bypassed days ago stood a monstrous creature which Akeno could feel the same aura of divinity that Harry could exhibit even from this far away. It was less powerful perhaps, but felt almost malignant, vile, causing Akeno to shudder, and not at all in a good way this time.

Closer, the creature looked like an unholy cross between a hippo and the man. It was huge, bloated like a hippo, with short legs like a hippo and the mouth of one, but with the arms of a man for all it stood at least two stories tall.

And all around it was a horde of other hippos. Hippos that were killing every man and woman as they came across. Already they had turned the port area into an abattoir, and they were pushing out into the city now.

Seeing that and seeing one of those hippos run down a screaming, crying boy, Akeno's lips drew back in a snarl as she concentrated her magic into the Lightning Rod, calling upon one of the purification spells that her family was so well known for. *Hopefully, it will work on evil deities just as well as restless spirits.*

Halting in midair above a rooftop so she could observe but not be seen by her target, Akeno moved the Lightning Rod this way and that, using it as if it was a talisman that was part of the original. "By the power of Raijin and Amaterasu, let the holy power of the gods flow through me. Banish, oh creatures of darkness! Holy Lightning!"

At each word, the lightning coruscating through the whip grew, and grew, and grew, until it gleamed like a web of gold lightning almost as bright as the artificial sun behind her. Indeed, the lightning seems to take on some of the sun's rays, although that was just a visual trick. Instead, that aura came from Akeno herself and her changed magical nature after she and Harry had handfasted on the Blessed Isle.

With the spell finished, the golden lightning hit like a tsunami, crashing over the area where the port ended, and the rest of the city began. The hippos and other monsters and undead caught in that area were incinerated, blasted out of existence. Even the monstrous God or whatever it was at the center screamed in pain, falling backward and away from her strikes, conjuring up a shield of some kind of fel red energy to protect himself.

But this did nothing to protect his fellows, who died and screamed in their hundreds. The lightning almost seemed to reach out for them even after grounding itself in the concrete and buildings of the city. Even better, the few people who were still alive in that area were, to the astonishment of Akeno, not similarly struck by lightning. Instead, the lightning forked itself around them. *Really!?! Why didn't... oh, drat. I've never mentioned I know that spell to anee-san, and I got the original from an Imperioused prisoner. Fuck!*

The holy aspect of the Lightning paired well with Akeno's ability to guide her lightning so that the Holy Lightning spell only struck the unnatural, the monsters and undead and the conjured hippos rather than the people themselves. Those people, who only numbered in the bare few hundred after the earlier attacks, stared up into the sky where the lightning came from, then thanked their respective gods before racing off deeper into the city away from the horror behind them. Getting to the defensive zone wouldn't be easy, it was still several blocks away. But it was at least possible now.

Akeno couldn't really concentrate on that. The red energy which had previously protected the hippo suddenly shifted into a ball, shooting towards where Akeno was flying in the air, blasting through the intervening buildings. She dodged it, but still more came at her, the hippo below shouting something she couldn't make out over the din of battle.

Then Kala was there, attacking with her lances, only to watch them dissipate against the red energy shield. "Well, that's not good."

Soon enough, she too was dodging attacks from the hippo god while returning a few of her own as Akeno did the same. Neither of them made any move to fall back. The further from the rest of the defenders they could keep this creature the better.

OOOOOOO

For his part, Harry knew that not only did they need more hands, but they also needed more locals to work with the civilian population. That was why he and the others had made their way through the city on foot to the nearest police station. In this way, they enlarged the defensive area - making it more of a corridor than a circular protective zone. And each time they moved forward, Harry and the others acted as a rallying point for any of the locals nearby, using illusions and attack magic to give the civilians a fighting chance. Occasionally he also used larger scale attacks to catch the attention of the monsters and undead, making it easier to destroy them. This was especially true considering how many came out of buildings to attack them rather than remaining in place, forcing the leprechauns and dogs to dig them out.

Now as the defenders continued to push outward and the Aurors, police and civilians worked to clear the streets, and the Leprechauns and Issei worked together to clear houses, Harry had another mission beyond keeping up the shield pushing back against the fear that was part of the Curse of Kek and whatever other god was behind the conjuration magic: Breaking the Curse that had destroyed all the electronics in the nation.

But there were still far, far too many monsters and beasts already within the city, and Harry knew that the easiest way to overcome his defense of Alexandria was simply to conjure monsters into being outside of it his aura's limits and then send them into the city over land or by air rather than magically. Thus making his way through the city was slow going. But Harry also knew that the Curse that had shorted out the electronics and created the initial feeling of fear was centered in the Nile. He could **feel** that the moment it had burst out and shuddered at the very thought of it.

What kind of mind would hide a Curse underneath a Blessing like that? The thought is almost as anathema as a Curse itself should be. As he thought that, Harry blasted another batch of monsters into offal, pausing, one foot in the air. "Huh. Maybe this whole 'god' thing brings along a bit more mental baggage than I thought. Annoying."

He looked down at the one companion who had flatly refused to be left behind, smirking as it tore out the throat of a crocodile, and then leaped over the strike of a scorpion's tail, biting at it in the air and crushing the tail, spitting it out before Harry finished the scorpion off with a well-placed Reducto. The dog turned to him, glaring, and Harry shrugged. "Next time don't take so long that I have a chance to steal your kill, then. We're not doing it this way just for fun, you know?"

The dog chuffed in annoyance but moved to stand beside Harry, and Harry shouted out, "If you are hiding or still within the range of my voice, head south to the area around the hotel district!"

The echoes of his bellow had barely faded when more people came into view from around the next corner and behind them still more. But none within the houses around where the dog and Harry were currently standing. *Damn it.* That had been the case all too often. People who had quickly taken to the streets or been influenced by Harry's earlier injunction to fight were able to get away or were still alive, aided by the Aurors as their numbers swelled from the returning Nome reaction forces. Those who stayed inside had no such aid and had to rely on their own abilities and luck.

His eyes beginning to glow with magic, Harry rushed forward, shouting out, "Keep going, keep going south to the hotel district!"

A second later, several dozen pinpoint accurate Reductos lanced out from his hands, ending the lives, if it could be called that, of many of the monsters and undead harrying the group of survivors. The next moment, Harry had teleported the entire lot of them forward as he

rushed ahead, an illusion of the crowd all around him, taking the attention of the monsters as he attacked. The tumult was loud and frenetic, but the people continued to move and eventually, Harry and the dog downed enough of the monsters for the civilians to turn back and overwhelm the remainder.

For the next hour or more, Harry fought his way through the city, dealing with the crowds and monsters, his presence acting like a lodestone to the monsters as it had during the push to the police station. In this manner, Harry gave nearby civilians both direction and time to retreat to the protected area. And despite his earlier moment of concern, many people had been able to barricade themselves in their houses or apartment buildings or what-have-you and were now streaming away behind him to the slowly growing shelter.

Occasionally though, people would refuse to move on without protection, and would even ask they come with Harry moving forward. And with the fight in the sky growing even now, Harry and the dog were sometimes forced to retrace their steps, protecting this or that group, until they reached the defensive area where the police and his own allies took over.

Harry eventually reached the river after two more small-scale battles to protect other clumps of people, one of which was rather large, several thousand strong, including lots of kids. This had pretty much emptied the route to the Nile Harry had taken. Those people who remained outside the reach of Harry's amplified voice had either retreated already or were ignoring him in favor of staying where they were. And with the lessening of the pressure afforded them thanks to Harry moving around nearby, they at least had a fighting chance. Unfortunately, that was all Harry could do for them at the moment.

Now Harry came out into a small bazaar-like area by the river, where he breathed a sigh of relief seeing there were no people around. *Anyone near here must have cleared out already, thank the... oy.*

Just as Harry felt the irony in that thought, musket balls flew toward him from a large group of janissaries, the first he'd seen since starting this trek. Monsters, particularly several dozen crocodiles and hippos thrust out of the river, walking or waddling in his direction. Even after all that had occurred so far tonight, it was strange to see hippos and crocodiles moving alongside one another since normally, hippos would go after crocodiles and bully the poor beasts tremendously. *But these are not exactly natural creatures.*

Regardless, with no civilians here to protect, Harry was able to let loose at last. "Kasai! (conflagration)" The Japanese phrase created a fire spell in Harry's hand while his other hand shot out bone exploding or other curses at any undead that got too close. Not that he really needed to most of the time. The dog had charged ahead of them, crashing into the nearest monster, a scorpion creature dodging around its barbed tail, chomping down on its head, then leaping up of the creature's back to crash into a Mummy, tearing his throat out and head off, even as the mummy attempted to crush it in turn.

The fire beast roared forward, burning the undead and the conjured creatures both in its path. As it did, the dog circled back, protecting Harry's rear, dealing with several Jackal-men. The fire spell crashed into and through each of the janissaries in turn before dissipating, the long-range warriors having been the last enemy in sight.

Moving toward the river, Harry idly patted the dog on the head. "Good dog."

He then had to quickly pull his hand back as the dog snapped at him irritably. While it was fine with being cuddled by the kids, being petted by adults seemed to annoy it.

"Whatever, you mangy mutt," Harry muttered, shaking his head. "Just protect me while I'm doing this, okay?"

The dog looked up at him shrewdly for a moment, then nodded his head once before moving to Harry's side as he reached the river. There, Harry went to one knee, thrusting his hand into the water. His will moved along with it, entering the magical web within the river. "Right, let's do this."

