

The Fates' Duel

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Chapter 1: Arrival

Location: Wave World – A planet in the Angel Constellation, home of the Mystic League.

For nearly two decades, the Mystic League has been the most premiere school of powered beings in the Great Wide Universe. Its students are respected, and are considered like warrior monks in their abilities to keep the peace through a show of incredible, overwhelming magical powers, and magically empowered physical might.

Its students were all able to lift several metric tons in sheer weight after their first year, and hundreds of metric tons by graduation's end.

I could accomplish over a thousand metric tons. I could bench press a bulk freighter.

To look at me, a tiny six foot fem, despite my rippling body and sexy demeanor, I nonetheless had several magical enhancements which allowed me to do battle with battle mechs bare handed.

But that was a mere sample of the magical enhancements a student of the League accomplished. They became sorceresses and sorcerers, tapping into the very life force of the universe to enhance their magical and psychic powers a thousand fold, using techniques handed down to us and taught to us by a young dragon maiden.

As we neared the end of our training, our powers grow so immensely powerful that we are able to destroy whole planets if we were able to find a way to exist in space.

And all this because of an ancient race that nearly annihilated us an age ago.

Wave World, however, was a remarkable world, home to the School of Sorcery Arts and Combat, a school that was only about a decade old. Presently, several thousand students resided in this now sprawling edifice placed upon one of the premier island refuges upon Wave World; its facilities pristine and beautiful, with white and green marble, and the feeling of tangible spirit magic all around it. The school resembled the capitol city of many a society during their subsequent Golden Age, built on one of the Ocean Planet's largest islands, it sprawled over step-style mountains, which rose eventually to the Pinnacle Tower at the center of the school. Inside the tower was a Great Library, the centralized depository for all things arcane. A gift to us from the Emperor Himself.

Perhaps, truly, this was a Golden Age... for a place such as this to exist.

It was such a beautiful school, and from my position atop the Pinnacle tower, beneath the great crystal sphere that served as the school's power tap into the arcane, I was able to look over everything sprawled out beneath me, and right out over the vast glittering oceans.

My name is Rae, Rae Iksaki.

I am the eldest member of this school, now having passed on far enough in my skills here to where I was now the teacher with students of my own. I was also the first to ever have graduated from the school, ahead of schedule even, and with honors. My name was the first one on the rolls, the first to do practically everything with my potential having been released so thoroughly. I was nearing immortality, and the magical power of the undying.

I'd heard that they were even considering making a statue of me in the great hall. I hope to squash that idea as soon as I find who started it. I don't need to be immortalized like that...

But I had become the pride of the school, the person that they all looked up to – males, females, and young and old – with me being the favored pupil of our headmistress, the feathered Dragoness Menikomenqolui, I had gained her direct attention, direction and teachings. Perhaps that is how I had advanced so far. She who is our teacher, mother, headmistress, and the founder of this school...

And now I stood, my long head fur waving in the breezes, watching the yellow sun set from my usual perch atop the Pinnacle Tower, basking in both the sun's light and the light of the Massive Anchor Stone; caught in its mechanical workings, and empowering the entire world as a source of magic. The tower had once been the only standing edifice on this island, and was where the headmistress had stationed her home. She has since moved her home to the nearby Radiance Island, inside a golden pyramid, leaving this tower as the principle school building. But way up here, a mile up into the sky, atop the flat top platform surrounded by the Spell Anchor spires about the tower, one could get the most beautiful of views.

I leaned over the railing while the Anchor Stone continued to glitter above me; the thing a ball of arcane might and the power source for this world, glittered and shone above my head like a massive ball of electrified water, projecting a single beam straight up into space. Somewhere high up past the cloud cover, the top of that energy spire erupted into a perpetual star burst. But down here... a golden sun, now changing into orange as it set, melted into a green sea while the Anchor stone took over as the source of light for the school

It made my heart leap every time that I saw it. When I was younger, a sight such as this was as rare as a good night sleep.

I hugged myself in remembrance of my childhood, in remembrance of less happy times.

