

Sacrifice

Written by "Ina Izumi"

Life is getting more and more complicated in the world where Traiana lives, a peasant brown haired, red eyes, thin, pale body in her twenties, an orphan who tries to survive by managing and cultivating the land of her recently deceased parents, who went to war to defend their small country. In the world Traiana lives in, is the year 2230, instead of progressing, it has been paralyzed ever since the year 1800, if it's not that it has really gone backwards, until it became an eternal middle age. It all started when a mighty empire ruled by a magician emperor subjected the rest of the world to its domain, leaving 60% of the planet's territory directly under the domain of the empire that was called Nova Neustria centuries later, while the other 40% of the territory became small autonomous fiefs tributaries of the empire that once were great nations, now they have been plunged into the most decadent misery, being eternally tributary to the emperor at the same time that they fought each other for the emperor's amusement in destructive and fratricidal wars between fiefdoms. However, for about two centuries one of the small fiefdoms, Numantia, began to become stronger and stronger under Emperor Scipio, who soon managed to dominate most of that remaining 40% of the earth's territory subjugating most of the small tributary fiefdoms of Nova Neustria. Soon only the Empire of Nova Neustria remained on the map under the command of the great emperor and the Empire of Numantia under the leadership of Scipio, in addition to a score of small kingdoms that served as buffer states for some time to avoid direct conflict between the two powers. Nobody really believed that Scipio could defeat the Emperor of Nova Neustria, who everyone was afraid to even mention as he was banned for years, but Scipio and Numantia constantly provoked Nova Neustria by calling the emperor by his name, Hermès, something that disgusted the emperor as he believed that his mortal name had been forgotten after so long. Little by little, some territories directly annexed by Nova Neustria began to violently rebel and separate, as a result of the intense psychological and propaganda war that Numantia seemed to be slowly winning. One of them, the currently called Protectorate of Thuringia, of great territorial extension, still holds a deep hatred for its conquerors, so it has taken the opportunity to join Numantia seeking revenge for what the ancient predecessor empire of Nova Neustria and its eternal emperor did to its people, humiliating and then disappearing its empress and subjecting its entire population to the most draconian slavery possible. Finally, by 2230 both superpowers shared almost 50% world territory each, in which only four domains existed: Empire of Nova Neustria, Commonwealth of Numantia-Thuringia, and the two smaller Kingdom of Bethany secluded in the deep deserts of the Middle East, and the fertile but small and afflicted Kingdom Ofardeahe, which is the last buffer state between the two great empires, and is the small country where Traiana was born and lives

Currently the Kingdom of Ardeal is submerged in a deep anarchy, after their last king died in a triple battle against both superpowers, since both tried to gain control of Ardeal being halfway between the capitals of both empires and being a safe passageway for one invader or the other to their enemy's territory. All that time Ardeal has tried to remain neutral since they know that war can only bring destruction and death to such a small kingdom, but being simultaneously invaded by both powers, they have not many more options left than fighting for survival. In these circumstances Traiana finally decides to avenge the death of her parents and, with nothing else to do, she takes her father's old sword, her mother's bow and rides a horse dressed for the cold climate of the mountains. that surround her crops, which is the most important front of the war at that time, saying goodbye to her

house and her pet geese, thinking that perhaps she will never return and that, victim of a maelstrom of emotions and an impulse for revenge, she turns to irrevocable fate.

However, it seems that the way fate works is mysterious and, over the years, while Traiana is carried away by her infinite desire for revenge and by the darkest impulses that dehumanize her more and more, she gradually reconquers the lost lands almost alone by her own hand directing and motivating the men and women who join her, and repulsing the armies of Nova Neustria and Numantia in an increasingly savage and bloodthirsty way, to the point of becoming feared and respected by both armies and admired by the population of Ardeal. Traiana does not care how much more blood has to be spilled on her and her children, she has been totally absorbed by the desire for revenge, becoming known worldwide for hanging the corpses of her enemies on the ledges of the reconquered towns as if they were puppets, and for her bravery and for having prevented in those years the fall of what seems to be the last civilized and independent kingdom on earth, has occupied de facto, in a few years, the unoccupied crown of the Kingdom of Ardeal, being elected to this position by popular acclamation.