The moment Harry did so, his mind was assaulted, not by one mind, not even by two sources as he had earlier that day, but by three different minds all of them attacking him at once through the underlying magical network of Egypt. What those minds could be originally, Harry at first didn't realize. But as he grappled with them, as he fought them back, the shape of those minds became clear at Harry.

At least two of them were some kind of construct, released into the magic of Egypt that ran through the Nile River. It was obvious to Harry now that they were no longer hiding that they were there specifically to stop him from understanding that magic, from taking it over.

The third mind was still living, but it was most decidedly not a mortal mind. Instead, it was something like an animal, only far more cunning, an animal deity, perhaps? This mind attempt to coil its power around his own, trying to bind him with magical force but thanks to his connection to water, Harry had just enough of a connection to the battlefield around them to avoid this, his mental probe shifting this way and that, his mind awash in pain as he grappled with them.

Combined, the three of them started to press into Harry, pushing him back, pressing him out and away from the underlying web of magic. But Harry dug in his mental heels and then changed tactics. *If they can combine, that means they can also be divided.*

With that, Harry created a mental wall for a very brief second to protect himself from their pressure and then struck out not against them as a whole but against the one mind whose shape was most apparent, the one who had the most life, in other words. This mind was icy and reptilian, not like a dragon but more like a snake, a creature of calculation and poison rather than fire and air. It also felt somewhat female for all of that, but Harry had no idea how he could tell.

On the mental plane like this, there were no specific spells Harry could use to attack his distant enemies. It wasn't like using Legilimency and Occlumency. There was no physical mind to attack. Harry's mind or mental-self was on the attack, the equivalent of pushing into enemy territory, which acted as a buffer against any intrusion, and the minds of his enemies were too diffuse or too far away. There was no magic that really worked on this quasi-mental, quasi-magical plane. Both attack and defense was composed of pure magical thought, each move barely colored, so to speak, with a concept to add a different impact or feeling to the spell.

This first attack was 'cold'. It was the idea, the concept, the thought of cold shoved into the mind of the serpentine attacker. And like any serpent would, the snake recoiled, its presence quickly receding, its power disappearing from the wave of magical energy crashing into Harry's defenses.

Harry did not try to press his advantage on that mind. Instead, he instantly attacked one of the others. This mind was almost familiar, and Harry realized with a start this was the same mind he had been dueling with over the past few days. Except now, Harry knew it was a personality, something like an enneagram, or a shadow of an ancient being. And it was revealed to him now, instead of hiding most of itself within the magical matrix, attacking instead of attempting to obscure itself.

This was a mistake. Harry's days of trying to understand the river's magic paid off now, as he understood where that background magic ended, and this mind began. Even better, over the days spent investigating the river, Harry had come to understand the other enchantments on this portion of the river without damaging the Blessing that covered the Nile. This came in handy now, allowing him to attack this enneagram without damaging anything else.

For an instant, the other two minds could not come to the aid of this one. And Harry's assault was vicious, his magic constrained into the image of Fragarach, boosting his attack, and Harry's power crashed into this mind, no longer aiming to trace it back to where it had come from but to slay and tear apart.

The snake and the other mind which had joined the struggle earlier that day tried desperately to aid their fellow, but they failed. For a moment, the enneagram, the ancient remnants of a God, fought back desperately. And then, it shattered, bursting and dying under Harry's attack.

OOOOOOO

A scream that combined agony and exultant release from a life that had become worse than soul-torture reverberated through the central ritual chamber of the Fortress of Vengeance, and Akhenaten reeled where he stood in front of the control stones. Luckily, he had tied his hands down on the lapis lazuli spheres, else he would have flinched away from the backlash as one of their deific shades died under Harry Potter's attack. *Dammit! First, he's able to push the Curse of Kek back, something that even most gods should have had trouble with,*

and then he pushes out some kind of spell that protects Alexandria from further undead and monster assault. And now he does this? When I told my wife I thought I hated Potter more than I had ever hated even the gods, I did not think I was understating what I felt for him!

But there was little he could do about it now beyond moving his other servants into position to attack Potter directly. Akhenaten's mind was now entirely wrapped around the various enchantments that he and Nefertiti had released, most particularly, the enchantments within the columns that Harry and the others had previously noticed. On the one hand, those spells were simple, anti-undead spells taken from the Egyptian school of magic. But, on the other hand, they were very different because there was another set of enchantments beyond that. Enchantments that were even now starting to take hold...

OOOOOOO

With no means to communicate with Harry and the other mystical types elsewhere in Egypt beyond carrying a message themselves, the exorcists were not having nearly as good a time as Harry and his companions were. Whereas Harry and his companions had created a single centralized and ever-widening area of control and defense, in Cairo, the exorcists and Aza'imi worked with the columns, which seemed to have spells on them to hold back the monsters and undead both. These created smaller but even more resistant pockets of defense.

At first, the people within that first pocket they came across were leery of Irina and the others. Not because they came from the Church. No, it was the fact that they seemingly knew how to fight the mystical enemies who had suddenly appeared that threw off the common citizen. Even when one of the Aza'imi told them about their identities and that they were charged by the Prophet himself to see off supernatural threats, it didn't make anyone any happier. Understanding that Muhammad had created a special branch of his faith to protect you from threats like this was one thing. But, seeing the existence of those threats and needing to fight against them yourself was quite another.

Leaving two-thirds of the Aza'imi with that first protected zone, Dulio led the others out, hoping to find other such protected areas. In doing so, Dulio also began to use his powers more often because there weren't as many civilians around anymore. Those who had been able to escape had retreated into the areas protected by the columns, whereas those who hadn't been able to were already dead or able to fend for themselves.

During the group's fourth expedition out, they came across one such area. Several policemen had retreated into an apartment building that was somewhat newer looking than the buildings around it, along with what looked like a personal protection detail of some kind of VIP. They seemed to have barricaded the first few floors and then retreated up to the fourth floor, where they had started to lay down fire on the surrounding monsters and undead.

Their bullets didn't do much against the undead. Unless you removed the head, the undead kept on moving. Beyond the armor the jackal men wore, the monsters had no such

protection, and several of them, including the harpies above them, had died to the wildly inaccurate fire of the police, who were very obviously close to breaking mentally as the exorcists came onto the scene. But so too had several people on other roofs or on the streets around the four-story building.

Staring at a group of dead men and women on an adjoining rooftop who had obviously been gunned down rather than slain by tooth or claw, Dulio shook his head. "With God as my witness, I do not believe that those folks have the correct mentality that I would wish to save from this hell, and yet, they are still humans. And still perhaps, true believers led astray by fear and thus should be protected."

With that in mind, the Sacred Gear, Zenith Tempest, appeared once more, appearing almost like a staff with a Holy Cross on the top. He gestured, and suddenly from the earth to either side of their current perch a wall erupted, creating a walkway between the distant rooftop to their own. The next second, fire blazed out in two tremendous fireballs that acted almost like dragons, swooping down into the masses below.

The fire from the other rooftop faltered, and Dulio shouted, "This way!"

For a moment, the gunmen dithered, then first a few of the police, followed by several of the security guards, raced over the walkway. Harpies and flying serpents appeared out of the sky above, flying down to the attack. But with his own position being guarded by his fellow exorcists, Dulio turned his attention upwards, and a hail of ice as sharp as swords sliced into everything within the air in the area around him. Then, as Dulio muttered, "No one else is going to be in the air..." he held out his hand, slowly clenching his fist. "I think we have enough to do with on the ground. We do not need to deal with aerial threats at the same time."

Over the entire city of Cairo, an ice storm slowly flared out, sending particles of frozen water sharp enough to cut concrete in every direction, slicing everything in the air to ribbons. Since without power nothing that the humans in the city had could get in the air, this allowed Dulio even greater freedom than Harry had back in Alexandria given the Aurors there, something Dulio now took advantage of.

Xenovia turned away from watching Dulio work as a jackal man bounded up from the streets below. She caught it in the side, Excalibur Explosion creating its namesake upon impact, hurling it away in pieces. Then she moved forward to take up the position of a downed Aza'imi, grabbing up the man's gun and firing down into a mob of jackal men attempting to climb up the side of the building. Meanwhile, Irina moved to the top of the fire escape leading onto the roof of the building they were currently standing on as a mummy made its way up.

This mummy reached forward, faster than Irina had thought, but she dodged anyway as the thing tried to grab her hand. At a mental command, Excalibur Mimic shifted into a long rapier. She then thrust forward, using the added reach to stab the creature in the eye, then

pulling back and doing it again. Even blind, the mummy kept coming, and behind it still more bit monsters.

Several of the Aza'imi turned in her direction, weakening the defenses elsewhere as this new threat came to light, but Irina shouted them back, as her sword changed forms into a broadsword and she sliced the hands off of the mummy, then moved around it, cutting it in half before situating herself at the top of the fire escape, her blade transforming into a long pike. With that, she stabbed down as she pulled out a sanctified gun with her other hand firing point-blank at the monsters and undead.

The exorcists held their position until several hundred people, more people than Dulio had expected because most had still been inside the other building, were now crowding the rooftop with them. Then Dulio cut off his attack over the city and gestured them back the way they had come, hiding a sense of creeping exhaustion as he did so. A second later, the walkway behind him collapsed back into the earth and concrete of the road below, and a new one formed, leading back to the nearest protected zone. "Time we left, ladies and gentlemen."