My home world was a place of devastation, corruption, and crumbling cities sinking rapidly into the dust and despoiled by death at every turn. When I was ten, my home town, which was little more than a small block of homes in a city surrounded by boarded up windows and guarded walls, was ravaged – its goods pillaged, its men murdered for sport and its women raped repeatedly.

Like my mother...

Why do such memories always find me when I'm alone? I heard myself think, gripping the short wall surrounding the courtyard here atop the tower with my clawed fingers. That day, I was rescued from that hell and brought here, to where I was taken in, treated like a daughter, taught how to grow strong and powerful, confident and beautiful. Powerful enough that in only a few years, I was able to return and save my home world.

I'd nearly lost my sanity in the process. My mother, my beautiful mother, whom I was sure had been dead by then, was instead still alive. Barely. She'd been ravaged and beaten only the Creator knew how many times in the years I'd been safe and at study, but I revenged her, and found... remarkably... that I had a sister now.

Father... did not live more than a month after I took my sister with me to this school, to be safe, to where she could grow up and be strong without the same influences that I had had in my youth. When I took her here, she was still barely more than a baby and, thank The Maker, she did not have a life like I had. She had been blessed with nurturing teachers who treated her like a daughter, she had a loving mother/sister in me, and a heart filled with happiness.

The last time I visited my home, I found that my father had been buried in a grave directly beside my mother, with the tree that had been planted over her grave having grown immense and strong. A testament that my home world had been given another chance. That was years ago, and I haven't been back since. The empire, however, has gone to great lengths of protecting the world and instilling law and order at last.

This was good, I decided, actually managing a smile at the hard thought as I redirected my attention back to the beauty of the setting sun.

But still... I may never go back. Too many bad memories...

I hugged myself, hunching my shoulders as I tried to warm myself from the chill of so many bad memories, some of which I barely even remembered. There was so much about that whole affair that I didn't remember. Perhaps it was that I didn't want to remember.

A soft wind, full of warmth and life blue against my back, picking up my floppy ears and hair, while dragging at the trailing edges of my fur, flushing the short hair all over my body in one direction with the wind's breath while my tail wrapped around my thick legs. I was a six foot tall female weighing at just over a quarter of a ton; with my birth race resembling canines... dogs and wolves, the noblest of creatures, the most loyal...

But years of intense physical and magical study – just over a decade – has changed this once lithe and tiny body that I'd been born with, into an intensely massive and muscular form presently unrivaled by any known competitor. I always chuckled at the thought that I weighed as much as I did, and even more so at the thought that I was proud that I was this heavy. It is a lot of muscle...

But for a female to weigh five hundred and thirty two pounds, one would think that I was heinously overweight. Many have entertained that thought until they saw me. That quarter ton of weight on such a small pound is due almost entirely in sheer muscle mass. Incredibly dense, having developed into tighter, firmer chords that were the tensile strength of composite alloy chords and with most of my body fat helping to support the well rounded and firm bosom attached to my chest.

I hugged myself a little tighter, feeling the weight of such a bosom heft up higher against my chest with my thick arms, smiling happily and pleasingly that I have developed into such a virile female. I took pleasure in showing off this body, though not nearly as much as some of my friends did, but I enjoyed wearing clothing that made me appear more sexual.

Such is the effects of training at this "school."

I have been trained since the age of ten in the arts of sorcery and combat, mingling the mystic arts and the body into a unified whole. At the age of ten, after only a few mere months of learning at this school, my body had grown large and had already begun to 'develop' prematurely, to the point where I had become a fully breeding female at the age of twelve. Likewise, even then, I had possessed the height and physical bearing of being able to lift several times my own body weight.

And then I'd also amassed immense power in the forms of several magical schools of thought.

As a sorceress, I was linked into several 'Sources of Power,' as they were called, each linked directly to my Center, and my Center absorbing tremendous levels of *Femininity, Strength, and Spirit*. I was already stronger than an entire army of foot soldiers at the age of fourteen when I went to visit my home world again after joining the school, to see my family and perhaps help them, I possessed more than enough power to exact my revenge on much of the evils of that world.

Including the damnable creature that had stole my mother from me...

