

Chapter 42: Escape from the Temporal Plane

After a while of flight, Atlas spotted a deer below the trees eating some leaves. She hadn't eaten breakfast since they resumed their trip. Her belly had been aching for food to fill it. Not wanting to miss her chance for a meal, the dragoness said to Axle, "I'll be right back. I got a deer to munch on. Don't stop for me. I'll teleport to you when I'm done." The dragoness swooped down towards the buck. As soon as she reached the treetops, the deer heard her shifting the tree branches and stopped eating. The panicked animal began to prance away from its predator, hoping to escape becoming her next meal. Atlas shot a spell of ice needles at it, which struck the deer and froze its veins. The prey was slowed down by its frozen wounds and in a matter of moments, the dragoness reached it and struck it down with a powerful swipe of her claw. Atlas began to eat the slain animal, savoring its delicate meat. Any tiny frozen parts of its flesh were warmed up with fire magic melting the ice.

As she was nearly done eating the deer, the magi heard a telepathic voice from Ohimia. The lumina asked, *'Hey! Atlas, right? It's me, Ohimia! Garin, the halfling you met, and I are looking for you. Where are you?'*

Atlas answered, *'Axle and I are going over to Trident Mountain. We have to make it there before the end of the day or else the bad guys are going to put his daughter into whatever twisted games they have for her. You guys need something?'*

Ohimia replied, *'Well... we don't necessarily need anything as in "we need help", but you and your white dragon friend seem to be good friends. It's hard to keep friends, especially in this time of war, and... I would like friends. And companions to travel with. It may sound silly, but it's true.'*

The magi would be glad to keep her company, but she knew Axle and his sister, Juna, would be displeased if she brought others into unnecessary danger. Even Atlas herself didn't want to put her and Garin into harm's way. So, she gave the lumina a fair warning to understand the journey to Trident Mountain. *'Well Ohimia, I'd like to hang with you guys, too. But our journey isn't all playtime and games. You see? We're going up against two evil dragons, a necromancer, vampire humans and everyone else they're throwing at us. That means there will be fights, danger and death. You almost got killed by a hybrid; I'm not sure I want to have your life risked again. Especially when you're still learning how to fight,'* she said.

Then Garin entered the conversation and asked, *'Mind if I interject for a moment?'*

'Hm?' replied Atlas, curious as to what the halfling was about to say.

Garin asked her, *'I know how to handle myself in a fight, and, if anything, we could come along and my job could just be to keep Ohimia safe. How does that sound to you?'*

The magi thought over her decision whether to bring them along or not. If Ohimia was with her, then Atlas can help train her and pass off her skills that won her many battles in the tournaments, but only during breaks. After making up her mind, the magi told him, *'Alright, I'll take you along. But I got to ask Axle first.'* She formed a telepathic bond with the white dragon and asked, *'Hey Axle, Garin and Ohimia want to come with us. They can both fight for themselves. Can I bring them?'*

The dragon said, *'I leave that choice to you. Also, I landed in a clearing quite far from you as well for my own hunt, just teleport there when you are done. Violet is there as well.'* He sent a mental image of the clearing. Some of the area was burn, but for the most part it looked like a nice spot to rest at. It seemed like the magi's hunting had inspired him to go catch his own food. Looks like they'll be having their first break until it was time to go again.

After taking the image in to her memory, the magi replied, *'Alright, I'll be there in a few seconds.'* Then she stopped using telepathy with Axle and went back to Garin and Ohimia. *'Alright, I'll take you guys with us. I'd like to see how much Ohimia has learned from you,'* she said. Atlas used the tracking spell to locate the lumina and halfling. Then she teleported herself over to where they were at. Ohimia was a little surprised at the magi's sudden appearance. Turning her head to look from one to the other, the magi told them, "Let's go to where we'll meet Axle." She pictured the location the former dragon lord gave her and she teleported the three over to the clearing. There, Atlas saw that Violet was left here by herself. Atlas told the vampire who the tag-a-longs were before she looked from the halfling to the lumina, "Alright blood-sucker, I brought some new friends and I want you to know them. This halfling is Garin and the other one here is Ohimia." Then she turned to the duo and introduced the girl to them, "And everyone, this is Violet, a vampire who worked for the evil dragons I was telling you about. She supposedly didn't want any part in the attack and Axle trusts her. But I'd watch her if I were you."

