

## Interlude IV

(Two and a Half Months Later)

“Good evening world. We bring to you the latest news and updates from the world of BiPrism. In case you have been living under a rock for the past few months, you might have missed the fact that the pearly gates are closed, that or they are so close to being closed that unless you have the Midnight Hunters in your back pocket, you might as well not even attempt to enter.” The announcer begins, but then quickly continues.

“Just what do I mean by the Pearly Gates, why this is the entrance to the famed Arcanarus Tower, given the connection to the spirit realm, and the fact that the gates themselves look exactly like white obelisks, people have taken to calling the entrance to this famed location the pearly gates, for beyond them lies the secret to the afterlife, which in this case is media favorite Cassiopeia Spiritlight. Why is she a media favorite? Simply put, she is free to advertise and talk about without threats of corporate sponsors breathing down your neck. Meaning we can use her as a conversation piece for what the game is doing right, what they are doing wrong, and everything else in between.”

“This is why despite her slow growth compared to her accomplishments, she is still growing. Also, true to her promise, she is one of the few truly non-combat oriented characters in the game. Even the famed watch maker Zeurlig periodically goes out hunting, if only to increase their level. Because of this she has gotten some blowback from longtime fans of the game. More than a few people who have joined recently attempting to replicate her style of play have all been met with their own series of disasters. Only Cass has been able to traverse the world to the beat of her own drum. By first thwarting an Audit, then when the auditors attempted to join her guild, she managed to deftly maneuver the other guild members against the two auditors, this along with the toxic spore quest being taken care of meant that Cass has had a relatively quiet life. Though we have learned a few things. First, we learned that her Simulacrum cannot heal to the same level of competency that Cass herself can. While her Simulacrums can show surprising creativity, they do seem to be limited by the way they interact with magic. To help explain this phenomenon, we have our leading magical expert Hans Schumer here to provide additional details on this phenomenon.” The main reporter stated.

With that the screen flipped over to an older male with a thick silver moustache and beard that helped him look every inch the real life mage himself.

“Yes, thank you for that. What we are seeing is the creativity of users still being greater than the AI system so far. Time and time again, we have found that while the content and stories that the AI can generate are great, what truly makes them compelling stories to watch are the ways people react to and

work their way through the various problems. The same can be said for magic, the magic that is taught and the magic that is seen as rote memorization in the case of Cass and a few others, like he who must not be named, lest we get censored due to copyright infringement,” Hans began, but then quickly let go of his comment, whatever his rationale for the comment were, he would not expand on them, especially not during a live broadcast, again. Taking a deep breath, he composed himself and then continued.

“What we are seeing is that certain people can see the magic system in a way that is wholly unique, one that the system itself doesn’t even seem to be able to understand. Basically, we can look at the way that Cass performs magic as being wholly unique each and every time she casts, even when casting the same spell that she herself has created. This means that despite having many spells credited to her name, she is unique in that she will always gain a bonus to their casting, while everyone else will receive a degraded percentage.”

“So you mean, that even if she sells her spells, the people that buy the spell will not be able to cast it as effectively as she can?”

“That is precisely right Jim. We have seen this be the case with he who must not be named, identified, or referenced, but now we are seeing first hand with Cass, how amazing the ability to create spells truly is. For even her Simulacrum, the person with whom she shares the same baseline model for thinking, is unable to accurately copy the spells that her base template has created and that she should theoretically be able to mirror herself.”

“What does this mean exactly?”

“Well two things. The first is that the AI is not able to be as truly creative as the people they copy over into their world.” Hans begins.

“And the second?”

“Well the second is something that the game developers and government have insisted on for quite some time, but up until now have lacked the evidence to prove.”

“What is that?”

“That when you uploaded to the game world, they do more than copy your brain activity, but rather they are able to fully transport your soul, your very essence into the game.” Hans.

“And it is cases like Cass, and...” The announcer pauses, catching himself. “And this other alleged person who you keep alluding to, cases like these are what the Government is using as proof of their long standing claim of 100% transmigration?”

“That is exactly correct.”

“So with this, I take it we can expect the Government to take an active role in Cass’s advancement?”

“One would assume so, but if that is the case then no. One could claim that the government has had a play in the recent golden line train route that will head from floor two of the Crossroads all the way up to the fiftieth floor, but this is standard programming that happens to everyone who “gets stuck,” as the original developers noted, particularly when other higher level people have already gone through and cleared the path to the fiftieth floor on their own.” Hans replied.

“Interesting, very interesting, where do you think this will go next?”

