

[David Lance POV]

I closed my eyes as I took a deep breath, my knuckles buzzing in pain as they dripped with blood, melting the ground beneath me. For forty-two hours, I had sparred with Wioska without stopping, making in our wake a trail of blood and destruction as the brutal battle went on.

Not a single drop of blood was hers.

Her unfathomable power drove me to the gates of beyond more times than I could count. Her power was without equal as far I was concerned. She was formidable. A worthy opponent. One I had failed to conquer on the battlefield.

"Impressive," Wioska complimented, her tone sincere, showing admiration for my progress.

With a blood-tainted smile, I looked at her before surveying the scene around me. Mutilated pieces of my broken were strewn everywhere, some mangled beyond recognition, a true massacre of one man.

The ground was slick with blood and gore, and the air was thick with the stench of death.

Even for my current mindset, one fueled by rage and an unyielding desire for vengeance, the scene before me was truly gruesome. No matter where I looked, the picture would be the same, growing darker under the dim light of the night.

Severed limbs and entrails piled high as my very own blood pooled on the ground, giving birth to a cloying perfume that made my gorge rise out of reflex. In fact, flies were already starting to gather, drawn by the sickly-sweet scent of my own decomposing flesh.

Without a doubt, this was a scene of utter carnage, one that I knew I would never forget for as long as I lived.

Sure, Wioska had healed me after every lethal injury, but the experience remained. The pain of each near-death experience, the suffering behind the futility, and the fear of the unavoidable would forever be there, etched into my mind like a brand.

"Impressive?" I chuckled darkly, "I didn't manage to make you bleed, not even once."

"True," Wioska admitted, "But you came closer than anyone else has in a long time."

I snorted, "Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

Wioska shrugged, "It is what it is. You should be proud of your accomplishment."

To be proud of one's own failure, how utterly pathetic!

I refused to accept such mediocrity! I didn't go through Wioska's cruel training to accept this pitiful result! The reason I had accepted to be under her tutelage was to set my sights even higher than before. Failure was simply no longer an option.

I respected her overwhelming strength, but my respect didn't equate to an acceptance of defeat. If anything, my understanding of her power made my resolve even stronger.

"Proud?" I spat the word out like it was poison, "I will never be proud of this result."

"Don't be so harsh on yourself," Wioska replied calmly. "You've improved by leaps and bounds. When we first started, you couldn't even touch me. Now? You can land more than a few hits."

I knew her words to be true. Even with my powers sealed, I had shown results beyond what was expected of me; however, this truth did little to placate my desire for victory.

"The week ended, Wioska," I said, breaking the silence as I turned to look at her. "What will happen now?"

"Nothing, I go back to my retirement, and you go back to your vengeance," Wioska replied plainly.

I frowned. I recalled her saying I would have to endure a test of great difficulty at the end of the week. Had she forgotten about that?

"You passed my training, at least the first week of it," Wioska answered. "If you remember correctly, our agreement was for one week of training. That week has now ended."

I grunted. It seemed like defeating her would have to wait for another time. "So I passed your test, the one you said I would have to endure at the end of this week?"

Wioska nodded, "In a way, you did."

[Rachel Roth - Raven POV]

[Young Justice]

I had finally done it. After months of research, I had finally found a clear path to my goal, bringing David back. It had been hard to unveil the threads of chaos, but one by one, I learned the arcane secrets behind them, their mystical meaning and purpose.

Now, all that remained was to gather the ingredients. Some were common enough, but others were rare and unimaginably difficult to obtain. It would take time, but I was willing to do whatever it took. This was my chance to bring him back.

The first ingredient was the most important and also the most difficult to find. It was a small black stone, no larger than a child's fist. But it was not the size that made it so difficult to find; it was the magical properties of the same. The stone was incredibly dense, heavier than anything else on Earth, yet at the same time, it was lighter than air itself.

A physical paradox of arcane origin.

This stone was known as the remains of the in-between.

According to some speculation on Fate's part, this stone was the physical embodiment of the space between creation and nothingness. Something that should not exist in this world, yet against all odds, it did.

That ingredient would take me some time to find.

The second ingredient was a drop of rain from the tears of a god. Compared to the last one, this one would be easier to acquire, not only because there were many gods in the world but because I had someone who could help me with this task.

Diana of Themyscira.

Now, as for the third and final ingredient, I needed to acquire the blood of a familiar. Preferably one whose master was powerful in the arcane. Needless to say, I already knew who I would use to get this ingredient.

Klarion and his cat would serve this purpose well.

After all. It was only fitting for that pathetic chaotic scum to aid in David's retrieval.