The civilians needed no urging and raced away, fear and terror in their faces. Here in Cairo, the Curse of Kek was still going strong, slowly worming its way into the minds of those who did not have any inherent protection against it. Irina and the others were fine, their faith protecting them from such subtle machinations for the most part. They felt the fear but knew it as a foreign thing and were able to, if not ignore it, overcome it with courage.

But the rest of the city? No. Like practically every other population center in Egypt, it was now dealing with a level of fear and paranoia that left them ripe for the second spell within the monoliths. As the newcomers were passed off into the area the monolith was defending to be incorporated into the organization slowly growing within, everyone in that area felt it.

Felt a foreign voice saying into their heads a simple word with all the power of distant thunder. "**Believe! Believe!**"

Irina frowned, staring down into the protected zone, looking over at one of the Aza'imi. "Why are they doing that?"

"Doing what..." The man grunted, looking up from where he had been taking a sip of water from a canteen only to pause as he too stared down. Because below, half of the crowd currently protected by the monolith had turned to it. Kneeling down, they had prostrated themselves as best they could, given the insanely crowded conditions, bowing towards it as they would towards Mecca. Others, perhaps Coptics, simply knelt and prayed, their hands clasped together in front of them as their eyes closed.

For a moment, the exorcists all looked at one another uneasily, then Dulio shrugged it off. "It isn't as if most of these people have any ability to fight back against whatever is going on, is it? And for all they know, these columns do indeed come from God. And perhaps they do!" He laughed. "After all, churches and so forth were built on top of ancient pyramids."

Perchance in ancient times, when the undead kings of the pharaohs tried to rule here, the ancient followers of your Prophet created those columns to defend against such.”

“That is far too positive an outlook to be anywhere near reality,” Xenovia answered tartly, shaking her head.

“Then what do you want us to do about it?” Dulio asked, his own voice now tart and showing a smidgen of tiredness. While he was in no danger of magical exhaustion, he was in danger of becoming physically tired from the drain of the night’s escapades.

“I suppose you have a point. But, perhaps, one of you should probably take control down there? Organize them to defend themselves better?” Xenovia suggested her tone an apology for her earlier sarcasm.

“Agreed. I will take Ifez and Andrew with me and start to organize this group like we did the first group we met. That is all we can spare. We can’t dilute our strength any further and still perform out in the city. Indeed, you all should go back and regroup with our brothers,” Said the man who had first confronted Kiba and the others with him when they came to Cairo to investigate the battle several days ago.

Actually, that was a lie. Dulio alone could probably perform just as well as all of them combined, so long as one or two went along to watch his back. But the locals still had their own pride, and whatever was going on, they didn’t want to leave defending their people and attacking these monsters to the representatives of the church.

While all three of them knew that was the real reason, the churchgoers didn’t say anything. Instead, they simply nodded and left once more, with Irina being the last to leave, staring over her shoulder at the monolith in worry.

OOOOOOO

Wherever the monoliths were throughout Egypt that call went out, finding fertile soil. And then, as the night dragged on, this message slowly changed. The message now was ***‘believe in the ancient God!’***

In far too many places with no local government surviving under the sudden madness, the people began to believe. They began to worship, sending prayers not to Allah or God but to the symbol on that monolith, having no other idea of what to do. Slowly this belief formed, overcoming their original religious understandings, superseding... taking over. It was built on fear and despair, and more powerful for that, slowly changing the minds of Egyptians.

In the recesses of far too many minds, people asked themselves what the modern religions had done for them. Where were they now? Indeed, where were the other nations that should have come to their aid? Was this insanity happening worldwide? Would this attack end with the coming of dawn or continue? To defend against these questions, hundreds of

thousands of people throughout Egypt grasped onto the hope of the message coming from the monoliths. Worship the great God, worship the monolith, and you will be protected.

In a few cities, surviving Mullahs or priests of the Coptic faith noticed this trend. While a few succumbed, others tried to take the message over, shouting out how the monoliths were, like Dulio had pointed out, possibly created by God, the church or Muhammad.

This didn't do much to slow the message's spread. And, eventually, that belief also began to change.

In one protected area, a mullah eventually decided to take a harder stance. The Mullah stood up in front of the kneeling masses, shouting out, "Do not listen to the voice! This monolith is from Allah, not an ancient god! The voice IEEEE!!"

That was as far as he got before a stone took them in the side of the head. "Blasphemer! The monolith is the only thing protecting us! It is the only thing that will ever protect us. All hail the ancient god of the monolith! All hail he whose name will be revealed!"

Even as the crowd rumbled agreement, the Mullah pushed himself to his feet, unwilling to give up even in the face of the anger directed at those who had once been his flock. He stood up, his face streaming blood and bellowed back towards the man who had thrown the stone. "You are wrong! Only Allah can save your soul!"

"It is not just my soul I am worried about, but my family, my children!" Another voice shot back.

"We can use these monolith friends. We can hold out until other nations come. We are Egypt, home of the Nile, home of the Suez Canal! Do you really think the whole world will have turned a blind eye to our plight? It is only a matter of time..."

He was interrupted once more by a stone hitting the back of his head this time. "No! Only our belief can empower the monoliths. For every believer, the monolith grows stronger!"

A second voice, this time that of a woman, chimed in. "If the rest of the world were going to save us, they would be here by now. We would've heard them! We would have seen Libya crossing the border or something similar. We have not!"

A third person in the crowd, a young, college-aged man, took it even further, his eyes alight with new religious fervor. "Allah is the lie, not the ancient god. The ancient god is calling us and will protect us from the demons!"

Fear. A demand based on faith. The promise of protection connected to that faith. Combine all those with a quite literal otherworldly threat like the undead and monsters from the past? You had an incredibly powerful message. One the various priests and mullahs throughout Egypt could not fight against.

Eventually, their attempts to do so began to backfire as it had to the first brave Mullah. First, in a small town devoted to the Coptic faith, a village priest was slain for speaking out against the monolith protecting them all. Then, in Kafr El Shiek, a group of mullahs and priests who had banded together to try to combat this new growing belief, fearing it for some reason without understanding why, were stoned to death.

Soon, those who were not physically going out to try and find survivors spent all of their time praying towards the monolith, man, woman and child. And in return, the message kept on getting more sophisticated.

Believe! Believe, and his name will be revealed to you. Believe, and once you know his name, say it to the heavens!

OOOOOOO

With the death of the first shade, the spirit of the second fought all the harder, and the snake-like God was also almost desperate in her efforts to try to crush Harry's will as they clashed in that pseudo-otherworld that was the magical network of the Nile River, trying to stop him from taking over that power. But Harry was relentless, pressing them further and further back a living tsunami. And while they came from the same school of magic that had created the various enchantments and the Curse that was hidden within the magic of the Nile, Harry had learned over the past few days, and he was the stronger now.

Slowly Harry pushed forward and eventually mousetrapped the second shade, destroying it in the same manner he had the first, corralling it away from the Blessing above and the Curse below, shattering the second enneagram utterly. That only left the snake goddess, and with a roar, Harry just pushed. There was no more subtlety, no more trying to guide his magic beyond keeping it away from the Blessing on the 'surface' of the Nile's magic. He simply reached into the very magical weave of the Nile that existed below that Blessing and imprinted his will on it as he had the Undertaking before.

And with that, Harry knew what he had to do. Pushing his will out even more than before, Harry's awareness sped out, memorizing the entirety of Egypt's magi-sphere. In doing so he sensed the hordes, thousands upon thousands strong of undead and monsters forming just outside where his will had ended previously, charging inexorably into the city from the southeast. *Now, that just won't do...*

With that thought, Harry reached through the Nile river, his power blazing up and out of the river in a corona of power colored the purest ocean blue to annihilate hordes of undead and monsters that had previously been along the Nile River within Alexandria. The same wave of power spread upriver, and in every city, a few survivors looked on in shock as the Nile River seemed to come alive to annihilate their mystical enemies.

A second later, the direction of his attack shifted back into the magical web, and with a silent roar, Harry smashed his power into the Curse of Kek and the mind directing the pair of

enchancements that was summoning the undead and monster hordes throughout Egypt. That mind had the time it took Harry to wipe out the forces by the river to prepare, and even so, both it and the mind that Harry could sense directing it, reeled under his assault.

However, Harry had been concentrating so much on the mental plane that he was completely unaware of what was going on in the physical. After Harry had 'killed' the first enneagram, a little, over two hundred crocodile monsters had attempted to attack him. But the dog and Issei, along with a troop of reinforcements from Kiba's Dragon Knight Legion, had pushed this far to enlarge the defensive cordon. They lost people, and more than one of the civilians wondered what the heck Harry was up to, but they held the attackers at bay right up until this moment when a new attacker arrived.

Leaping down from a captured flying carpet, Sobek roared, using something much like a wizard's apparition to teleport line of sight right in front of Harry Potter. And in his hand was the spear Gae Bolg.

Feeling his feet hit the surface of the water, The crocodile god used a minor spell inherent to his being, well, a crocodile god, before instantly thrusting forward, and he did not miss.

Harry gasped as his mind was shocked back into his body, Gae Bolg piercing his heart, stabbing straight through and out his back, blood pouring out of his mouth. Reaching forward, he grabbed at the spear where it thrust into his body as he stared up at the crocodile gaze of Sobek. Then, his lips quirked into an almost evil smile as he slowly transformed. That transformation shifted some of his innards up and away from the spear point, his grip on the spear stopping Sobek from pulling it back. Now the spear was plunged into his chest right below where his heart had been, a heart that was healing itself.