“Well I would assume a major plot twist, we are expecting Cass to go to get revenge for stolen experience, something many followers complained about vehemently, which is why there was pressure to get this redemption quest line started months ago.”

“So you think there will be something big that happens during the heist?”

“Who knows, other than we know it will be a huge, wasted opportunity if nothing relevant happens.”

“When you say relevant...”

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*Click.*

The live feed of the Biprism analysis channel ended, as the topic slowly shifted to more and more conjecture about what would happen next.

Cassandra Redding turned from the feed about one of the most intriguing players in recent history, and turned first to the daughter of said player, and then glanced down to the medical reports that lay before her.

“Thank you for sharing these.” Cassandra said, waving her tablet and indicating the medical records that spoke of long-term illness and a bleak future.

Jackie Cruise, the daughter of the now famous Cassiopeia Spiritlight sat there nodding, a look of resignation on her face.

“You know I can’t do much. Had you come earlier, we might have been able to do something about this, but this...” Cassandra said, shaking her head at what she had to say. Sure, she could offer the best, offer lies and platitudes, but that was not how strong business relations were forged.

“I know.” Jackie said, a look of hard resolve filling her features.

“So, let me ask you, what would you want out of this, arrangement?”

Jackie having expected this nodded. “I want you to look after my children, and grandchildren. Provide career opportunities for them, and cover their schooling and education.”

“Anything else?”

“I mean, I would also like to have some manner of assistance set up for me. I saw what mother went through, and I do not want that.” Jackie said, shuddering at the thought of having to endure the same hardships for herself.

“That is more than understandable. You know that might instantly lower your marketability in the eyes of some, but in this case we are not buying you so much, as the legacy you represent, the bloodline that will be innately afforded to you, along with access to your mother.” Cassandra said.

At that Jackie could only nod in agreement, as she had expected this very same treatment. She was nothing special herself, but rather she was a mobile advertisement that would be highly visible and likely supported by her mother. Also, with her they would have access to the impressive bloodline that her mother had somehow awakened. Granted, she too would have to awaken the bloodline on her own, and while her mother would be able to improve her rating as time went on, Jackie herself would only be able to awaken hers at most to the Royal bloodline rating. Of course, Jackie herself had no clue about the Royal rating of her bloodline until she came here. Cassandra had been fully transparent, telling her what her mother had, what that was worth, and why investing in her and possible future children and grandchildren to enter would be in Redding House’s best interest overall.

Hearing the sales pitch Jackie knew two things, first Cassandra Redding was an amazing saleswoman, as she wanted to do business with her just by the way she spoke openly and honestly and the way she carried herself. Then the second thing she knew, was that one way or another she was leaving here with a deal in place with Redding House, the only thing that mattered now was hammering out the final details of the contract.

“Know that part of this contract will be a chastity clause.” Cassandra stated.

“Chastity?”

“Yes, until you fully awaken your bloodline you will not be allowed to perform any sexual act of any kind, regardless of the age of your avatar.” Cassandra began, but then held up a hand to stop any protests from Jackie so she could explain. “The reason for this is simple, the first child of any relationship has an 80% chance of gaining the bloodline progenitor’s rating. Meaning that if your mother somehow improves her bloodline ranking, after you enter, your child will have a chance of having their bloodline surpass your own. This is explained as skipping a generation, but it is an important aspect. Each additional child has a percentage, but that percentage will increasingly go down by ten percent every child until a maximum of 25% remains. For the sake of the proposal that I am proposing, you will have to mate with a person of our choosing.”

“Just for the one child?”

“That is correct, just for the one child. After that, you will be able to produce your own children, or let your own children follow after this initial child slot is claimed. But that first one will be property of Redding House.”

Hearing that Jackie let out a long breath. While she had wanted her children to join her, this wasn't too much of a price to pay on her end. Granted it would mean her children would have less of a chance of getting Cass's bloodline at least to the level that she had it, but it was still a great deal.

“Deal.” Jackie said finally after a lot of internal debate.

“Very good.”

Only once the contract was signed and finally ratified did Jackie ask the all-important question.

“If I may ask, who exactly do you intend to take the spot of my child?”

At that Cassandra just smiled brightly, “why I intend this to be my own spot. You will sire a child with one grandmother's sons, and I will have a chance of having not one but two royal bloodlines coursing through me.”

At that Jackie couldn't help but nod. This was an ambitious play, but also one that Jackie herself was comfortable making, as it meant that for the time Cassandra Redding would be fully committed to helping her progress and awaken her bloodline in game. After that, she would likely be cut loose, but up until that point, she would have backing, resources, and above all opportunities that her mother never had. Honestly it almost wasn't fair, but then again, few things ever were in life.