

((Note: I updated the previous chapter to have Chase give an example of the Illustris Theocracy's ways when he's teaching Glacies, the Church of Light's priest & nuns scene in the crystal, the priests & nuns be included as targets along with the possessed teens, and up the number of hours to 4.))

A pair of teens and a ghost dog flew through the dark cosmic space that was the Ocean Between. Stars shined around them in the surrounding black skies. Sakura said to the knight beside her, "Hey Nemo, let's go to Halloween Town. I got to tell Jack that I'll be borrowing Zero for longer." She also needed the help of a certain scientist for this quest, too.

Nemo replied, "Sure thing, lead the way."

Unfortunately, Sakura was unsure of where to go from the Land of Departure to get to her home world. She could easily get them lost and they would be looking for the place for days. The bat stayed quiet about her uncertainty for she did not want to bring discouragement to the knight. She prayed to the light to send them some luck that would enable them to get there soon. They flew past a cluster of floating asteroids and over a huge piece of a floating land that was patched with crystals. Soon, Zero spotted a planet in the shape of a giant jack-o-lantern crowned with Christmas Town and its snow. On its bottom was Halloween Town. The dog barked out in excitement for they were going home. Sakura smiled at him, "Yes, I see it too, buddy. We're almost home."

Nemo asked, "That does look like a Halloween Town, but what's with the festive house and snow?" These oddities seemed out of place for a world that was supposed to be about Halloween. Did that world celebrate Christmas, too?

Sakura smiled at him, knowing they were going to visit Sandy Claws eventually. She assured, "You'll see when we get there." They flew towards the planet and landed right into the plaza of the dark and spooky town. The bat transformed back to normal as Nemo got off his glider and dismissed both it and his armor. The world's magic had transformed him into a devil.

The boy took in the sight of his surroundings, observing every structure, object and inhabitant he saw. He commented, "So that's Halloween Town. I figured it would be like this." Then he noticed his reflection in a cafe's window and gasped in shock. He reared back from the window and cried, "Gah! What just happened to me?!" His skin was red, his clothes turned dark, he now wore spiked wristbands, and he had horns and a tail.

Sakura answered, "You've been made to look like us. Worlds like this does that to some people."

Nemo frowned, "Sheesh, this world should leave that for October." Both Sakura and Zero smiled in amusement at his comment.

They went on their way to Jack's house with Sakura leading the way for she was the one most familiar with the streets here. Once they got there, she rang the doorbell and waited for her skeleton friend to answer it. Not a moment too soon, he opened the door and greeted, "Hello." He saw who his visitors were and smiled, "Sakura, you're back! Come on in! Your new pal's welcome, too." They entered his home, stepping into the living room, and shut the door behind them. The Pumpkin King asked the girl, "So, did you stop that awful lady, LimeX, yet?"

Sakura answered, "We did, but now we got more bad guys to face. I hope you don't mind if we borrow Zero for a while longer."

"Not at all," Jack gladly permitted. He was happy to help any way he can. Then he asked, "So who are the new villains this time?"

Nemo answered, "They're the Church of Light. They're going to send this universe six feet under if they don't put a stop to them."

Sakura said, "We need to get to the mayor and warn him. Is he busy right now?"

Jack offered, "I'm not sure, but I can go check."

The girl said, "We'll go with you, too, if you're going to the mayor's office." That way, they can save time rather than wait for the skeleton to return and answer.

The skeleton beamed, "Well then, it's nice to have some company along the way. Alright then, we'll go together." They left the house and went on their way to the mayor's office. After getting there, Jack knocked on door and called, "Oh Mr. Mayor, Sakura and her friend have something they need to tell you."

Pretty soon, the mayor came outside with his happy peach-colored face on front to greet his visitors with. He greeted, "Hello again, Sakura. And good to see your friend, too. What can I help you with?"

Sakura replied, "Actually, we're here to help you and our world. You see? There's this Church of Light and they're trying to get rid of all the darkness in all the worlds' and people's hearts."

The mayor asked, "Get rid of the darkness?" He wondered why would anybody get rid of something so vital.

The girl continued explaining, "It may sound good, but it's going to mess us up all real bad. And I mean apocalypse-bad." She emphasized the last two words to show that she meant serious business.

Nemo told him what she meant, "The universe's going to get blasted by the light."

The mayor's head spun to the opposite side, so that the white gloomy face was in front to do the talking. He worried, "Oh dear, that doesn't sound very good. What can we do to stop this?"

Sakura gave him the solution, "Tell the whole town to keep an eye out for people in white robes or with creepy blank eyes, especially if they're wearing something to hide their faces." Speaking of whom, "By the way, there's been no one like that here, right?"