However, Traiana taking power and becoming head of state, even if she does not have the education to lead a country, has quickly realized that Ardeal is insolvent and very economically and materially wounded by a war that has already lasted five years, against two great superpowers that have almost infinite material capacities compared to their small kingdom. Ardeal needs to expand or die of starvation, so she has no qualms about starting to take territory away from both superpowers, it's that or die, plus her little kingdom had no choice from the start, and even if they die, Traiana believes that they will fight to the last soldier standing. Even predisposing this, Traiana is not completely convinced to go from defensive to offensive: while it was easier to reconquer territories for her when she was fighting the enemy directly on the battlefield, now that it is she who directs the movements from her castle, numbers don't make sense and the natural borders of their territory, surrounded by mountain ranges and rivers, have facilitated defensive tactics, but once they prepare to leave that safe zone, it will be very difficult for Traiana to advance or at least avoid economic suffocation. On the other hand, it seems that being impressed Due to Ardeal's resistance capacity, the two superpowers against which they are at war decide to increase their efforts to finish off that territory, which represents the last additional resistance for both empires.

As the days go by, Ardeal continues to bleed economically and militarily, and any offer of peace or alliance has failed, as the two empires are highly offended by the resistance that Ardeal has sustained instead of surrendering at the beginning of the invasion. Traiana was sure that resistance for so long would be clearly impossible, and even though she is still full of desire for revenge, all those circumstances are something that she could never foresee. Even she was ready to die from the first day of the war, but now that it is her responsibility to look after her population in all aspects, realizes the circumstances in which they are and never thought it would be so complicated. She never thought or wanted to become a queen, and now that the feelings of Responsibility for her people and love for her companions who have accompanied her for so long in the war are intermingled with her strong desire for revenge and confuse her, having a maelstrom of emotions so contrary to each other. Suddenly she heard an elegant voice whisper in her ear. Traiana takes her sword and turns pointing at whoever is there, but it seems that behind her there is only a deep darkness, so deep that it is absorbing, while intense red eyes appear behind the darkness and a winged silhouette.

Traiana demanded that the winged shadow reveal her identity, to which she replied that who she was or where she came from is not that important. Traiana, who has recently decided to be alone in her castle except when she must give important and urgent orders, asks her why she is there and how she got there, being impossible for a mortal since that section of her castle only had one entrance which was guarded by numerous guards, questions that the winged shadow ignores and then reveals to Traiana the real reason why she is there. The winged shadow, who decides to introduce itself to her as a goddess from another dimension and time, engages in a closer conversation with Traiana.

winged shadow: I smell your fear against your mighty enemies, your hate for the injustice that cries out for revenge, your love for your town and your great fighting spirit...You are certainly an interesting specimen

Traiana: And what do you want from me? I don't remember the last time I accepted guests in my castle, much less if they came by surprise...

winged shadow: I come to offer you a deal... You are such an interesting specimen that it would be a shame if you ended up decapitated by your enemies and your head impaled on a stake. Lately things are boring in the dimension where I come from, so I'm interested in having some fun in your world... Your revenge will be my hobby and this impossible war will be your greatest victory, and your name will be recognized in any corner of this world, and the blood of your people will not have been watered in vain, and all the other people of this world, once their executioners, will have to kneel before you, if you accept my offer, of course.

Traiana: And what do you want in return? No one offers something like that without wanting something in return...

winged shadow: Oh, I see you are a smart person... My offer is the best offer that blood can afford, of course. To fulfill my part of the bargain, you will have to accept my only condition... I want you to capture and hand me overturned into puppets the three maidens of this world. The first one is the daughter of Hermes, the princess Lys, the second is Scipio's daughter, Princess Laia. Once you capture them, I will tell you who the third maiden is. In return, your kingdom will survive, and it will become the mightiest of all. After that, a new era of peace will begin.

Traiana: I can't accept something like that, I'm a bloodthirsty warrior and a queen, not a princess kidnapper

Winged Shadow: Mwahahaha! It's either that or end up having your throat slit in a public square for your rebellion against one of the two emperors. You should thank me for this opportunity, I am offering you a favor that will help your kingdom survive and you a new life free from worries...