I shook my head, clearing it of those thoughts as I turned sharply and strode for the portal elevator leading down, feeling the wind brush against my body before I stepped onto the glowing circular platform and it immediately began to descend.

And now... I'd grown several hundred times more powerful since then, with my strengths all growing exponentially, and the newest of my Sources adhering to my center quite rapidly. I've tapped into other 'sources' of power, each one making me stronger, faster, wiser, each one slowing my aging process, keeping me beautiful, virile and young. Till one day most recently... I simply stopped aging.

The doctors and medical specialists called it "Clinical Immortality." My headmistress simply called it immortality.

I still don't know how I should think of that, but now I was being called "The Immortal Rae Iksaki."

I hugged myself again as I continued to descend at that last thought.

It was sort of an accident achieving that feat. I'd grown so powerful, my healing factor so fast, my magical prowess so massive, that all of these forces sustained me, revitalized me, even from the affects of age. I was twenty-one now, and I still possessed the body of an eighteen year old. Firm and rounded in body with very few sharp angles making up my form, with full and rounded breasts and a pleasant, young face locked in an ageless beauty. The only thing that seemed to age in me was the light of my eyes. I'd been called immature and young until one has chanced to look into my eyes and seen the maturity that exists there.

I blushed slightly then as I looked down at my body, at the massive expanse of my bust that was nearly too large for the clothing I wore, and a few scant centimeters of cloth were all that needed to fall to reveal the fullness of my femininity to any who chanced to look. Part of my charm was that that never happened.

But though all the more-than-obvious feminine physique that I possessed, I felt the sheer, raw, unrequited *power* sliding through my form as if my energy was on the verge of breaking from my flesh. At sometimes I burned with the warmth of it, and it was an effort to keep my emotions in check or else the sheer act of my anger would burn holes in the floor.

I sighed, as the elevator brought me down within the tower, my whole body swelling briefly as the lift brought me down to the main courtyard hundreds of stories below, to where I exited and moved off toward the main courtyard. Every movement that I took was exacting, every step quiet and demure, graceful and beautiful and without sound.

They had given me the title of "goddess," because I'd grown so powerful, a title I'd achieved five years ago when I was sixteen. *And now they call me "Immortal,"* I thought.

Pausing on the steps of the Grand Stair leading up to the central tower, a hand coming to rest on the railing to one side of me, I flexed my arm, watching as its forearm flared, its bicep near tripled impossibly in size, and I could feel the tangible source of my powers sliding through the length of my arm, and without even trying, sparks of energy danced about the length of my arm, sparkling this way and that, lighting my fur with a golden color briefly before I released the flex and let the energy pass back into my center.

And that wasn't even a full flex! I smiled, opening my fingers slowly. *Why have I been blessed with such power?* I wondered then, and continued in my steps.

I didn't like the fact that they called me a goddess, but I certainly seemed as such, sometimes even in my own eyes. *But an Immortal?*

I finally banished my darker feelings and lifted my head, my circular hat bobbing briefly atop my head as I stepped lithely forward, gracefully, while the younger students, and even some of the faculty, moved purposefully out of my way, bowing their heads and greeting me warmly. I smiled happily back at them as I strode forward, waving to friends as I passed off into the central courtyard.

I'd reached the center of the courtyard when I slowed and then stopped, feeling something... strange... unique in the air.

Something unfamiliar.

I lifted my hand to feel the air with my four fingers, blinking for a moment as I felt the unfamiliar magic in the air. Something that was tangible already with no visible effect as of yet. I began looking around for the source, but it was either so vague or powerful in its area of effect that it had no discernable center.

“Hey Rae! Oh Rae!” I heard someone calling my name suddenly, and lifting my head and turning, I saw with a smile rising upon my lips again as my friend Equis rapidly approaching me.

A Casid, a race of catlike creatures resembling lions, Equis was one of the very few senior students, those that had graduated. She stood tall and proud, full of feminine power, greater than my own in that regard, and stood head and shoulders above me. Her physical abilities, again, outweighed my own – but only by a little – but it was my Taoist methods and combat abilities that earned me the respect that I had even above her in other people’s eyes.