Through bloodied lips, Harry's smile turned sardonic as he intoned, "Phoenix Werewolf for the win, ya ruddy cock." Then in his other hand, the Boosted Gear appeared. While Ddraig had been no help in terms of the battle occurring on the mental/magical plane, this fight was in the physical world, and Harry could feel the dragon's intense desire to help once more.

Sobek had a choice, take the punch coming from the Boosted Gear, or release the weapon. Knowing the spells on the weapon would allow him to call it back to himself and knowing about the Boosted Gear, Sobek made that decision with all the speed of self-preservation, releasing the weapon and flipping backward and away to land on the opposite bank of the Nile.

"BOOST!!!" The voice from the gauntlet bellowed in fury before a beam of pure magical energy, colored now nearly yellow rather than the blue of Harry's previous attack, blasted through the area where Sobek had been. Even the heat of its passage caused the crocodile god to cry out in pain as he ducked to the side while a shield of his own magic, appeared around him in the form of a layer of scintillating scales.

The blast tore through a segment of the city and out into the suburbs beyond, thankfully in an area where the civilians had already died or evacuated. This was a good thing because everything in its path was obliterated from existence.

Grimacing, Harry twisted to try and stare at Sobek, but Sobek teleported away, holding out his hand to call the spear back. He would not miss a second time, and for all his bravado, Harry was exhausted from his recent ordeal in the river, and while his heart was now pumping once more, he was still wounded, the magic of Gae Bolg slowing down but not overcoming his phoenix werewolf healing ability.

But almost like a mirror of Harry's own lack of situational awareness, Sobek had completely neglected to think of Harry's guards. While the rest of them were busy dealing with the ongoing attack of scorpions and other creatures, the dog had heard the spear slamming home into Harry and twisted around to see Sobek's ambush and the spear he used.

When Gae Bolg flew out of Harry's chest with a sucking sound, hurrying back towards the alien creature, the dog leaped, a loud woof of joy following him. No dog, not even a Cu Sith of its size, should have been able to leap that far. But the dog did, and as he did, the dog grabbed the spear out of the air.

For a moment, the momentum of Sobek's command for Gae Bolg to return to him pulled the dog through the air. But then, Harry gasped as he felt a wash of Fae or Tuathan-based magic pouring from the dog, accompanied by a feeling of completion. As if someone had just slid the last rune into a runic array, it was that same kind of almost preternatural clicking sensation.

And a moment later, the dog and spear glowed as one even as the dog fell into the river, dragging Gae Bolg down into its depths. The glow continued within the river, and Harry stared down at it along with an astonished Sobek, both of them putting aside their previous antipathy in sheer shock at what was going on.

Because the dog was changing. The dog was no longer just a dog. It was shifting into the form of a man. It was hard to make details out through the water, but that much at least was obvious. The black fur was disappearing to be replaced by skin and leggings (thankfully), and Harry could see a burst of red hair along with lines of blue magic. *What the heck... The Curse, the Curse is being lifted?! What the bloody fuck...*

OOOOOOO

At the same time that Akhenaten began the Harrowing in Egypt, Rias was just waking up, smiling as she felt Lily stirring beside her. The kids had decided to sleep in the grownup's bed last night, both of them annoyed and unhappy that Harry hadn't returned yet. *Well, that, and being back in school for this little one. Whatever else changes, I doubt Lily will ever have any easier a time sitting down in class. Thankfully she hasn't attempted to use the Undertaking*

to escape again. That was most annoying, even if she wasn't gone more than a few minutes by my reckoning.

Opening her eyes, Rias turned her head to smile down at her daughter, then looked past Lily to where Yasaka and Kunou lay on the other side of the younger redhead. Yasaka slept with one arm flung over both girls, pulling them into one mass of cuddles against her while at the same time having somehow kicked off the blankets without Rias noticing. The reason for her not noticing however, was easy to see: Yasaka's tails had taken over covering all of them like a furry blanket.

No wonder I had that dream about being smothered by a fluff monster, Rias thought ruefully, then sighed as she slipped out of bed, grateful she had kept her position on the outside of the cuddle pile. There was no reason for the kids to wake up with the dawn after all. And with Yasaka still asleep I know I won't be distracted in the shower. Although her idea of us ambushing Harry in the baths is a very enticing one...

After a nice, albeit lonely shower, Rias spent an hour speaking to Gasper, who she found awake in the main sitting room. As a Damphir, he didn't need a lot of sleep, and had been working on a program for them. It would create what Gasper called an alert bot which would pan the internet for any strange or unusual news coming out of Egypt. So far the bot hadn't come up with anything, but Rias hoped that it would serve as an early warning for trouble if Harry suddenly became too busy to get a warning out, or the communication network down.

They then talked about school and how Gasper was getting on having left his personal box behind as Rias entered the kitchen to start cooking breakfast and the lunch boxes for those who needed them. With Kala and Harry both gone, it had fallen on Rias and Yasaka to cook for the much-diminished clan, a clan that had since lost two members, Koneko and Asia, to Danan and the backup forces being prepared there just in case.

So here I am without my little helper once again, Rias thought ruefully. Asia was the only one of the below eighteen crowd who had any interest or ability in cooking. Although for the life of me I cannot think of why Harry would... why did we think there was anything going on in Egypt at all in the first place? She thought, frowning into the distance suddenly. There was something... wrong about that thought, but for the life of her, Rias couldn't think of why.

Cooking the lunchboxes and breakfast took her another hour on her own, with Gasper only helping in boxing the lunchboxes. Then she was up and waking up the others, where she found both girls already awake and mock-wrestling with some of Yasaka's tails as the kitsune let out a very fake snore. "Alright, that's enough you three. Unless you don't want breakfast?"

Rias had to scramble off the ladder to get out of the way of the two hungry little monsters, then found herself pinned against the side of the hallway and the life being kissed out of her by Yasaka in thanks. Rias gave as good as she got before the two women broke off thanks to a shout from below from Kunou, "Momma, are you coming?"

"Pity that doesn't seem in the cards yet today," Yasaka quipped as she pulled away, heading downstairs with a wink at Rias. "Still, maybe later tonight that could be changed?"

"We'll see about that later," Rias answered with a laugh, before her world exploded in pain. The magic within her, the connection between herself and one of her Peerage, began to thrum, pulsing with so much power that it put her on her knees, slumping against the wall as a cry of pain wrenched its way out of her. "Yaaaaagh!"

Yasaka was at her side in an instant and the patter of feet told a bleary-minded Rias the others in the house were reacting to her agonized cry. But she was only peripherally aware of Yasaka's arms going around her, the worried kitsune's voice in her ear as Rias clutched at her chest, feeling the power binding her to her newest peerage member, the Cu Sith or whatever-it-was with Harry disintegrating under a wave of new magical power.

It wasn't as if the dog was close to death. She wouldn't feel anything in that case except a sudden cessation of their connection. No, this raw magic was something buried within the dog, hidden behind the Curse that had so flummoxed all of them in their attempts to try and figure out what was going on.

The problem was, this magic, buried within the dog prior to this moment was also destroying their connection, although Rias didn't think that was the reason behind this sudden change. If that connection failed, the dog's Devil-given ability to ignore the passage of time would fade. It would be ravaged anew by the eons it had sidestepped while in Tir Na Nog under the command of the winter Fae.

Rias had no idea why this was happening, nor at present did she care. Whatever the reasons for this sudden outburst of magic, Rias would never let one of her Peerage, her family, die no matter who they were or why. Grimacing, Rias collected herself using some of the mental exercises that Harry had given her, and then, cupped her hands in front of her face. The image of the Knight piece, the visible connection between them appeared in one hand. Already she could see it slowly coming apart, disintegrating from the bottom up.

"I don't think so," Rias hissed through clenched teeth, gathering her magic and, again using lessons Rias had learned since meeting Harry, thrusting her magic down into the connection between herself and the distant dog, grateful for extra power she had been given recently by the enneagram of Aine Fand. As the others watched a red miasma of energy surrounded Rias and the Knight piece in her hands, the miasma slowly seeping into the piece, keeping it intact against the ravaging energy.

How long Rias fought that battle she didn't know, but eventually, the ravaging energy cut off, as if it had performed its function, and the connection was still there. The Knight piece in her hand, however, had shifted, mutating drastically, even more than the mutated Queen piece that represented Akeno after she and Harry had pledged their troth to one another.

But that didn't matter. The dog was still alive, and that made Rias smile as she looked at the black and red chess piece in her hands even as it faded back into incorporeality. "You're not allowed to die on me, dog. Whatever you are now, you are still a member of my peerage, and that is not going to change."

Then Rias collapsed and would have fallen to the floor if not for Yasaka's arms around supporting her. The Kitsune had followed all this with some alarm, and now scooped the taller Rias up into a fireman's carry before looking askance at the ladder leading up to the master bedroom.

"Honestly momma, are you a magic user, or not?" Kunou grumbled. "Levitate her!"

"Good point daughter mine," Yasaka answered ruefully, and a moment later Rias hovered bonelessly in the air in front of her, with Yasaka carefully levitating her up through the now open hatch, Lily having climbed up the ladder and opened it for them.

Watching Yasaka carefully lay her mother down on the bed, Lily shook her head. "What the heck happened? She mentioned something going on with the dog, and I remember the piece she put in the dog didn't look like that!"

"I don't know, Lily," Yasaka frowned, touching Rias's forehead. "But something certainly seems to have happened to the dog in Egypt."