Traiana: I.... It's okay. I guess I have no choice. I'll do it just so I can take revenge on those two bastards and ensure the survival of my people.

Winged Shadow: Very good, what an obedient little doll. All you must do is pierce their heart with this

magical bow and arrow, then the sacrifice will have been made and they will become puppets, then you will only have to return to the highest tower of your castle where I will receive the dolls.

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FOUR CENTURIES AGO, THE NOVA-NEUSTRIAN EMPIRE CONQUERED THE WORLD. THEY TOOK THE BEST LANDS FOR THEMSELVES AND LEFT THE REST TO WARRING FIEFDOMS.

LUNFORTUNATELY, OUR SMALL COUNTRY LAY DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE TWO CAPITALS. THE DAY THEY MURDERED MY FAMILY, BURNED MY VILLAGE, AND LEFT ME ALONE IN THE ASHES IS SEARED INTO MY MEMORY.

TWO CENTURIES PASSED, AND NUMANTIA EMERGED FROM THE TUMULT. THROUGH CONQUEST AND ANNEXATION, THEY GREW TO RIVAL NOVA-NEUSTRIA.

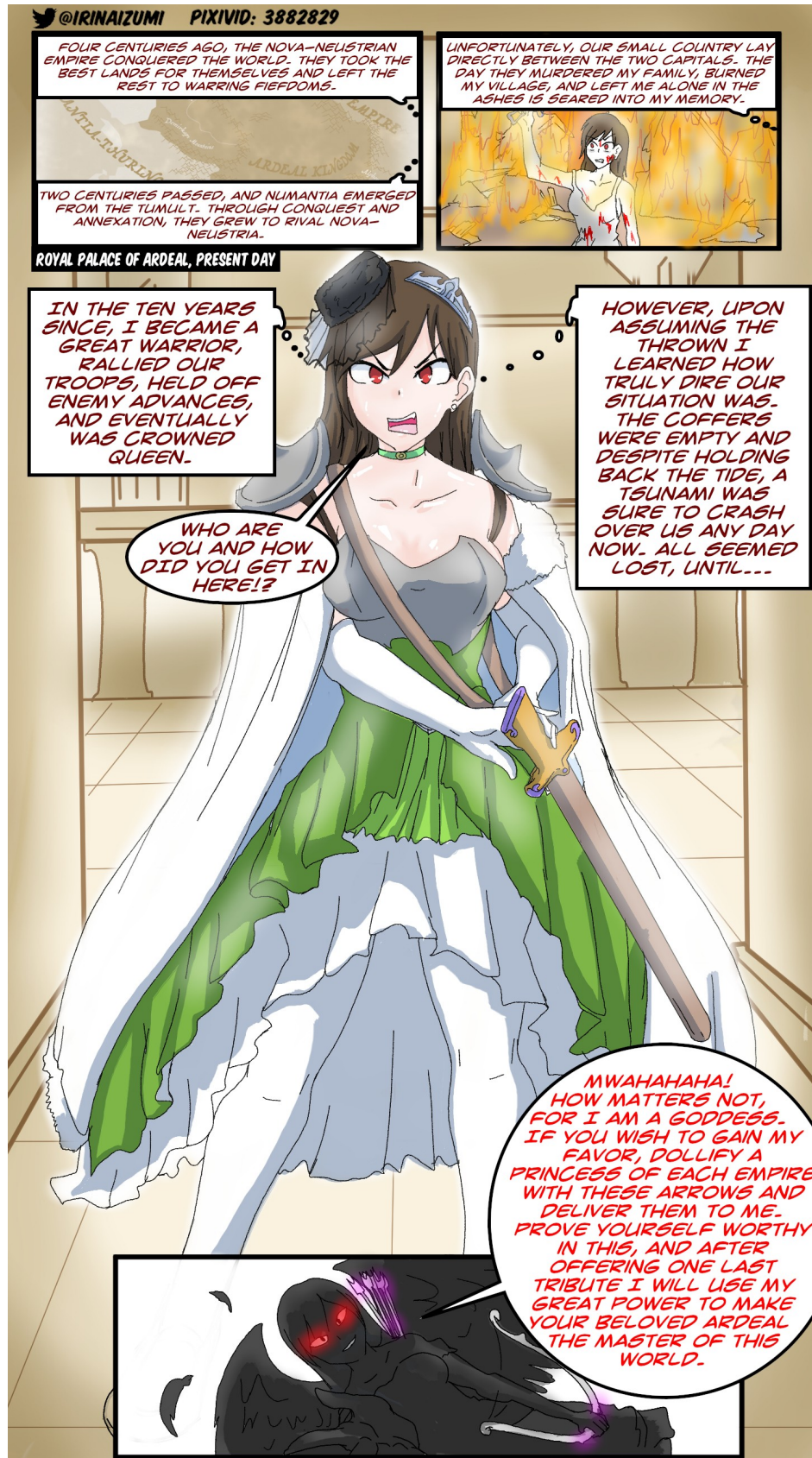
ROYAL PALACE OF ARDEAL, PRESENT DAY

IN THE TEN YEARS SINCE, I BECAME A GREAT WARRIOR, RALLIED OUR TROOPS, HELD OFF ENEMY ADVANCES, AND EVENTUALLY WAS CROWNED QUEEN.

HOWEVER, UPON ASSUMING THE THROWN I LEARNED HOW TRULY DIRE OUR SITUATION WAS. THE COFFERS WERE EMPTY AND DESPITE HOLDING BACK THE TIDE, A TSUNAMI WAS SURE TO CRASH OVER US ANY DAY NOW. ALL SEEMED LOST, UNTIL---

WHO ARE YOU AND HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE!?

MWAHAHAHA! HOW MATTERS NOT, FOR I AM A GODDESS. IF YOU WISH TO GAIN MY FAVOR, DOLLIFY A PRINCESS OF EACH EMPIRE WITH THESE ARROWS AND DELIVER THEM TO ME. PROVE YOURSELF WORTHY IN THIS, AND AFTER OFFERING ONE LAST TRIBUTE I WILL USE MY GREAT POWER TO MAKE YOUR BELOVED ARDEAL THE MASTER OF THIS WORLD.



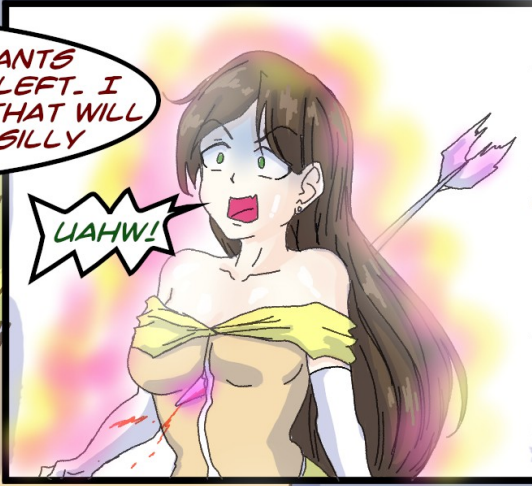