The mayor said, "Not that I know of, but I'll be sure to tell everyone to look out for these villains and capture them." Then he went outside with his microphone to alert the townsfolk.

With Halloween Town made aware of the situation, the girl said, "Alright, now we need to tell Sandy Claws and the other holiday leaders, too."

"Sandy Claws?" Nemo asked in confusion, though she probably meant Santa Claus.

She said, "You know those red houses you saw? That's Christmas Town. All the holidays are here in this world. I'll show you how to get there, but not now. We need to go see Dr. Finklestein. We're going to need his help."

The boy asked, "What can he do?"

The girl told him, "You'll see." They went on their way to the laboratory.

Along the way, they passed the mayor who was on a podium before a crowd of citizens and issuing an alert to them about the Church. His gloomy face added, "For the protection of this town, I shall have guards stationed everywhere to keep an eye out for these miscreants."

Sakura and friends eventually reached the lab and went inside after knocking on the door and being granted permission to enter. Dr. Finklestein rolled the wheels of his wheelchair to the widest space of the experimentation room, where his visitors can have room to see him. He turned around and asked, "So, what can I help you with this time?"

The girl said, "Remember those black potions I asked you to make for those kids?"

The scientist asked, "Yes, what about them?"

"Can you make a lot more of them? My friends and I are going to meet a lot of people in need of them."

Dr. Finklestein assumed, "What's this? That no-good harlot has taken darkness out more people's hearts, too?" He heard about the incident from Jack a while ago.

Sakura shook her head and hands as she told him, "No no no, it's not LimeX this time, doc."

"It's not?" asked the confused man.

Nemo said, "It's the Church of Light. They're sending their girls to destroy the darkness in everybody's hearts in every world they go to."

Finklestein said, "It looks like I got a lot of potions to make. Alright, I'll get to work on them. You younglings sit tight and wait. I'll have them ready as soon as I can." He wheeled himself over to the chemical room.

Sakura appreciated, "Thanks doc! We're counting on you." The potions brought Lock, Shock and Barrel to normal, so it should work the same way for the purified people after they have extracted the light.

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Meanwhile elsewhere, an olive-skinned girl lied face up on her bed, sleeping in a perpetual coma. An illness she suffered had rendered her in this state. To anyone, it seems likely that she would never wake up again. But there was one person who still had hope for her recovery. And that man was the father who swung open the door and went inside, carrying bowl of his home-made medicine that he hoped would cure his beloved daughter. He was a tired-looking man whose body was nearly bone-thin. The haggard man went to his sleeping and dying daughter and pulled up a stool to sit next to her bed. He murmured to her, "Here you go, Safiya. I brought you another kind of medicine. I just hope it will work a miracle this time." Though for all he knew; this cure might as well fail like all the others before it. But regardless, he still tried for his daughter's sake. He brought the bowl to Safiya's mouth and used two of his fingers to open them. He poured the contents down into the mouth until the bowl was empty. Right after that, a big swirling pool of darkness appeared behind the man in the room. Rising out of it was a black jackal god with golden eyebrows and was adorned with a majestic-looking blue & gold nemes, anklets, bracelets, armbands with blue diamonds, tail bands of different shapes, and a necklace all of the same colors. He also wore a gold & black neckpiece with two hanging appendages and a white skirt hanging from a golden belt with a gold armor piece to its left. On the center of the belt was a patterned gold & blue loin cloth. The father looked behind to see the deity standing in this very room. He asked, "My lord Anubis, what brings you here?" Normally, gods would not pay a visit to mortals unless it was important.

Anubis answered in a voice befitting any god, "I have come here to claim Safiya's soul."

The man was confused as he assumed, "But I thought you only take souls once they die." Did that mean it was all over for Safiya?

The god of death confirmed, "Indeed, it is true that I bring the deceased souls to the Duat upon departure. But your daughter has been alive longer than she should be. She needs to leave this world."

The man was not having it. No, he cannot let his precious daughter depart so soon. He cried, "No!" With hands clasped together and shaking as his knee went down, the father pleaded, "Please Anubis, you can't take my daughter away!"

Anubis asked, "You would go against a god? That is an act of blasphemy."

The man assured him, "I am a devout believer of the gods, lord Anubis. But please! Please don't take my daughter's life away. I beg you! I can still save her!" He was desperate to keep the girl alive.

But Anubis shook his head, declining the man's request. He told the mortal, "Your daughter is suffering in her coma; she needs to die to end her torment for good."

The father begged still, "But your godliness, I love my daughter so. She's the only family I have left after my wife passed away. Please spare her!"

The god once again declined him, "I cannot. Now please, move out the way so that I will take her to the Duat." He approached the bed as he lightly shoved the man out of the way. The father watched in horror as the deity held his hand over Safiya's chest.

That was when a mysterious speaker said, "I won't allow it!"