All of them, even Gasper who had raced to the sound of his king's cry, frowned thinking about it, then shrugged as one. There wasn't anything interesting in Egypt after all, so whatever was going on there, it really couldn't be all that important, it couldn't be could it? "Maybe Harry found some kind of magical weapon or powerup and gave it to the dog?" Kunou asked.

"That's about as likely as anything else," Yasaka answered, shrugging unconcern. "They should have called but given the time difference it is possible Harry isn't even awake or aware of what happened. Still, it hardly matters. Rias will recover soon, and you two have school. We'll also need to call in sick for her to the school though."

The wards of the Wizarding World were, as Ophis had put it insidious because they didn't quite work as other wards did. Indeed, they had more in common with a bounded field than any of the mind magics that the other magical communities used. They were a purely defensive working that did not attack. Words and places were placed under a kind of fog that would then counter any interest in those areas, becoming thicker and harder to get through as the invader attempted to push deeper. There was no set defense against this, no way to completely block out the influence of them so long as you kept trying to get through the wards in question. After all, the Interdict, like the other wards, were not harming you or attacking, simply redirecting.

Even for someone like Yasaka, a powerful individual with a strong mind and a connection to people within Egypt, getting through that fog of apathy was impossible. This was true even for the strongest of magical beings on Earth.

Ophis, busy as she was in South America, was completely unaware of the goings on in Egypt. The Underworld remained unaware of anything unusual, their agents on Earth not reporting anything. Those in Heaven had begun to realize something as the prayers of the faithful within Egypt carried a sense of panic, but they were constrained from responding personally, and none of their people on Earth seemed to understand something unusual was going on. And in India, the gods could only feel a bit uneasy about things to the East, but put it down to their own squabbling rather than anything beyond India's borders.

As long as the Interdict remained, no help would be coming to Egypt. So at least something was going right for Nefertiti and Akhenaten. Something that would have served the Pharaoh as cold comfort given the disaster in Alexandria if he had any time to spare from trying to figure out what new wrinkle was being added to his current headache.

OOOOOO

The transformation seemed to move with glacial slowness, making Harry wonder what this was doing to Rias back in Kuoh. But then the newly-formed man burst out of the water to stand facing Sobek, flinging the spear this way and that to block Sobek's attacks before a riposte hurled the attacking god away. The newcomer rested the butt of Gae Bolg on the ground, grinning over his shoulder at Harry while Sobek got to his feet slowly. "Greetings, oh High King of Danan! It seems as if you have need of my spear, and since I have now claimed it once more, I have no issue with placing it at your service. Setanta, of the blood of Lugh, at your service."

Harry stared at the man. He was tall, more than six feet, with wide, powerfully built shoulders and chest, both on display at present because he was only wearing a ragged kilt with green boots. He was heavily tanned, with a few scars crossing his body, along with wode tattoos covering one of his pecs and the corresponding shoulder. His red hair was long and lanky at present, paired with a short-cropped but still wild-looking beard and mustache. He had a hooped copper earring in one ear, and on one half of his face, he had several lines of wode tattoo going from the bottom of his jaw up over his eye, which were brown in color.

But more than his appearance was the magic emanating from the man, spreading out from the whirls and eddies of the numerous tattoos all across his skin and almost flaring from his eyes.

Here was a demigod in all his glory, one born to it rather than come into it via other magical means like Harry. And, for all that the name he gave was not one so well known, Harry still knew him and smiled tiredly. "As High King of Danan and husband to Rias Gremory, your peerage's King, if you're still bound to her anyway, I accept your service, Cú Chulainn. Now go get me a crocodile belt."

“Hahaha, I like the way you think, my Lord!” Cú Chulainn, the so-called Hercules of Ireland, grinned, happy his brief attempt at humility had failed, before he twisting around to block a blow from Sobek. Wielding a pair of khopesh the crocodile god had crossed the intervening distance in a second.

Battering aside Sobek’s attack, Cú Chulainn countered with a stab that Sobek was barely able to block, but suddenly he was stumbling back, Cú Chulainn pushing the far larger, broader god with a roaring laugh on his lips. Again and again, Cú Chulainn flicked the spear this way and that, stabbing dozens of times, changing the angle each time slightly trying to get through Sobek’s defenses. Twice the crocodile god was nicked before he could bat the weapon aside just enough to go on the offensive himself, his other blade flicking out with all the speed of a striking cobra.

That blow should have killed anyone bar a high-level Knight or someone who specialized in speed, or Harry, who would have been forced to take it and rely on his phoenix werewolf healing ability. But somehow, Cú Chulainn was able to get the end of Gae Bolg in the way of the blow, causing it to simply graze one shoulder rather than stab into his pectoral. The next second, the Khopesh in Sobek’s other hand turned away the next stab from Cú Chulainn’s spearhead.

The two of them stood there, and Cú Chulainn smirked for just a second before flipping himself backward, then charging forward, his spear once more flashing out so fast it created a small boom as it passed through the air. Sobek’s khopesh gleamed green for just a moment, and a coruscating wave of energy, similar but not as powerful as the Boosted Gear’s blasts, lanced out, forcing Cú Chulainn to dodge.

That blast lashed out towards Harry, but a reinforced magical shield bounced it off with difficulty. Shaking his head somewhat wearily, Harry chuckled, then looked down at the river before shrugging and leaping down into it.

That was all Cú Chulainn saw before he had to turn his full attention on Sobek. Twin Khopesh met spear again and again, and twice, Sobek tried to simply disappear, to teleport away using the underlying magical structure of Egypt as was his right as a god of these lands. But the land of Alexandria was Harry’s now, and like Akhenaten’s earlier attempt to get him and the others into a position to attack Potter, Sobek’s willpower failed to break through Harry’s even while Harry was battling the last God in the river, locked in mortal mental combat with the serpentine coiling power of the protector of kings.

Sobek’s attempt to teleport cost him, Cú Chulainn’s next strike came dangerously close to skewering him through the forehead. Instead, it sliced along the side of the crocodile-man’s head, nearly taking one of his eyes. “Where the hell were you lookin’, you overgrown gecko!” Cú Chulainn shouted as the crocodile God’s blood began to flow from the wound down his side, which only slowly began to heal. Although Sobek was a god, none of his normal godly vitality had ever been used to heighten his healing ability.

Stumbling back, Sobek raised an arm to wipe away the blood with the back of his hand, then he hissed, his crocodile mouth opening to show his teeth as he readied his blades once more, a green cloak of magic billowing out from him as it had earlier against Harry and Tiamat before that. **“You will die for this, man-god!”** Being forced to retreat by a dragon of Tiamat’s power was one thing. Being hurt by a human god was humiliating.

Cú Chulainn laughed gaily, twirling his spear in front of them as if it were a staff, before standing, pointing the spearhead towards Sobek. “Hahahaha, that’s the way! I don’t want my first fight back in my real body to be borin’, after all.”

Sobek attacked quickly, launching himself forward, both of his Khopeshes smashing aside the blow that he knew was coming, carrying the spear out of his way, and barreling bodily into Cú Chulainn. But Cú Chulainn stepped back, deadening some of the force of Sobek’s charge and whirled to the side, even as Sobek barreled forward. Then, the magical aura around Sobek lashed out at him, acting as if it was an extension of the crocodile’s scaly body, scraping and cutting at Cú.

But Cú Chulainn rolled further away, the butt of Gae Bolg catching Sobek in the back of the knee, sending him tumbling to the ground. Cú flipped around, his spearhead coming down like an axe. Sobek barely rolled forward in time to avoid it, the blow sinking deep into the ground, before Cú pulled the spear out and stabbed forward. Desperately, Sobek got one of his khopesh up to block the blow, but the weapon was smashed from his hands, disappearing the instant it left his fingers into motes of emerald light. The next second it was replaced, as Sobek brought his other khopesh around, forcing Cú to parry before slicing with the newly reformed blade. And this time, Cú had to block with the spear’s shaft instead of deflecting the blow. That first khopesh was quickly joined by the second khopesh, and Sobek snarled, attempting to use his greater strength and height to bear the human to the earth.

For a moment, the two combatants strained at one another, Cú holding the twin blades at bay with his spear. As they strained, Cú could feel his Ríastrad strain at the leash. But he refused to give in to his base, berserker desires. Not for this fight, not his first fight back in a human body. *Cursed Gwyn ap Nudd kept me in that mindset for far too damned long!*

Just before he was going to be overwhelmed, he thrust up hard before rolling backwards. Both Kopheshes finished their downward strike but missed the Irishman, who swung Gae Bolg in an arc that would have disemboweled Sobek if he hadn’t backed away.

But in backing away, Sobek was able to make use his magic once more. The aura of green magic around him expanded, and several green glowing crocodile heads appeared around him, much like the spell he had attempted to use against Tiamat.

Cú stared at them, then started to twirl Gae Bolg around one-handed, while his other hand slapped at one of the wode whirls on his forearm. A light blue aura enveloped him the next instant, and he charged forward with a wild, almost fey laugh, shocking Sobek. “I said I was

the blood of Lugh, ya gecko! Did ya think that my sire or Scathach never taught me aught of Tuathan magic!?”

The crocodile heads attacked from every angle, but several were sliced into nothingness by Gae Bolg, Cú's attacks creating furrows in the ground underneath them and the buildings around the battle. Other crocodile heads clamped onto Cú, trying to bite through Cú's skin but getting nowhere, causing Sobek to hiss in frustration. ***For the second time, my magic has proven useless!***

Unable to back away quickly enough, Sobek found himself hard-pressed by Cu. Even when he was able to block a blow from Gae Bolg, Cú's other fist smashed into Sobek's head with enough force to send him sideways and through a building, which collapsed around him. The smaller human raced after Sobek, laughing all the while as he dodged Sobek's magical attacks, which continued past him destroying several more buildings and catching one of Harry's defenders, hurling the armor-clad civilian into a building on the other side of the Nile. This caused everyone around them except Harry to dive for cover.