Then the winged shadow proceeds to appear that magical bow and arrows, which float towards Traiana. She is not willing to waste time and, despite the difficulty of the odyssey, in which she will have to enter the capitals of the two rival superpowers, she sees no other alternative and is sure of herself. Also, it looks like it will be conveniently simple, since Princess Lys, daughter of Hermes, the emperor of Nova Neustria, always travels with her father, who is always near the front line of most of their conflicts, while that the main residence of Scipio, Emperor of Numantia, is in an island near the territory of Ardeal it is where his daughter also lives, taking care of her father's famous collection of wax sculptures.

After a few days of traveling alone, riding a horse and disguised as a merchant, she manages to infiltrate the castle in which the Princess of Numantia, Laia, takes care of the collection of wax sculptures in her father's absence. As Traiana approaches the castle and walks around it, she looks at the wax statues of Scipio, all slim-figured and dressed as princesses that adorn the entrance to Scipio's castle along the way. The statues are so realistic, that Traiana would not doubt that they were people once, something that does not seem so far-fetched since she is on her way to turn a princess into a puppet. On the other hand, Traiana thought that it would be difficult to enter the castle, but it seems that Scipio is very confident of the power of his kingdom, so there are only a few knights guarding the castle or even the island where the castle is, and she only needed to forge an invitation from Scipio to be able to breach the weak security of the island. Traiana is still thoughtful as she enters the interior of the castle and walks a bit, exploring its wide corridors. After a few minutes she found Laia, who was receiving a declaration of love and an offer of marriage from a prince of one of Scipio's tributary kingdoms, then Traiana without hesitation shot the arrow at Laia taking advantage of that her target had their back unprotected.