Equis, however, unlike myself was not as easily embarrassed about her body, even in comparison with my at times flaunting garb. She however exhibited her boisterously feminine form as much as she could, and even with the requirement for all members of the Mystic League, those taught by this school, to be clothed, Equis was always borderline in disobeying that rule. Even now, she was dressed in a simple white body cloth that was nearly transparent. As such, especially in this light, it did little more than place her entire naked body into shadow.

And with the breeze blowing the cloth about her, all one had to do was stand off to her side to see all that they wanted. In this way she was such a tease to the young male members of the League who hid behind trees and bushes in the off chance to see her.

The public bath was always a grand display of her body to both men and women, and I always had to chuckle as she washed with us.

I wasn’t much better than her after all... especially since my miniskirt in my wrap around body suit was so short you could see my panties, and the front of my bodysuit did little more than to cover my teats. But when you gain a body like the two of us have developed, you tend to flaunt it... and often.

“Hi Equis!” I smiled happily in greeting as she stopped up short and the two of us hugged one another in greeting.

“Hey yourself, kid.” Equis grinned, patting me on the back while showing off her elongated incisors that were reminiscent of her meat-eating feline heritage. “They did it, Rae!” She said then as she fell into stride beside me. “The Headmistress got the tournament to be here! Members from all the other two leagues are coming here! Tonight!”

“Tonight?” I echoed, and absentmindedly began walking off in any old direction, biting the hooking claw of one of my nails. “The Demon League and the Power League here? That means...”

“Yup! Makahn is coming!” Equis said, startling me first with the exclamation, and twice with a solid slap on my rump. Then a third surprise when she gave my rump a firm squeeze.

“Hey!” I exclaimed, rubbing my bare bottom where the back of my panties didn’t cover, but then I waxed rhapsodic. “Makahn... coming here. Equis, I’m... I’m not ready to see him again.”

Equis chuckled and landed a hand upon my muscled shoulder. “The most powerful being in the Great Wide Universe, and she’s scared of a little relationship with... with... *with one hunk of a male!* Mph... that wolf has got some serious meat on him. Stop playing hard to get! Just invite him to your rooms and let nature take its course.

“Otherwise...” she nudged me with her very wide and capable hip. “Someone might take him from you.” She giggled.

And then I rounded on her, my fur all suddenly standing on end as I burned with my power, my eyes shining a burning white as an electrical charge snapped and crackled across my bodice.

“Don’t you *dare touch him!!*” I practically screamed.

And then I saw the frightened look in her eyes as she took a step a way from me and I hurriedly suppressed the anger. A great example as to why I needed to keep it in check.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” I apologized quickly. “I’m so sorry Eqis. I don’t know what came over me.”

Eqis took several calming breaths, but managed to smile. “It’s alright kid... it just goes to prove that there’s something there. Otherwise you wouldn’t be trying to protect him from other predators like me. He’s a male, you’re a female... and you both have affection for one another... it’s a good start. That... and he is one of the few men in this universe who might actually be able to please you... or me for that matter.”

I managed to laugh in spite of that. There was a rather unfortunate side effect to both the male and female sides of any of the leagues. Our bodies grew exceptionally strong in every regard. And I do mean *every* regard. I could press a rod of steel flat with the pocket between my thighs if I were sufficiently aroused, and bend it in knots. Likewise, this had a similar effect on the males, making them longer... thicker...

I gave off a soft sigh, and spread my hands over my muscled thighs, trying to hide the effects of my rising sensuality between them at the thought of Makahn finally kneeling between my thighs.

Then I suddenly got a light punch on the arm, and I turned to Eqis again, keeping my hands folded over my crotch.

“Now come on, or we’ll miss the arrivals. They’ll be Gateing in soon, and the Headmistress wishes all senior students to attend. That means you kid.”

Again I laughed, my momentary rage having waned completely as I stepped into pace with my friend and fellow upperclassman as she led the way down the Grand Stair toward the main Courtyard between all the towers and the dormitories.

“Does Fatima know?” I asked.