Ohimia looked at the vampire girl and greeted, "A vampire, huh? Well, nice to meet you, Violet!"

The history started off by mentioning that dragons originally came from another dimension that eventually died off with the gradual death of the once fertile lands. It also told of the evolution of dragons, who evolved from dinosaurs that survived the extinction caused by a magical meteor. These dinosaurs would then evolve over time to gain increasing IQ, wings, the ability to breathe fire and do magic. Before they came to the human world, the dragon lived in clans, each with a different breed that was purebred. Mixing with another clan was forbidden back then, unless their breeds comprised of only gender and need to produce a new member.

Things were generally peaceful back then until the first evil dragon known as Evila came to rule the witch dragon clan. She was a sadistic and power-hungry dragoness who would stop at nothing to make her clan a superpower and be the supreme ruler of all dragons. She would make all clans who opposed her disappear off the face of the world. The clans who didn't want to fight and risk their lives, gave away their lands to the ever increasing witch dragon clan and fled. Evila's reign of terror ended when the

leader of the magi dragon clan, Ganelum, brought together the clans with the best powers and waged war against her. Evila was slain and the witch dragon clan went into extinction, but at the cost of the hero's life and over 30% of his army.

Kathia also read one part in that history that intrigued her. The witch dragons would take the most dangerous animals and magically transform them into mind-controlled dragon soldiers of new breeds to use as weapons against the other clans. These new breeds of dragons were still alive to this day. The girl thought about doing what the witches did and turning animals into monsters. These monsters would be weapons to fight against the dragons. If only she knew how to do this, then it would be great. With necromancy and transformation, she would become more powerful.

Van came back up to Kathia and he was not alone this time. With him was the good Spinx, but the good one now had on a black suit. But under that suit, it looked like he was wearing armor and there was a sword attached to his hip. "Morning Kathia. I take it you heard about Elisabeth and about what might have happened last night," Spinx said as he pulled out one of the seats.

"I sure did," said the girl in response.

"Van, can you go get the item that is from Excab and Sapphire. It should be in the armory room in the metal box," Spinx said as the boy nodded his head and walked from them. Then the man asked the girl, "So any question you want to asks?"

Kathia nodded and answered, "Yes sir, a few. Who or what attacked Elizabeth? Is she going to be alright?" If she knew what the castle was dealing with, she'd be better prepared for ambushes from the mysterious enemy.

The man nodded his head reassuringly and told her, "I figured as much. Well, what have happened to her last night; she is lucky not to have come to more harm than what she was in. So far, the only real injuries on her physically was inflicted on her back and a few on her neck and right arm. She will live from it before you ask; but her mental state, seeing how things in this place are more, well, deadly, is questionable." Kathia now knew the state Elizabeth was in, but what about the attacker? Why did Spinx jump around that subject? The girl felt that was suspicious indeed. But she wasn't going to press on that as she didn't want the man to know that she was coming on to her. She knew things would get ugly if she revealed her wits. The girl decided to play along for now until she could find a way out of this world.

Van was quick about acquiring the item. It was a small black box with a clear lid. The boy set it on the table and backed away. In the small box was a rolled up piece of paper and a small orb in it. Kathia looked at these two objects and asked, "What are these?"

Spinx slid the box and said, "It's your means of escape from here; consider it a gift from a few other lords. As for how it works, I really have no idea. All I know is the sphere is full of dragon blood and you need a second source of magic energy, one that will be destroyed after. From what Sapphire was able to tell me

was that it only teleports you to a dragon, a dragon you must know the name of. That's about it, that's all I know."