Everything went very fast, Laia fell to the ground and suddenly, behind a cloud of smoke, Laia was laying down with a minuscule size compared to her original height, as if she had become a doll that anyone could rest on its hand while the nobleman who was courting Laia, looked puzzled as his future partner had been turned to a doll. However, the worst was presented in front of him when Traiana wielding the sword of that prince, since he had left it placed next to the entrance of the room, decided to execute him to avoid leaving witnesses about what really happened. Traiana took the new doll and hid it under her clothes. Now only the other princess was missing, Lys, who Traiana thinks is probably a more difficult target because of what is said about her and her skills in combat and the use of magic.

SHE'S SO SELF-ABSORBED HER ATTENDANTS MUST HAVE GOTTEN BORED AND LEFT. I CAN'T MISS FROM HERE, AND ALL THAT WILL REMAIN IS DISPOSING OF THAT SILLY SUPPLICANT...

HOW MARVELOUS, EIGHT SUITORS IN ONE DAY. I BELIEVE THAT TIES MY RECORD.



AFTER GETTING RID OF THE SUITOR

HUH. I WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY JUST STICKING AN ENEMY WITH THE POINTY END, BUT IT SEEMS BIRD LADY WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. THIS WAS A HUMAN NOT 5 MINUTES AGO, BUT NOW SHE'S SO TINY AND SHINY. HER SKIN SEEMS TO BE MADE OF SOME STRANGE, NEW MATERIAL.

HOW ODD. OH WELL, ONTO THE NEXT ONE.

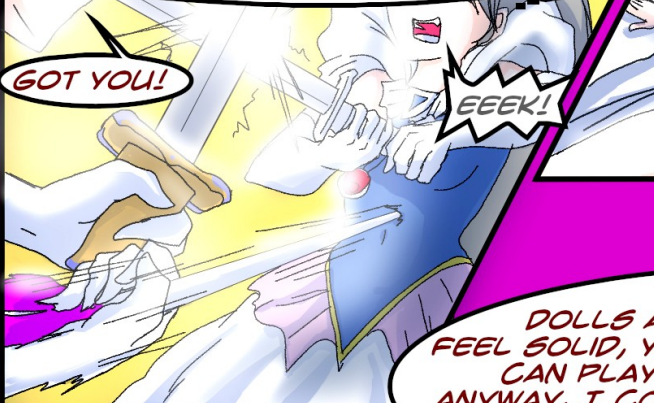


After two more weeks, finally Traiana was already in the surroundings where Hermes has its military outpost near the border with Ardeal. There was Traiana climbing a tree some distance away from her objective and observed with a pair of binoculars, the princess Lys of Nova-Neustria, the daughter of Emperor Hermes, who was bathing in a river near the base, a place where there was no kind of surveillance probably because of the princess's self-confidence to defend herself against any threat. Traiana thinks that perhaps it is a good time to attack Princess Lys, while she was bathing, but suddenly she came out of the river and quickly dressed, then quickly appears behind a peasant, who jumped out of the bush in a rush. where he was, who had apparently been hiding behind that bush watching the princess bathe. Then Traiana decided to act while Lys reproached the peasant for that espionage and launched very quickly to fight her, throwing the magic arrow at her before reaching her. Lys suddenly appeared her sword and destroyed the arrow with inhuman speed, but she only had time after that to block a sword attack from Traiana, until, before she could prevent any further attacks by being so focused on repelling Traiana's sword attacks, Lys suddenly felt something go through her chest. Apparently, the attacks with the sword that Traiana made were so fast that Lys could never see that Traiana had one of those arrows held by her hands next to the handle of her sword and that, in a quick and imperceptible movement, Traiana fit the arrow in it as if it were a dagger. Then a powerful light erupted from her wound, and before Lys could do anything to stop it, that light and then a cloud of smoke enveloped her and turned her into a doll. Lys was still conscious, but she couldn't move, she was only there, existing in some way, as an object, even Lys wondered why she could still think when she was in that situation, even though she suddenly felt a strange warmth that enveloped her mind and caused deep erotic desires, while Traiana took her with her hand and hid it under her clothes, but not before having executed that voyeur witness who was in the bush

DAYS LATER, IN A NOVA-NEUSTRIA MILITARY CAMP NEAR THE ARDEAL BORDER

IMPOSSIBLE...
I CAN'T PREDICT HER MOVEMENTS...
HOW CAN AN ORDINARY HUMAN PARRY
MY BLADE!?