The father looked to the voice's owner as Anubis turned his head and demanded, "Who goes there?!"

They saw a man wearing white clothes marked with gold lines and patterns that resembled a bishop outfit. His skin was white, and his hair, beard and mustache were all brown. He had just stepped out of a Corridor of Light. The bishop told the god sternly, "You have no right to take away people from their loved ones."

Anubis refuted, "Of course, I do. I am a god of death! And if you, outsider, wish to get in my way, then I shall punish you." No mortal, whoever they are, shall defy an Egyptian god and go without consequence.

The fearless bishop challenged, "By the light of the glorious Nuru, I dare you to try." He summoned a bunch of Soldiers to engage in combat. They consisted of Purities, Shines and Ruby Suns.

The god looked at these creatures with his teeth gritting like he was on edge. *'What?!'* he thought. These were creatures of the great goddess of light and that mean serious business.

The bishop pointed at Anubis and ordered, "Attack!" The Soldiers immediately went to assault the death god. Anubis swung his scepter at the white creatures, hitting any one that so much as dare come within his range. One of the Ruby Suns took a different approach as it ran around the god to get behind him while he was distracted by its allies. After getting to a good spot, the Ruby Sun launched a fireball at Anubis's back. The god was burned as he yelled out a pained scream and hunched forward. This created

an opening for the other Souldiers to get in and attack. The Purities and Shines pummeled him together with punches and kicks as the Ruby Suns burned him in places he was not attacked with pyrokinesis in the forms of small flames. The overwhelmed god gritted his teeth and grunted under the assault of his enemies. Luckily, he a trick to free him from this torture. He blasted them away with his dark aura, sending the Souldiers flying into walls and objects. Then Anubis got up and unleashed a pair of lasers from his amber eyes at the nearest Souldiers. He destroyed two of them with each shot, but a third flew out of the way and the laser nearly hit Baki, who jolted in fright, as it left a scorch mark on the wall behind him. The god realized the fight here could endanger the poor father, he needed to take this battle somewhere else. So he escaped through the glassless window and ran out into the streets to lure the Souldiers away. It looks like Anubis would to have to claim Safiya another time. He will be back and he will not rest until she was in the afterlife.

The relentless Souldiers pursued him through the streets as the onlookers outside watched their god flee the white creatures. One woman shouted in shock, "Aieeee! They're harming our god!" A few brave men went after the Souldiers with their keyblades, but a couple Ruby Suns cast their fireballs at them and lit the men on fire. The men dropped their weapons as they flailed their arms and cried out in pain as the flames burned them.

Back at the mud house, the Church of Light bishop told the father, "Don't listen to Anubis; you mustn't give up on your daughter for there is always a chance that she will wake up one day."

The father replied, "That's what I truly believe. That's why I work hard every day to ensure that Safiya lives long enough to one day see daylight again."

The bishop smiled and commended, "I admire your dedication, sir. And I wish you good luck on bringing her back to full health."

The father returned a small smile, "Thanks, I hope the day will come when my daughter will smile and walk the streets again." He pictured that very scene in his mind with her lovely little smile.

"And it will by light's good grace." Then the bishop left the room, leaving the man to his own devices, and went out the house. Just as he started walking the streets, the bishop hummed as he pondered about the death god, "Hmm..." He thought, *'Anubis and the rest of the pantheon here in this world will be a threat to Nuru's plans. I must subdue him before he foils things here.'* He hoped his Souldiers will have defeated the god by now.

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Zephyr and Leohart rode their keyblade gliders through the Ocean Between. Earlier, they made the first stop at Radiant Garden to leave a note to Zephyr's parents that their son was going on another mission. The boy wondered what his folks will think of him constantly going on dangerous quests. They also informed Amelia that Glacies will be gone for a while to be spy on the Church. Naturally, the mother was

worried about her daughter being in enemy territory, but Leohart assured her that they and the others will do everything they can to keep her safe. The team went to one of the nearest worlds, which was a desert planet with an Ancient Egyptian-like design to it. They flew into the world's atmosphere and descended down towards the land within the city below them.

Zephyr looked around at his surroundings in curiosity and wonder. He processed the familiarity of the culture as he saw the mudbrick houses, the olive and tan skins of the natives, the clothes they wear and the palm trees. He had seen all these in a picture book before. He asked, "Wow, is this Egypt?"

Leohart confirmed, "It is, and this world is only a piece of the country." The other Egyptian worlds were scattered elsewhere in the Ocean Between, probably somewhere far from here. "But we're not here to sightsee. We must seek the pharaoh of this world and warn them about the Church of Light." The task always came first before the trivial stuff.

Hitomi felt the scorching heat of this world burning her skin as a result of the sunlight that was harsh in this world. "It's hot," she commented her displeasure.