Sobek was not a War God for all his strength and willpower, not like the Tuatha De Danan who fought **real** wars against the Fomorians. While Gods of Egypt often fought one another, it was always one-on-one matters or, at most, families attacking one another. Sobek just could not match the skill that Cú Chulainn displayed. He had hoped his magic and larger size would see him through, but as the city around them was destroyed by every deflected stab or spell that flew wide of the mark, Sobek was pushed more and more onto the backfoot.

Desperately Sobek attempted to use one of his summoning spells, a type of spell that would have been useless against Tiamat. Crocodiles appeared, attempting to bite at Cú's legs. But he dispatched them with simple stabs. It still let Sobek regain some time, and by the time Cú finished off the crocodiles, Sobek had launched his next attack.

A powerful magical blast roared out into Cú, slamming into him and hurling him backward through an entire block's worth of buildings, his cry of pain music to the crocodile god's ears. When he landed, the building Cú had last crashed into collapsed on top of him.

But Sobek did not sense the creature's passing. Grumbling, he moved forward slowly, cautiously, his magic once more creating a thick coating of green scale mail across his body just in case.

He was right in his caution. As he watched, the rubble was pushed away, and Cú stood. The Tuathan runes on his body gleamed, the treelike runes creating bright blue energy as a wilder, even more battle-hungry look had come to his face. “Not bad, but let's see how well ya can take it!” With that, he charged forward again, but he hurled his spear forward as well. “Strike, Gae Bolg!”

Midair, Cú hit a few of the glowing runes on his chest, then gestured forward. Each rune disappeared from his body momentarily to reform in the air shifting into pure magical energy.

The next second, a series of gleaming blue beams of power erupted, crashing into Sobek, dissipating his energy shield faster than Sobek could repair it.

So surprised was he that the crocodile god could barely get his khopesh up in time to block the incoming spear. Both khopeshes shattered, and the spear slammed into his gut, hurling him backward. On impact, one of the spells on the dread spear activated, following the will of the one it had been gifted to by its creator. The tufts of feelers behind the spearhead shifted, poking into and through the wound, questing ever deeper.

The effect was immediate and excruciating. “GRRAGGGHHH...” Sobek screamed a sound that could never come from a normal crocodile’s throat, completely overcome by the agony in a way that he hadn’t even been by Tiamat’s fire.

So in pain was Sobek that he was barely able to open his eyes as Cú moved to stand over him, pulling the spear out his gut, the feelers tearing free and pulling chunks of the crocodile god’s flesh with them. “So, that’s it, aye? A bit of a disappointment.”

The wound was terrible, but Sobek was, for all his shortcomings, still a god. Ignoring his pain, indeed, slowly shutting down his body’s ability to feel pain at all, Sobek slowly stood, and after a brief second, his khopesh formed in his hands once more, and he glared at the Irish godling.

“Now, that’s the way.” Cú Chulainn nodded respectfully just once and then was on him again.

OOOOOOO

As Harry battled it out with the three spirits within the Nile, the battle elsewhere in the city continued to drag on. For every five people of fighting age who simply wanted to get away, there were two or three who, buoyed by Harry’s earlier words and the continued impact of the Patronus portion of the sun spell, wanted to keep fighting, putting on the armor or picking up guns. The area they controlled spread slowly but relentlessly.

It cost them, of course. Just because a civilian put on a suit of armor and was given a magical sword didn’t mean that the civilian instantly learned how to fight well. This was some of the worst fighting imaginable even for wizards and witches, let alone nonmagical combatants.

Nor was their cooperation seamless. Many arguments between the locals sprang up, and Yubelluna or Kiba occasionally had to step in when Proudfoot or Farouq locked heads with one another, or someone in a position of authority normally within Alexandria was added to their command. Several times various politicians - not the mayor of the city, who had died in the initial rush - tried to take over, tried to demand explanations of what was going on. But Harry’s orders were absolute even to Farouq, simply because they made sense. First, get

through the night, protect as many people as possible in Alexandria and perhaps beyond. Then go demanding answers.

As the defenders pushed outward, Kiba, who had now taken to only leading attacks into the largest buildings, was slowly starting to hit his magical limit. If Glory Drag Trooper ran out of power, the fight would go from bloody to brutal instantly.

Worse, Kala and Akeno were slowly losing ground against the hippo god. They'd hurt it, and in the hour since they had first run into it, they had slaughtered who knew how many conjured beasts and hippos, but they were being pushed further back into the city by its magical assaults. Without Tiamat or Harry there to combat that creature, whatever defenses they put up would not matter.

Yet they held long enough that, at around three in the morning, the weary defenders got a major shot in the arm when Tiamat arrived back, still wounded from being ambushed by Sobek and the others but leading the remnants of Base Epsilon's troops into the city along with the team of Aurors that had joined them. By this point, the soldiers and Aurors were making quick work of the creatures facing them, only slowed by the beetles and monsters pouring into the city from outside the reach of Harry's will.

But now, Tiamat hopped out of the truck she had been in, moving to the side of the column, where she shifted into her original body. Then, with a flap of her wings, she took to the air. **"Let the Aurors guide you all deeper into the city towards the hotel district. That will be the center of the defensive zone. You may even find more soldiers already there."**

"What about you!" Sala shot back.

"I just sensed something, and I think my friends need some help." A moment later, Tiamat was out of sight over the buildings.

After his forwardmost company reported an all-clear, the general looked at his second-in-command. "If that dragon's friends are in trouble, that doesn't bode well for us, does it?"

"Frankly, sir, I think we've all been living on borrowed time since the first attack. But have you noticed something since we entered the city? I haven't seen any undead rising from the ground or monsters appearing. Only the ones coming from our southeast for the monsters, and the only undead I've seen come from inside the buildings and the shadows within."

Sala was about to shout at the man and point at the monsters they had recently gunned down on the road but then noticed that the only monsters he could see were coming in at the back of his group and from the southeast. "You might be right. Which means, perhaps, we could have found something resembling a safe zone."

The bearded man pulled at his beard for a moment, then shook his head. "Break into battalions, infantry on the sides to move into any alleyways as we pass. Don't go into buildings

unless attacked and then in terms of three squads for larger buildings. Smaller buildings are targets of opportunity. We've trained to move through cities before. Let's put it to good use."

OOOOOOO

How long they had fought, using their aerial mobility to offset Metni's raw attack power, Akeno didn't know. But tiredness was starting to slow her down, and Kalawarner too. Then the rest of the aerial battle finally intruded, and neither woman was in a position to get away.

Kalawarner's spears took out an undead sphinx and sliced a harpy's wings off, but as Akeno dodged around the poison spit of one of the flying cobras, Kala screamed as a bolt of energy caught her in her right wing, sending her tumbling to the ground.

In response, Akeno's lightning crashed out once more, the same Holy Lightning she had used to start the battle, clearing the airspace and then blasting down into the monster below. And yet, the red shield around the evil hippo god remained as the lightning creature dissipated. The next second, another blast caught Akeno, launching her away, where she landed the same park where Kala had gone down.

"Damn you!" Akeno shrieked, raising her lightning whip as Metni smashed through the intervening buildings to attack them. "You will pay for that!"

"BWAHAHAH, you and the crow are both done running now, islander!" Metni charged forward at the deceptively fast gate a hippo had, despite only having two hippo legs rather than four. And then the creature was right in front of Akeno, raising a fist.

A hasty Protego covered Akeno but shattered under the blow from the hippo god, hammering her into the ground with a cry of agony as she felt her jaw and some of her teeth shatter under the blow. Metni raised a foot, intending to crush her skull. But Kalawarner's light spears stabbed into his side, causing it to snort in pain, twisting away slightly to smash the Light spear into pieces.

"Damn you, crow!" With that, Metni lashed out with his own attack, a giant hippo maw shaped of red energy reaching for her.

Kalawarner gamely summoned up light spears, hundreds of them in a row in front of her between the two of them. But the attack shattered each row in turn until being stopped by the last row, and on the heels of its attack, Metni charged towards Kala, who had no chance of getting away with her ruined wing.

Then, there were explosions.

Metni was flung backward and Kalawarner turned wearily toward where the explosions of come from. Yubelluna stood there, scowling angrily, one hand thrust forward as she strode forward to put herself between Metni and his victims. "I think, hippo man, you should keep your mouth and hands to yourself. The ladies and I already have full dance cards."

“I am Metni!” the creature screamed, now thoroughly incensed. **“I eat where I will, kill what I wish!!”**

The bandrui’s eyes flashed with magic as she shook her head firmly. “You will not have them nor anyone else under our protection.” Trees reached for the creature, grabbing at the hippo, slowing his forward momentum as their branches flexed, pulsing explosions into the monster.

As powerful as Yubelluna was as both holder of the Sacred Gear Bombardier and bandrui, the hippo god was still more powerful. It lumbered its way out of the trap, striding towards her now even as Yubelluna created more explosions in its path.

Yubelluna stared at the monster in shock but did not flee, knowing neither of her friends could do so.

“Fall!” She shouted. “Fall!” With every word, more and more asked explosions hammered into the beast. The grass underneath turned into grasping vines or grew a cutting edge as every bush and tree reached for the beast.