Kathia was both surprised and glad that they're giving her a means to escape this place. Perhaps she misjudged these people; they weren't so bad after all. They probably must function as themselves normally here as they did in the living world before death. Maybe they only change once the bad Spinx summons them to use under his control. The girl took the box and said, "Gee thanks, Spinx!" She knew the name of the dragon she wanted to teleport to was Axle. The other thing she needed was a source of magical energy. But where would she get that? Certainly not herself as she needed her powers. It was a few seconds before a church bell ringed and the whole place got quiet. Unsure of what was happening, the girl asked, "Hey, what's going on?"

Spinx and Van seemed to react to the church bell. Van drew two small swords from his jacket and Spinx slide the chair out quite fast, knocking it over. The moment the two males looked ready for an oncoming battle, Kathia knew that something was wrong. The man's hand reach for the sword hilt when the sound of glass shattered somewhere in the library; the girl suspected that the castle has been invaded by intruders. "Van, take Kathia out of here. Now," Spinx said as he bounced over the table to the sound.

Van came up to Kathia, who was holding the box under her right arm. The girl looked to the boy; the nervous expression on his face was unsettling. Last night, the boy had been calm in taking the dangerous job to protect her from attackers. Now he seemed like he didn't want to deal with who or what has attacked the castle. Whatever it was, Kathia knew that the foe was going to be more dangerous than she expected. She said to Van, "Come on, let's get somewhere safe." Then the boy made his way out of the library as the girl dashed following him to wherever he was going. As they were running, a screech was heard coming from the hallway. This was soon followed with a large fireball rushing down the hallway. Kathia's eyes went wide with terror of being burnt to crisp. She immediately screamed, "Duck!" Within the next second, she threw herself face flat to the floor and let the fireball fly over her. Its impact destroyed the vase on a stand that got set on fire and scorched its wood black. She didn't look to see if Van had saved himself as well.

After the fire that engulfed the hall died out, the girl looked ahead of herself to see what was going on in front of her for the fireball to come in like that. Standing in front of them was Elisabeth, who was now out of the infirmary, looking a little more pissed than normally. She said, "This is no time for eating the crumbs off the ground. Get up and move you two, now."

Van bounced to his feet in a second. Kathia hastily pushed herself off the floor and got to her feet, while crying, "Okay, I'm coming!" She resumed following Van to who-knows-where, hoping that they would make it there safely in one piece. *'Oh gods, let me survive this! Let me survive this!'* she thought with her panicky heart racing. They ran down the hall towards the back entrance and was about to turn around the corner when an arrow was shot right at Van. The startled girl jumped when she saw the weapon fly. Fortunately, the boy's hand deflected the arrow with ease. Whatever was around the corner that he signaled Elisabeth to take Kathia another way. Van turned his full focus to whatever was around the

corner and ran down in a full speed.

"This way Kathia," the woman said as she opened up a door to a small room, which seemed like a dead end. For a moment, the girl felt safe until she heard someone behind her.

"And what do you really think you can go with his prize, Elisabeth of the silver tongue, hm?" a voice came from behind them. They turned and saw a halfling covered in blood. Elisabeth covered her nose from the smell; it seemed she could smell the blood on her. Kathia knew that he was referring to the bad Spinx, who saw her as his tool. She realized that if the bad Spinx's men were here for her, then that meant that Axle was approaching him soon. "Don't think you ca-" the halfling started to speak before Elisabeth channeled magic into a lighting blast.

"Go back to the hell you crawled out of," the woman said as she released the spell. The power itself was grand as it filled the hall way with a blast of white energy. Elisabeth looked back at Kathia and said, "That's twice it's been hit by a spell of mine."

Kathia asked, "So he can survive getting zapped by lightning?" It would make sense considering that everyone here was already dead and were being kept alive by the temporal plane. Killing them again might be impossible.