Fatima was my little sister that I’d rescued from the death and destruction from our home world. Shortly after I’d been taken up to join this school, she had been born amidst the sewers, grime and depravity. But despite all that, she still managed to hold a soul of innocence, joy and happiness. She was the flower growing in the wake of destruction. As such, she had taken up the more graceful arts than I had, but nonetheless possesses a very well developed and powerful bodice just like her big sister.

She may even someday surpass me... I considered with affection for my sister.

“Of course she knows.” Eqis responded to my inquiry. “She was probably listening to the Headmistress’s door with a glass pressed against her ear. She’s been waiting in the courtyard ever since, pushing everyone away from her spot so that she can get a good view of the proceedings.”

“And perhaps a good spot for the feast as well.” I laughed.

She was a growing girl, and had quite a good appetite. She ate more than her figure would allow for at times, and even as such she never gained a pound unless it was in raw muscle. As fate would have it, my sister was following well in my footsteps, and after me and then Eqis in strength and overall power, she was the third most powerful being in the known universe.

Sure enough, Fatima was ensconced, immovable, in a place of perfect view on one of the many benches in the courtyard, the only one occupying it at present, with already a great throng of other members of the League all around the perimeter of the courtyard. She was apparently so adamant about retaining her seat that no one dared sit beside her now.

Headmistress Menikomenqolui was already resting on her dais of cushions, her great multi-colored wings folded against her back while she stabbed bits of fruit from a bowl in one claw and chewed them off. When she saw us, she beckoned us to take our place with the other faculty and upperclassmen.

“I am very glad that you are here Rae, Equis.” She greeted, directing us to take our seats on the long benches about her dais. “This wouldn’t have been complete without the two of you.”

“I am sorry we are late, headmistress. I wanted to see the sun set today, and Equis was kind enough to come find me.”

The young dragoness smiled regardless.

“I understand fully, child. Now let us be patient for a short while. Our guests should be arriving soon.”

The courtyard was broken only by short muttering before a low hum suddenly entered into the din, and the resulting silence was far, far greater than the noise had been. I sat nervously, my thighs together, my hands folded over my muscled lap, wondering who’d be coming through the Gateway first. Would it be the Imperials? The Demons... or... or the Powered League?

They’d definitely send Makahn, I thought, biting my lower lip while my shoulders hunched, pressing my buxom breasts against one another and pressing them up over my biceps. *Great Maker, it’s been months since I’ve seen him.*

And at that moment, I didn’t know how I should’ve felt.

But then the Gate’s pillars began to shine a brilliant white, and bolts of electricity crackled to and fro between them, to the point where the static charge created a screen of brilliant light from the top of the pillars to the floor.

This dimensional gate was one of the few pieces of technology that resided here, but was necessary. Capable of mass transit over immense distances of hundreds of light years, for some of our guests who couldn’t arrive under their own magical power, technology was the only means available.

In the next moment, however, shadows appeared inside it and a procession came through. I exhaled a sigh as I saw four Imperial rangers stride through, followed by four psychic guardians, and finally the Emperor himself!

It’s not the Powered League, I thought, biting my lower lip as my apprehension rose.

But then I felt my jaw drop open as the Holy One himself strode onto the tiled work of the courtyard, and at once, whoever was sitting, was now standing, including Menikomenqolui herself.

“You grace us with your presence, my lord.” She greets as four more rangers exit through the gate, before with a snap it and its brilliance simply cease their emanations and all grows dark save the torches, magical lighting rings and the moonlight.

“I would not have missed this experience in an age, my lady Dragoness.” He said inclining his head, to which in response, all but his guard and psychic aides all bowed deeply at the waist. Their duty was to protect the emperor, and therefore must be constantly on the alert.

The eight rangers took up varying positions all about the courtyard – two remaining by him at all times – while the Emperor took a place of prominence at the head table, and as soon as he was seated, all others did as well. And just in time too, for a reddened light was beginning to glow on the ground at the center of the courtyard signified the next arrivals.

A great reddened ball of blood red light formed above the tiled ground of the courtyard, before all of a sudden, the red light solidified into a sinuous line that began to rapidly etch across the ground, being joined by other lines as it

broke off hundreds of times over, creating a *vast* spell circle, and an incredibly complex and difficult one I saw. Again calming my heart, I knew already who was approaching.