But Metni refused to yield, even as his legs started to get cut to pieces and the red shield surrounding him faded out entirely. He ignored this, charging forward, his hippo mouth gaping, and his wide herbivore’s teeth gleaming with blood. And somehow, that sight was even more terrifying than if Metni had teeth meant to look like that.

“Fall!” Yubelluna shrieked, holding up her hands and creating a barrier of explosions, while Kalawarner got to her feet and began to toss Light spears forward into the area where Metni stood as fast as she could make them

Whether this would have availed them anything at all, neither woman would ever learn. Because death came for the Hippo God from on high.

Tiamat roared down, a blast of fire crashed into the creature. Metni, who hadn’t bothered to magically defend himself from above, squealed in agony, and before he could dodge, Tiamat’s even vaster bulk slammed into him, bearing Metni to the ground.

Before the Egyptian god could try to defend himself, Tiamat’s head came down, her fangs gleaming. With a tremendous amount of effort, she tore the Hippo God’s head clean off its shoulders, chomping down and shattering its skull and every other bone in its head between her teeth. Blood and viscera spouted, turning into rubies and motes of light as they coruscated up like a fountain from the dead god’s neck or fell from Tiamat’s jaws. Then Tiamat reared her head back and swallowed, licking her lips. **“Mmmm... hippo.”**

Turning her head back down to look at the three battered women, Tiamat nodded her long neck in respect. **“Good work, and thanks for holding that creature still for me. Now, if you don’t mind...”** She looked pointedly at the carcasses of the hippos that had been summoned by the hippo god earlier in the battle, as, on cue, the massive dragon’s stomach

rumbling made it clear what she was asking about. Unlike the other monsters, the bodies of the hippos had stayed after having been killed, so Tiamat was hopeful that meant they could actually fill her stomach.

“Be our guest,” Yubelluna and Kalawarner said as one without even looking at one another before they slowly made their way over to the unconscious Akeno.

OOOOOOO

For his part, Harry’s dive into the river had, seemingly, served no purpose as far as his opponent could see. Wadjet was in no rush to appear personally to battle Harry as she had Tiamat, still nursing her very physical wounds from that match. No, Wadjet kept her portion of the fight purely on the mental plane, even as she knew she could no longer truly contain Harry’s influence from spreading throughout the Nile. Indeed, Wadjet tried desperately to call to her Pharaoh for aid, her normal abhorrence towards Akhenaten, the Pharaoh who had enslaved her disappearing.

And her call for aid was answered. Having watched events around Harry as best he could, Akhenaten had already begun to move another one of his deific pawns into position.

Having used much the same trick as Sobek to enter Alexandria from beyond the border of Harry’s control, Wepwawet had avoided the once again growing dogfight in the air above the city. Now, as Wadjet’s will was pushed back, the jackal-headed god leaped down, landing on top of Harry, driving a punch into the back of his head and neck that caused the water to explode all around them from the backlash, burying Harry in the bottom of the river.

Even with Harry’s durability that hurt like a bitch, and Harry could feel his skull cracking, his brain whirling before as his healing ability went to work. Grimacing, Harry concentrated through the pain and kept his aura from receding, which meant that the Curse and the various enchantments he had pushed away from Alexandria still could not gain a foothold there. But his work on doing the same throughout the rest of the Nile faded instantly.

A moment later, Harry pushed himself off the muddy bed of the river as the water flooded back in, staring at where the Jackal-headed attacker stood on the surface of the river, preparing an attack spell, the power coruscating around one massive fist.

Growling, Harry surged to the top of the river, a spell of his own keeping him balanced atop it before he charged forward, Boosted Gear raised, battering the enemy’s attack aside with his own. But Wadjet, with the perfect timing of her kind, went on the attack suddenly, and Harry stumbled, crying out in sudden pain as the snake attempted to, for the first time that day, launch an attack on Harry’s mind instead of simply defending against his own assault.

Harry’s connection to the river around them snapped, but Harry fought back, dodging and battering Wepwawet’s blasts to the side while grimly pushing the snake’s attack back. Both gods bore in, forcing Harry to fight on two planes at once, physical and mental. This was the

equivalent of having a wrestling match and playing a chess game at the same time. It was incredibly hard, but Harry knew that if he floundered on either plane, the enemy would be able to take advantage of it and he would get badly hurt, or people elsewhere in the city would die.

Thankfully, he wasn't fighting the physical battle all on his own. "**Boost, boost, boost and will you fucking hit that puppy!**" Ddraig roared. He sounded as if he was at a sporting match rooting for his team, but the Boosted Gear continued to strengthen one minute to the next when Harry used it to block and deflect the blows coming from Wepwawet.

Wepwawet, however, was a very good swordsman and knew how to use his magic effectively, and unlike Tiamat, Harry's magical resistance wasn't up to nullifying Wepwawet's magical attacks. And Wepwawet had learned. More often than not, an attack came from Harry's back, forcing him to block with an overpowered Protego. And he kept up the pressure, making Harry unable to use any of his more powerful spells. No matter how overpowered, wizard-style spells were not going to get through the Egyptian god's armor. His favorite attack seemed to be a spell shaped like a series of claws that cut and seared where it touched, which he could use as quickly as Harry could use wizard spells, to blast and tear at Harry.

Their spells met in midair, creating a cacophony that had Issei and the survivors of the group he'd led forward to retreat, pulling back away from the river. It was well they had because the next second, Wepwawet dodged a Boosted Gear blast which carved yet another furrow through the city. Before he could attack, Wepwawet took a Boosted elbow to the head that rocked him off his feet and away but responded with one of his claw shaped spells that opened up Harry's chest in several places, hurling him backward in turn.

Harry leaped up and over a kick, batting aside a sword thrust. But then Wepwawet opened his mouth, sending out a blast of energy that crashed into Harry, hurling him back and away, despite a hasty Protego helping him get through the worst of it.

Seeing steam rising all around them, Harry tried to pull his invisibility 'cloak' around him, but the snake goddess hammered at his mind once more, forcing him to redirect his attention, Harry's invisibility fading out. The same thing occurred an instant later when he tried an illusion, although there, Wepwawet's own senses also didn't seem to have been fooled. *Damn it, he's got a better nose than I do!*

The battle on the mental plane with the cobra goddess was taking too much of a toll, and worse, Harry knew that if he pulled back from that, he might lose the progress he'd made in pushing or attempting to shatter the Curse on the Nile and the other enchantments the enemy was using to spread their attacks rather than just pushing Maagh's influence away from Alexandria. Who knew how many millions of people were fighting for their lives against hordes of monsters who continually respawned everywhere like the monsters out of some shitty RPG? *Thank Merlin that Cú Chulainn appeared when he did, or I'd be facing far worse odds right now. But can I really keep fighting both the cobra and this bastard?*

The next second, the tip of the enemy's sword got past Harry's defenses slicing into his eye, and he knew that he couldn't keep this up any longer. *Fuck, this is not going to be fun!* With that, Harry took the power of Ddraig and activated his Balance Breaker. However, before the cobra goddess could strike, Harry turned his attention to that battle, his body nearly freezing in place as Harry put his trust in the armor to defend him from Wepwawet's continued assaults.

"Damn it, Potter, I hope you know what you're doing! This bastard might not be very strong for the breed, but he is still a god, and my defense has never been as good as my offense!" Ddraig grumbled aloud.

"Take what you need, Ddraig, just keep me alive!" Harry shouted before once more going on the attack mentally, the image of Fragarach appearing in his mind once more as he assaulted the cobra goddess. Soon, the two were wrestling once more in the magical web of the Nile, as Harry bore down, his will breaking out past her to directly attack the Blessings of the Army Breaker and the Staff of Set and the Curse of Kek, where they lay superimposed on the background magic of Egypt.

The Curse frayed first, then as Harry imagined filling the Nile with bright scalding light, this manifested in the physical world. All along its length, the Nile River suddenly burst into bright blue light. This light destroyed any monsters within a block of the river, and then, there was a sound that, oddly, sounded like a balloon being popped echoed in Harry's mind, and the Curse was erased from existence at last. What the ancient gods of Egypt could not do, Harry had against the age-weakened Curse.

The overwhelming fear that came with it dissipated slowly, but the effect it had on electricity instantly faded out throughout Egypt as it had in Alexandria. Although few were in any position to realize this.

Under desperate orders from Akhenaten, Wadjet attacked Harry once more mentally through the magi-sphere, But even as pain began to wrack his body and impact his concentration, Harry was ready. The snake's attack was met by a blast of magical power that sent her reeling, although the light he had created within the Nile faded. Yet now, there was no question: Harry had control of the Nile, not Wadjet or her Pharaoh.