Elisabeth slammed the door shut and started to slide her hands over the wall, almost like she was looking for something. "It's not the surviving part that's the problem, it's the fact that it is already dead; and trying to kill anything in the temporal plane is a bit more difficult than what you think," she said as she stopped moving along the wall. On the side of her neck, which can be seen now, was a very black area that was in the pattern of a claw mark from something. Kathia stared at the scar on the neck; the woman had been killed by a dragon. Elisabeth pressed hard against the wall she was against now. "And if I had to guess, yes that thing could survive a blast of that magnitude; simple because I do not have enough strength to destroy that thing anymore," she said as the wall glowed red and flames spit out from the wall, emitting heat onto the girl's skin, before opening up a secret passage in the middle of the room leading down. "To simply put in Kathia, all I can do is stall it for a few seconds or so before it returns," the woman said as she turned around. A small ball of fire appeared next to her. "Kathia, listen very carefully, at the end of this passage is a platform. Spinx already informed me on the theory of returning you home, and well seeing how you don't even measure up to a mage level of that skill, there was only one choice on who originally cast the spell here," Elisabeth said as they started to walk down the stairs. "If all goes according to plan, you should arrive back home with little or no marks on you. However, if things do not, just yell the name Excab. It's really your only safety net you have if worse comes to worse. Now let's get going."

"Alright, I'm going," Kathia said. After a while, they finally made it there and saw a platform in the middle of the room. "Looks like that must be it," said the girl.

Elisabeth seemed a little weary of the area, almost like she was on edge about something. "We are not

alone here," she whispered to the girl.

"Huh?" said Kathia, who was now uneasy by what the woman has just said. The woman snapped her fingers, lighting a line of oil paths on fire, and her supposition were correct. Sitting near the platform stairs were the halfling that Elisabeth blasted with lightning and another halfling. There laying over the edge of the staircase was Van, who was very badly injured and bleeding. Kathia gasped in shock and horror at the poor boy's condition.

The halfling that had been blasted with lightning said, "Well you finally made it here at last. I was starting to think I would have to have fun with slicing your partner up into little ribbons."

"Kathia, stay here," Elisabeth said as she started to walk towards the pair. She seemed to have a heat aura around her as she walked closer. "You two made a big mistake attacking Van, now you will pay."

"Oh, it sounds like the big bad dr-" the second one started to say before it was light on fire, right where she stood. It screeched loudly before vanishing into smoke.

The first one asked, "How did you get the strength to use ignite at the magnitude?" Its answer was on it as well as it busted into flames.

"You never ever, piss off a red mage ever, ungrateful soul," Elisabeth snarled at the now burning halfling. Once the area was clear for the time being, the woman looked back at Kathia and yelled to her, "We do not have time to for you to be standing around all day and sight-seeing."

The girl flinched at the woman's yell before she cried, "Oh right, sorry!" Then she hurried over to the platform and then looked at the box she held. This was it; she had to use a magic source to activate the orb and get her out of this world and there were only two: herself and Elisabeth. She didn't know if the woman would voluntarily sacrifice her own magic to get Kathia out of her, but she wouldn't count on someone happily giving up the powers that made them mighty. Even Kathia herself was reluctant to give up the magic energy she needed to kill dragons and teach her army. *'Oh gosh, this is so hard,'* she thought.

Elisabeth followed the girl to the platform and stopped at the edge of the circle. "Well I guess this is goodbye then, Kathia. With very little knowledge of how this spell works, I have really no idea where you'll really end up: could be in the air miles from the target or even inside them." Kathia's heart felt heavy with nervousness at the thought of being too high in the sky or getting digested inside a dragon. But then she relaxed in relief, after the woman continued, "It would be the first and only sending spell I will cast for the rest of my life. Now if you do not mind the scroll." The girl took the scroll and out of the box and handed to her. Now she waited for the moment would she would speak Axle's name.

Elisabeth grabbed the scroll and opened it up. What was inside was more than a spell for escaping, but

also a letter as well in an unknown language. She tore the letter part off from the scroll and handed it back to Kathia. "That part is not for the spell, nor is it in English or Draconic. Simply to put it, it's for whoever you are targeting, which I can very much take a stab at who," the woman said.

"Axle," the girl murmured the name, answering the woman's guess. Then Elisabeth started to chant the spell. It was a bit weird, sounding quite similar to a dragon, and the mage sounded just like a real one. Kathia was amazed at how well her voice imitated a dragon's. Perhaps the scroll was written in Draconic.