WHAT...? I CAN'T MOVE...
WHAT HAPPENED? WHY IS
SHE SO BIG?



GOT YOU!

EEEEK!



AS A
WOMAN YOU
WERE A RABID
ANIMAL. I
THINK YOU WILL
BE HAPPIER AS
A DOLL.

THESE PRINCESS
DOLLS ARE INTERESTING... THEY
FEEL SOLID, YET ARE STILL SO MALLEABLE I
CAN PLAY WITH THEM LIKE PUPPETS.
ANYWAY, I COMPLETED BIRD WOMAN'S FIRST
TWO TASKS SO WHERE IS SHE? I
WONDER WHAT THE FINAL TRIBUTE
WILL BE.

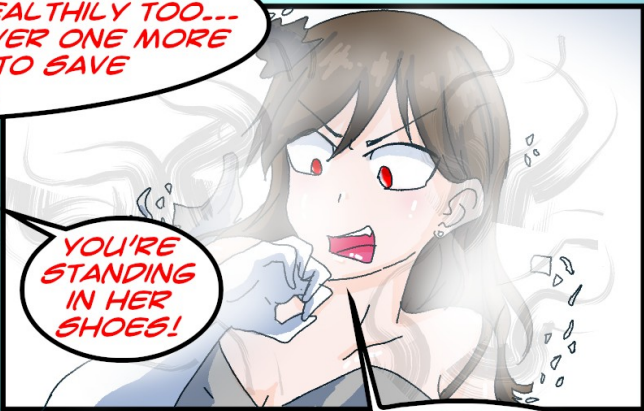
BACK AT ARDEAL'S PALACE



Finally, after a few days of travel, Traiana was in that tower of her castle in which she remembered to meet with the winged shadow, playing with the two dolls as if they were puppets, making them love each other in some cases, bored while she waited for the winged shadow to appear and while she was delighted by the news she heard from the battlefield, in which the two great empires blamed each other for the disappearance of their princesses, since they did not believe that such a small, poor kingdom and miserable kingdom as Ardeal could have been responsible for such a feat.

Then suddenly from the shadows that were in the tower behind Traiana's back, the winged shadow appeared and showed her true form, that of a pale and malnourished woman with a red dress like blood and eyes intensely red like fire. The winged shadow then introduced herself as Ina, who has been traveling through various dimensions to avoid boredom and showed that she was impressed by the speed with which Traiana had managed to capture those two princesses from two powerful empires like dolls, with the scarce transportation technology that exists in that dimension. However, after the winged shadow comment to Traiana about how impressed and pleased she was, she decided that the time had come and revealed to her who the third and final maiden that Traiana must deliver as a sacrifice to be turned into a doll is herself, Traiana, the queen of Ardeal. Traiana then turned to Ina but it was too late, suddenly a powerful fuchsia light blinded Traiana and when she reacted, she had already been turned into a doll, lying on the floor.

HOW WONDERFUL!
YOU MANAGED TO CAPTURE THOSE TWO
LOVELIES FOR ME. AND SO STEALTHILY TOO...
MOST IMPRESSIVE. NOW, DELIVER ONE MORE
MAIDEN AND I PROMISE TO SAVE
YOUR COUNTRY.



YOU'RE
STANDING
IN HER
SHOES!

YOU MUST BE
JOKING! NOOO!!,
MY BODY---

YIKES! THERE
YOU ARE. JUST TELL ME WHOM
SO I CAN GET ON WITH IT.

GRUFF WARRIOR
DIDN'T SUIT YOU,
DARLING. THIS FORM
IS MUCH MORE
ADORABLE!