Feeling that, Akhenaten knew that the Nile was a lost cause. In his distant citadel, Akhenaten snarled in growing rage, but he knew that the Curse wasn't needed at this point. Already the other enchantments, which Harry would not be able to sense in the magi-sphere – thanks, ironically to his having destroyed all the monoliths in Alexandria - were at work in the minds of millions of Egyptians. The other two enchantments that Harry had enough understanding to detect, the Blessings of the Army Breaker and the Staff of Set, could not be broken likewise, although Potter had already proven their influence could be suppressed. *Still, he has yet to show he can push his influence that far away from himself without using the Nile as a medium.*

Grimly, he ordered Wadjet to pull back. There was nothing to be gained now with throwing away another one of his godly pawns. They had already lost several, and with Potter's power keeping them or Akhenaten from influencing the magic around Alexandria, Metni and Wepwawet would soon die as well. Already he could feel Sobek inching ever closer to death against the new ally Potter had seemingly pulled out of his ass. *Oh yes, hate is too small a word.*

Still, their sacrifice was alright as long as the Harvest could continue, and it would. But, like the Blessing on the Army Breaker and the Staff of Set, there was no way to stop that spell without destroying the source, the mass of enchantments and runes that connected the monoliths to this room. *And I might need more aid to keep Potter out if he has discovered this place's central importance in Egypt's web of magic.*

Between one second and the next, Wadjet pulled back and even as he wondered why Harry once more pushed his influence out into the Nile. The glow that had signified the end of the Curse of Kek came back, and in an area around the Nile, Harry's influence pushed back the Blessing on the Staff of Set and the Army Breaker. Then, with an effort of will, Harry shifted that influence into a Blessing itself, placing it below the original Blessing on the Nile. He didn't think this Blessing would not last, not being self-sustaining like the old one was, but it would remain in place for a few days without Harry needing to pay any attention to it.

With the Nile now under Harry's control, he returned his attention to his physical body just in time for a magical blast from Wepwawet's khopesh to cut his leg off at the knee despite his Balance Breaker armor, sending Harry tumbling down into the water. Blood flowed throughout the Nile, but Harry could feel his body healing already, and with a growl he pushed up and out of the water once more, lashing out with a bolt from the Boosted Gear, sending the startled War God skidding away. "Thanks for the assist Ddraig, now it's time to end this!"

"About fucking time!" the dragon growled. **"Do you have any idea how annoying it is to sense your wielder just standing there getting the crap kicked out of him and not doing anything but taking it!?"**

Wepwawet got over his surprise and charged forward, and Harry didn't reply verbally. Instead, Fragarach appeared in the same hand on which the Boosted Gear usually covered. The two crashed together as Harry gathered his magic once more. His mind was throbbing by this point, and he could feel he had pushed his magic about as far as he could. But Harry refused to give up. Instead, he gathered had gathered enough magic to use in a final attack.

"Shatter all defenses, Fragarach, Boosted Style!" With that, all of Ddraig's accumulated energy flowed into the ancient weapon of Manannán Mac Lir, adding to Harry's power as Harry ducked his enemy's next blow, thrusting upward with Fragarach.

Despite being taken by surprise at the sudden shift from Harry just taking all his attacks, the jackal-headed god braced himself for the strike, but neither that nor his armor helped him. The enhanced blast of magical power thundered into him on impact. His deific body and magic

attempted to defend him, but the blast of overwhelming power overcame it, immolating him from the point of contact outward.

For a moment, a vast coruscating beam of energy lit up the city's sky, almost as much as the artificial sun Harry had originally created. And when it faded, Wepwawet, the Egyptian God of War, was no more.

Despite his growing exhaustion, Harry couldn't rest on his laurels when there was still so much to do. He canceled his Balance Breaker to conserve his magic, feeling a wave of physical tiredness hit him as he did. After a second, Harry shook it off and reached into the surrounding water once more, creating the bubble of water transportation all around him.

But instead of transporting himself, he pulled out the Fal stone and sent his willpower into it. Whatever ward which had been created to somehow block the stone from connecting to the rest of the Undertaking no longer affected it, protected as it was in multiple layers of Harry's will and magic in a body of water Harry now controlled, lock, stock and barrel.

With that, Harry could teleport himself for a very brief instant through the Undertaking to Tir Na Nog, using the same stone as he normally did, the stone overlooking the cliffs by the ocean. He didn't dare stay long, stopping for only a brief moment, but staring around at the number of gryphons and dwarves and leprechauns who had gathered into what amounted to an army camp around the cliffs, Harry breathed a sigh of relief, knowing it would be enough. "Your High King commands you to come to his aid. Come forth and fight!" he roared at the top of his lungs before returning to Alexandria, leaving the door open behind him.

Even in that brief instant and despite Harry's command of the Nile, the waiting Blessings had flowed back into the city. With the Himejima clan having worked so hard on spreading out their anti-undead wards, mostly it was monsters began to appear once more behind the battle lines to cause trouble, causing Kiba, Loup and Tonks some trouble. But the process stopped the instant Harry reappeared, and he pushed the Blessings away from Alexandria once more.

With that done, Harry let himself fall back into the water, simply floating there, a grin forming on his wolfish face even as he could feel his brain throbbing from the hours of mortal mental combat. *Fuck me, but I'd wager it's only my healing power that is keeping me conscious right now. Or even during the battle.* For all his power, Harry's body still had limits, and a human mind wasn't supposed to be able to use that much power, let alone be locked in mental combat for several hours.

Back in Tir Na Nog, the forces of the dwarves and gryphons were quick to react. "You heard him!" the dwarven King bellowed, looking at the gryphon chief sitting on his haunches next to Bail Stonebreaker. The aged gryphon nodded his head, and as one, more than three hundred armed and armored gryphons knelt to their riders chosen for this battle. An instant later, in groups of four, the gryphons went through the teleportation of the Undertaking, with Asia clinging onto one of them.

They burst out of the top of the water to one side of where Harry was floating, flapping their wings hard to gain altitude, the raucous cries of the gryphons ringing in his water-clogged ears. Nearby, Issei and the locals with him looked on in shock, then the Alexandrians began to shout in delight, raising their hands in fists to the air as more and more gryphons started to appear in the air above them, gaining altitude and joining the ongoing battle above the city.

The first group saw Harry in the river, and Bail moved down toward Harry, but he waved them off, his leg had already reformed but he was still unwilling to move for a time. The physical battles had not been very difficult right up to the whole being stabbed by Gae Bolg thing, but the mental one had really dragged it out of him. *If I never have to have a fight like that, it will be too soon.* "Take your people into the city!" He shouted. "Kill every undead and monster you find, protect the common civilians."

Asia and Koneko arrived next, sharing a gryphon, who instantly put down beside the river. "Father, are you okay?" Asia exclaimed, seeing Harry just lying in the water there, Dawn Healing appearing on her fingers.

But Harry waved her off, simply turning onto his side and swimming the short distance to the shore. "I'm alright, luvvy, just exhausted. Been a busy night, you know?"

Koneko snorted as she reached down and lifted Harry out of the water with ease before hugging him so tightly around the chest that Harry could feel his ribs creak. "I'm glad to see you're okay," she muttered into his chest as Asia joined the hug.

"Me too," Harry quipped, although his emerald eyes were dark as he stared around at the warzone around him that had replaced Alexandria's original beauty. Then he looked over at Asia. "I think we were able to take control of a hospital that way," he said, pointing in the direction of the defensive zone. "Can you head over there and do what you can?"

The words were barely out of his mouth before Asia, with a kiss to his cheek, turned around and raced back to the waiting gryphon, whispering instructions into the creature's ear before taking to the air once more. Behind her, Koneko made no such move, shifting around to Harry's side and murmuring, "Lean on me, Tou-san," to which Harry complied with a chuckle.

With every tenth gryphon having a leprechaun aboard along with a rider, the squadrons, several dozen of them, spread out through the city. And as people looked up to their cries of challenge and saw them in action, cheers started to abound throughout Alexandria, while Asia, on orders of Harry, raced to the center of the protected zone to help with the medical side of things. Even Tiamat looked up from where she had been gorging on hippo, smiling as she saw gryphons in the air.

Everywhere, spirits rose throughout Alexandria as gryphons, the symbols of kingship, swooped down. Even the dwarves on their backs reminded many an Egyptian of the ancient god Bes. Those dwarves held hammers, glowing faintly with magic as they struck. And between

them and the surviving Aurors and Shinsengumi, around a hundred and eighty men and women, they were able to completely clear the air around Alexandria.

Below them, Koneko helped Harry along as they moved down the block to where Issei could be seen whooping and hollering in delight as he saw what he took as a visible sign of the end of this nightmare. But Koneko stopped suddenly as an unknown warrior with a spear stood in front of her. The spear made her instantly wary gleaming even to Koneko's still somewhat limited magical senses with deadly magic.

Harry patted her shoulder companionably, then slowly pushed off of Koneko's shoulder, standing on his own wobbly feet even as his brain raged at him. *Oh yes, I'm going to need some building-sized aspirin after this.* "So, where's my crocodile belt, huh?"

"Hah, I killed that thing, oh wise and majestic High King," Cú Chulainn shot back, laughing and pointing in the direction he'd come from. "It's corpse is over there. Someone else can skin it. Now, where do ya think I could find some mead around here?"

Harry snorted, then looked around the city, closing his eyes and, despite the agony of his head, pushing out his senses, trying to discover if anything was attempting to push into the area. There wasn't, and he sighed in relief. "Come on, let's meet up with the others. This battles over, but the campaign has yet to be won."

Koneko looked at Harry in question, and he shrugged. "All of this wasn't just for us, Koneko. We'll need to push out into the rest of Egypt as soon as possible."

"What the heck is going on?" Koneko asked, staring at the number of dead bodies scattered around the area and the shattered, blasted cityscape.

"Nothing good," Issei and Harry replied as one, then Harry went on grimly. "But that just means we'll need to work harder to put things right, if we can."

End Chapter

Just so you all know, Metni is a god I've only found the name of. Ancient Egyptians had a very confused relationship with hippos, and he was one of the evil variety. As to the actual fighting, I think I showed Harry's abilities and his disadvantage very well, although I think prior to that I struggled a bit to show his variety of spells. Anyway, I hope you all enjoyed this.