The Demons.

They were not truly evil creatures, once having been a section of the Mystic League that Fatima, Equis and myself were all apart of, but they were dismissed, with great reluctance, because of their constant studying of the dark arts.

I may have been powerful, I may have in me the spirit of an immortal now due to my power, but an inter-planetary teleportation circle was something still too complex for me to absorb. And in the Demon league... there was only one person capable of such a thing.

Gehnohn.

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All of a sudden, the lines all flared brilliantly, and in a column of fire exploded straight up into the heavens between the Gateway's pillars, in a brief churning of flames, the first and foremost member of the Demons stepped through... a *massive* creature, towering over all around save for the Headmistress herself, of like height to even Equis. To his sides came out the other members of the Demon League while his gossamer wings folded against the back of his head and upper back where they were attached. He was not as muscularly imposing as some of the members here, like Equis, but he radiated power, both Sorceries and Demonic.

An air of superior presence to all, even the Emperor, radiated about him, and an effect similar to an even horizon of a black hole lined a very faint edge about his whole form. At his backside, five tails hung as he walked lithely and powerfully out into the open.

The other members of the Demon League stepped out behind him, a good dozen of his fellows, both male and female, and all of them, save Gehnohn himself, wearing as little clothing as was possible. Most of them wearing little more than pasties here and there.

These were Mystic Leaguers who had delved in the dark arts, which was why many of them had lost their tails while gaining horns and demon-like strength along with their demon-like natural abilities. And on top of that, they all were unbelievably powerful mystics.

As the last member of the Demons stepped through, the blazing pillar suddenly lost its strength and was snuffed out, its summoning glyph evaporating into a dark gray mist of free floating ash that was soon blown away.

Gehnohn walked forward and bowed deeply to his old headmistress, his massive, gossamer wings spreading open briefly and roiling about him like a black thundercloud to act like a cloak before returning again to their old configuration; fluttering briefly as they settled.

“Well met, ‘old one.’” He smiled softly, while his fellow Demons lined up behind him, some looking in disdain at those around him.

I remembered Gehnohn.

He was in the same first class with me... but that was before he grew his wings and developed his extra tails. Before his demonification. When his form started to change like that, he couldn't hide his extracurricular activities any longer, and he, and his 'Hell Fire Club' were all dismissed from the Mystic League for practicing the forbidden arts. Gehnohn left with nary a twinge of anger. It was as if he had expected it all along. Now he was the master of his own league, his own school, his own planet...

Planet Hades. A demon class planet of noxious airs, barely tolerable gravity, and very little life. Despite that, his Hanging Gardens in their Palace of Shadows was bright and beautiful and grandiose in its design and beauty. I never really could understand a man who delved into such darkness, but still took pleasure in such things.

In spite of their differences, my mentor was laughing as she answered Gehnohn's greeting. “And you too ‘stripling warrior.’” I chuckled at his old nickname, and he turned to me, smiling warmly as he placed a hand briefly on my shoulder and gave it a squeeze in passing greeting and in remembrance of our shared childhood. “If you'll be seated, then our final arrivals may gate in.”

“Ah of course, how insensitive of me.” He said, bowing again to his old headmistress, and then the Emperor, and gesturing off to his side, his near militant crew of Demons took their seats to one side of the courtyard in opposition to the Mystic League.

And then the Gateway was igniting again, and this time I felt myself beginning to shake, and tremble, and... jump! I turned suddenly toward Equis as she laid a steadying hand on my knee to keep it from shaking. She and I exchanged a smile, but that smile faded from my face as the gateway opened fully, and the final procession entered the courtyard.

This time there was a theme of celebration as the newest arrivals entered. The Imperial sanctioned League, the Powered League, positively bounded in. Trained as athletes and jocks on a high-gravity world – five G's if I remembered correctly – were as light as feathers in our low one-point-two G gravity well. Twelve fighters, one right after the other, and as each entered, my clawed fingers dug deeper and deeper into my knees to practically drawing blood.