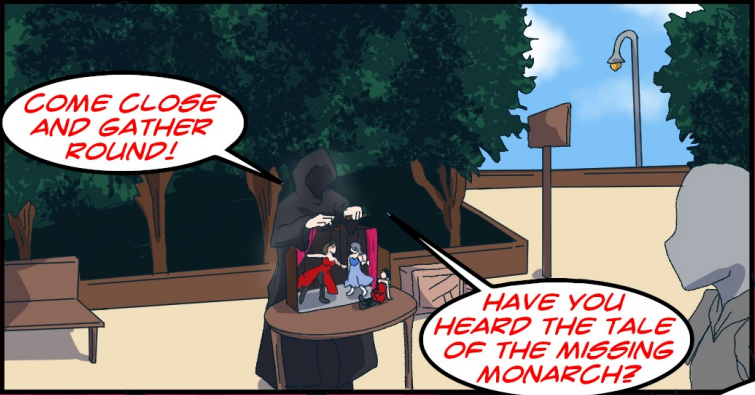


AND IN RETURN
FOR BEING SUCH A CUTE
DOLLY, I'LL KEEP MY END
OF THE BARGAIN TOO.

Finally, a few weeks after what happened, Ardeal was again left without a queen and without a warrior to protect and lead them in the war, reason why the town of Ardeal began to believe that she had died a martyr in a battle. despite that, Ardeal was able to return to peace and preserve its territorial integrity, because due to the accusations made by both emperors for the disappearance of their daughters, direct confrontation was now inevitable, and both the Empire of Nova-Neustria and the Commonwealth of Numantia-Thuringia ignored Ardeal and started a self-destructive war with each other by all means. Since the only land border between Numantia and Nova Neustria is through Ardeal, they have had to attack each other from their shores and through the huge impassable desert that separates both empires in Asia, dying thousands of millions in the armies of both sides without ending the war with a clear winner.

In the end, both empires, exhausted and on the verge of collective suicide, unable to control their hatred, shouting "if we burn, they will burn with us" end for launching their magical weapons of mass destruction at each other, causing mutually assured destruction and ending both empires in ruin and anarchy. Hermes and Scipio, both emperors, once known for their immortality and undefeated military conquests, have disappeared and have not been heard from since the destruction of the capitals of both empires.

Meanwhile, a beautiful black-haired woman and black eyes with gypsy clothing to was presenting a puppet music show in some distant village in the mountains of Ardeal, telling the villagers the story of three missing princesses. The story talks about Traiana, who had disappeared just when both empires self-destruct and when Ardeal is left as a nation standing on earth. Traiana may not have been able to see Ardeal's victory, her last great victory, but the blood of the martyrs is fertile, who have not died or disappeared in vain, and on that blood will grow a great future for Ardeal. The story told by the gypsy continues, talking about how Traiana transcended as a goddess and that her first action as a goddess was to make the princesses of the two great empires disappear so that they mutually self-destructed. Over the time, the myth of Traiana transcended to deity spread for generations throughout Ardeal and since then the people of Ardeal venerate her as undefeated military leader, goddess and liberator. The Traian legend will fill hearts with pride and inspire for centuries to come, to leaders, soldiers, politicians, artists and all the people as an example to follow, with Ardeal as the only hegemonic force is predisposed to rebuild a new world where no small country will ever again have to fear for its survival.



COME CLOSE AND GATHER ROUND!

HAVE YOU HEARD THE TALE OF THE MISSING MONARCH?



LONG AGO, BEFORE THE GREAT WARRIOR QUEEN DISAPPEARED MYSTERIOUSLY IN BATTLE, LEGEND HAS IT SHE KIDNAPPED THE DAUGHTERS OF THE TWO EVIL EMPERORS. IN THEIR CONFUSION AND FURY, EACH BLAMED THE OTHER AND THEY WARRIED UNTIL THEIR GREAT EMPIRES WERE DUST

OHH YES, I'VE HEARD THAT STORY.



BUT HOW DOES IT END? WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO THE QUEEN?

SOME SAY SHE ASCENDED AND RAINED DESTRUCTION DOWN ON THEM FROM THE HEAVENS. OTHERS, THAT SHE NOBLY SACRIFICED HERSELF. WHATEVER THE CASE, NONE CAN DOUBT SHE BROUGHT PEACE TO THIS LAND.