The chant seemed to last for about ten minutes before the woman stopped. "That it is; the spell is ready. Just break the orb and say the name of the target. Whatever you do, don't move. Also, according to the spell, it first has to pinpoint the target, which will take some time. Give or take ten minutes or so," Elisabeth said as she dropped the paper and it was engulfed in flames.

The girl replied, "Okay, got it. I'll just stand perfectly still while this is going on."

"That is the last of my magic, and once you are about to teleport, my life will go as well, ceasing to live any longer. Well hell, had a nice run while it lasted, but everything has its own time to end."

The girl was confused by this and said, "But I thought you and everybody else here are already dead. How can you die ag--" Her mind instantly figured it out for her when she remembered how zombies were corpses filled with magic to give them life again. Because Elisabeth was one, the woman would lose all magic in her body and forever cease to animate in the temporal plane. "Oh right," the girl continued. It was quite tragic for the woman to end like that and even though Kathia only knew her from last night to the morning, she still felt for her. "I think everyone here's going to miss you, Elisabeth," said the girl, predicting the good zombies' response to the woman's loss.

Elisabeth turned towards the staircase. "Dead? No kid, me, Van and Spinx are very much alive, well for the time being. But that's soon about to change, for all of us that still very much have life left in our bodies," the woman sadly said as she watched the staircase. "But there are secrets in these worlds best left forgotten," she said as she pulled off the cloak that was around her, revealing an armored Elisabeth. She had two purple metal whips on her sides as she gripped both the handles of the whips and cracked them out to their full length. Kathia stared at the woman's armor and whips in interest; not only was she a mage, but it looked like she was a warrior, too. Then the woman said out loud, "Well are you two going to be hiding in the shadows or are you going to strike?"

A few seconds later, the two halflings came from the shadows of the room. "My, my. What a noticeable girl you are. Sadly, we are not going to let her get away that easily," one of the halfling said as they both started to move slowly towards Elisabeth.

The other one said, "And how we are going to stop her from leaving is by killing you."

Elisabeth ended up cracking one of her whips hard on the floor next to them. She snarled, "You know you both are really starting to piss me off greatly."

"Oh' then, let me fix that for you than," the second one said before vanishing in the shadows than soon reappearing right in front of the woman. He quickly pulled out a dagger and it found its mark right square in her chest. "You see? Without your magic, you are very much useless and really no match for either of us, so do us all a favor and just die here," he snarled back at her as she fell to her knees.

The first halfling said to the girl, "Miss Kathia, it is very impolite to just run off before the big party is about to happen. It not very welled Mann-" It was interrupted when Elisabeth swung her whip right through the air, snapping right across it face. It drew blood from the creature.

The woman said, "And I do not find it very thrilling at all that a few shadow mages can't take on a single powerless mage without cheap tricks."

Kathia's adrenaline started pumping with fear and eagerness to escape before the halflings get to her. She quickly took the orb and threw it down hard onto the platform where it smashed and broke into pieces. Then she looked up at the ceiling and shouted, "AXLE!" She waited for the spell to take effect and take her to the dragon.

Elisabeth kept the halfling back at bay for a good five minutes before they started to wear her out greatly. One managed to tackle her to the ground and pinned her down. The other one stepped hard on her hand causing her to scream in pain. "Music to our ears," said one of the halflings.

The girl gritted her teeth anxiously, hoping that the woman didn't get defeated or killed in this fight. The last thing she needed right now was for these halflings to come take her away in the middle of the spell. Staring at the woman and hoping that she would come out on top, Kathia thought, *'Please win this, Elisabeth!'* The girl wished she could use her spells to aid in this fight, but that would turn the creatures' attention onto her and probably get her knocked off the platform, which would ruin the send-home spell.

There was a loud snap that soon followed Elisabeth's screaming on the top of her lungs. From the look of it the halflings have snapper her right wrist. Kathia flinched and hissed uncomfortably, feeling the pain that Elisabeth went through.

The halfling that was standing up said, "Oh quite your whining, it was only a wrist. Not like we went and rip out your damn heart from your chest or was carving you alive, which come to think of it, would not be a half bad idea." Then it turned towards Kathia and continued, "But time is running short and we cannot have his baiter teleport away before her big role now, can we. Zu, you can have your fun with her, I'll collect the other one, so she can't escape from her."