Then, finally, my wait was over, and the one who I'd expected to come stepped through the gateway. Not even halfway through the gate, and already he'd found me, his eyes searching me out, and all at once a smile that read of so many emotions, with his face showing so many more, focused upon me.

Makahn had come...

I felt my heart and my breathing suddenly stop, my breasts perspiring as I felt my body grow incensed in the familiar way he had helped me achieve so long ago. A simple glance, a simple touch or the sound of his voice drove me into such deep desires.

Is that not what one seeks for in a mate? My inner voice asked me.

He was a majestic wolf form, great and beautiful, and where I was powerful magically, he was raw physical might and power; that muscle system capable of lifting thousands of times his own body weight.

My panties grew a little moist all of a sudden, and I focused very hard not to think of him that way. But still, my first and foremost thought was to have him kneel between my thighs and enter me, a thought so strong that I heard someone clear their throat, and looking in that direction, I saw one of the Emperor's Psionics grin and wink at me.

My thoughts were usually so well guarded. That meant that indeed those Psionics were very well worth their reputation of being intensely talented Psionics if they were able to read my surface thoughts, in a crowd and at that distance like that. That or perhaps it was because I was so extremely... distracted.



“Hail! Hail, great mother, and thank you for having us!” he greeted at last as the Gateway snapped shut behind him, but his greeting was not to me, but toward the host of this semblance. “We are honored by your invitation!”

The other Power Leaguers clapped and cheered, which, as contagious as their usual fervor was, brought applause from the rest of the gathered assemblage.

“And you are most welcome. It is always good to have a little fun, gaiety and celebration, so if all will be seated, then the feast shall...”

Just then the headmistress stopped, pausing in her words, giving us a bare moment to wonder why before every member of the Mystic and Demon League, as well as the Psychics, all sensed it.

It was the same feeling of strange magics, to which earlier I had dismissed, but ever so suddenly it had flared to a point where it couldn't be ignored. Again my fingers lifted, feeling the air, and I felt something tangible, like rubbing a bit of liquid soap between my fingers. But this time I witnessed it, a sparkling of blues, greens, blacks and purples.

It was so smooth, so pure...

And then all of a sudden, there was a crackling snap, like a lightning bolt the hundredth size of its greater counterpart, and all turned to a place that the Gateway was now standing. A certain distance beyond it, another snap occurred, and then another, and more, crossing this way and that way, before the lightning bolts of blue-green energy suddenly began to rapidly coalesce into a will-o-wisp of sorts, a ball of crackling energy of incredibly pure, unrefined magical power.

There was murmuring as the ball steadily grew larger, trembling with power as it grew larger and larger. Then in a burst of light it exploded open, creating a vertical pool of what looked like water, before the pool formed into a whirlpool ringed in blue flames, and with a great breath of wind, the swirling vortex blew outward suddenly before calming to a gentle breeze. Then from the inside a figure formed with a snap of pseudo motion; walking through a

tunnel while people standing about the vortex backed away from the entrance. Even Makahn and the Powered League backed away.

Like walking from a tunnel, the figure stepped into existence. A tall, massive and cloaked figure stepped barefoot onto the cool cobblestones, and lifting a hand in a dismissive gesture, the portal collapsed in on itself, squeezing smaller and smaller till I could've sworn it created a one-dimensional bead of light before winking out of existence.

This creature, bearing the power and presence of a male, stepped forward to stand between the pillars of the Gateway, his arms folded into the long sleeves of his robe. A great, silvery, wide-brimmed hat topped his head, and all of his features were hidden behind masks and scarves.

I slowly rose to my feet, noticing all at once the Taoist formations and geometrical emblems on his garb, and the pair of stubby wings bracing over his shoulders. There was a light armor here and there, and who knew what else beneath all those robes.

But what part of this creature that was unclothed – his feet – ended in hooked claws on feet with five toes! *Five?! And white fur?*

“Greetings.” he said simply. “I am Lord Sage, Armsmaster and Grandmaster of my order and my people. I have come a great and immeasurable distance to find and challenge the Goddess Figure known as Rae Iksaki...”