As he approached her, the girl stiffened in fear and cried, "No! Stay back!"

The halfling grinned evilly and said, "Now it's not very nice to leave without permission, so how about you wait for a little bit before he summons you." Before it raised a hand to her, it said to its comrade, "Hey Zu, it is okay if she was well, under?"

"No, as long as she is alive," Zu said back, keeping the struggling Elisabeth down.

"Well dear, luck is not on yo-" the halfling started to say before a strange sword came flying across the air.

"You will her alone," a boy-like voice echoed in the air.

"So it lives. Zu, I thought you killed that brat?"

Zu replied, "There was no pulse left in his body, it's not possible for him to have lived though that whole onslaught." Then he was soon caught off guard by another halfling appearing out of nowhere and it took a slash at Zu, causing him to jump off of Elisabeth and away from the new halfling.

"I told you, you will leave her alone," Van said as a pair of white angel dragon-like wings was now on his back. "I'm the one who will protect her." Kathia was shocked; the boy was a halfling all along? All this time she thought he was human. She didn't know that he would be part dragon. Now this changes her perspective on the boy and not for definitely not for the better.

Elisabeth was help up by Van, who also looked shocked at his new appearance. "Take it easy, Elisabeth. You have done your job of protecting her until now. I will take over from here for the time being," he said, sounding a bit sadden by this.

Elisabeth looked at him and asked, "Van, what did you do?"

"That is not worth talking about, but my body will degrade soon because of this power, but," Van said as he looked at his hand as it swelled with a bright light aura. As the woman closed his fist into a ball, he continued, "I will use it to succeed with the job I was assigned to, and that will be to protect Kathia until she is returned home, as instructed by Spinx."

"What happened, Van?" Elisabeth asked.

"Spinx is dead. There is no good part of him left to stand against the evil soul fragment. I will see that his last wishes are seen though," he said as he turned his attention back to the halfling. Elisabeth looked down to the ground as she heard the news.

The first thought that came to Kathia's mind was, *'He's gone... and I never got to thank him for everything he's done for me.'* The good Spinx had truly been a nice man and the girl regretted getting

paranoid and thinking bad of him.

Zu readied his dagger as he asked, "Oh, how touching. The loss of your master made you closer. If it makes you feel better, we can reunite you two with him? Hm?" The other halfling readied its spells.

"No. I will send you both back to hell from which you crawled out of," Van said as he floated a few inches off the ground, yet the wings were not flapping or moving at all. The boy vanished into the air and reappeared in front of Zu, catching him off guard as Van punched him square in the chest, releasing a large amount of light into Zu's chest, causing him to fly back to the stairs. Zu coughed up blood when he hit the hard ground. The other halfling cast a fireball at Van at point-blank range, but the boy grabbed its hand with his open one and canceled its spell. With his other, he slashed with the second sword he had across its chest, dealing a very deep cut in its chest. Blood seemed to spill from the halfling's body as Van let go of its hand and spun, dealing another lethal blow to it next, slashing it clean open. He himself was covered in blood as the halfling he has slain fell to his feet.

The boy turned his attention back to Zu, who asked, "Damn you. How could you have taken a blast of that size and still live and still fight?" As he got up to his feet, he shouted, "It's un-human like, even a dragon could not withstand that blast."

Van did not waste time before he again vanished and reappeared back in front of the halfling, making quick work of him. As Zu fell to his blade, the boy said, "Because it's my own life energy that I was able to take on this form and stand for the moment."

The spell that was cast to track Axle now summoned a circle around Kathia, as Elisabeth fell to her knees and then soon to her side. It seemed the spell had found Axle and Elisabeth's life had faded from her body. Van looked at Kathia and said, "Sorry, Kathia, but you will be on your own from now on." He started to fade from existence.

The girl held back her disgust, masking her face with a plain emotionless one so as to avoid a conflict with him when she was just getting back to the real world. *'Yeah, no shit, freak,'* she thought. Then the girl was warped back to the living world.