Zephyr shared the same feeling, too. "Yeah, I know," he agreed. He made a small grin to make light of it, "This could be a free sauna for anyone who wants it. Good thing we're wearing short sleeves." Seeing Leohart in his long-sleeve robes made the boy feel hotter than ever. The poor man must have been heating badly under his outfit, but he did not seem to be bothered by the temperature. The man was just as stoic as always.

They walked through the streets as they headed towards the largest building in sight that loomed over all the others and was far away on the horizon. There was no doubt that was where the pharaoh resided. Along the way, they came across two men sitting outside a mudbrick house, having a conversation. The bald one with the circle beard shook his head sadly and said, "I just don't know what to do, Tau. I've tried every medicine that I could think of and none of them seems to work. It almost seems so hopeless that Anubis showed up in my home and tried to take Safiya."

The curly-haired man known as Tau looked hesitant to say something at first until he got the courage to reply, "Well Baki, if Anubis showed up, then maybe it's time to give up on her." He did not look happy to say this, but he had to anyway.

"What?!" Baki looked at him as if he was crazy and cried, "Tau, you know I can't do that! Safiya means the world to me!" His tone calmed down slightly as he continued, "Besides, someone came into my home and told me not to give up. He said there was always a chance that she would wake up one day." He vowed in determination, "So I'll wait for that day to come, no matter what."

Tau commented, "You sound very hopeful on that."

The father confirmed, "Of course, I am. I must have it for Safiya." Then he asked, "Anyway, do you have any medicine or money to spare? I'll pay you back when I can."

The curly-haired man shook his head, "Sorry old friend, I don't have any right now."

Baki let out a sigh before saying, "Then it looks like we'll have to go back to the oasis for the ingredients. I know it's a long way from here, but that's one of my sources for what I need." Zephyr felt bad for the father and his plight. He pitied the man and wished he could help them save the girl, but he and his team have more important things to do. Leohart would not let him prioritize something less over the fate of the universe.

Tau offered to his friend, "I'll go to the oasis for you. You can stay here and watch over your daughter."

Baki smiled and obliged, "Thanks Tau, I shall wait for your return." The curly-haired man walked away and ventured through the streets on his way out of the city. At the same time, the father went inside his house and went into his daughter's room. He placed a hand on her forehead and told her, "Hang in there, Safiya. I know you will wake up something."

The bedridden girl looked calm and peaceful in her sleep to any eyes watching her. But inside her mind, she was in a world of total darkness. There was absolutely nothing around her and it was driving her insane. She had been feeling lonely and trapped within this empty place. Safiya would constantly say things like, "Someone...help... I don't want to be here anymore... I'm so lonely...I want out!" She had been stuck like this and there was no one to help her.

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The team reached the palace entrance where standing still at both sides of the wall's opening were two royal guards. One of the men raised his open hand to gesture them to stop as he demanded, "Halt! Who goes there?"

"We're uh..." Zephyr started as he tried to find the right words to explain to the guards, so that they can get in easily.

Leohart continued for him, "I'm Leohart and these two are my apprentices. We would like to request an audience with your pharaoh. We have an important message for him that needs to be heard. So if your ruler isn't busy, may we please enter?"

The guard said, "Very well, I shall take you to him." He gestured with a wave of his hand and said, "Right this way." The team followed the man over to the large mudbrick building that was decorated with the designs of this culture. They went up the stairs and went past the columns that stood before the entrance. After they went inside, the guard lead them over to the throne room where the pharaoh sat

and looked at his guests expectantly. The guard said to his ruler, "My pharaoh, these people want to speak to you."

The pharaoh responded, "Okay then, return to your post. I shall hear them out." The entrance guard bowed before returning to his post. The pharaoh addressed the team, "Greetings, visitors! You are in the presence of King Nebemakhet. Tell me, to what purpose do I owe you my time."

Leohart responded, "You see, your leadership. We have come here to warn you about an organization who threatens this world's balance."

King Nebemakhet's brown eyes raised in alert and asked, "Threaten? Who would seek to do such a thing?"

The keyblade master answered, "The Church of Light. They're going to do this by sending light into its heart to lean its affinity heavily towards that element."

The pharaoh got mad and clenched his fist. He yelled, "How absurd of them! Darkness is a vital element to this world. To be rid of it is asinine."

Leohart agreed, "That I concur. That's not only the only thing you should worry about. The Church is also purifying people's hearts of darkness and replacing them with light. They intend to these things to every world out there."

The pharaoh became more angry, "This is outrageous! The Church will be punished for this. They dare to defile Waset? Then they'll earn the wrath of its pharaoh and the gods here." That was when he shouted, "Guards!" Many of the palace's guards came rushing into the throne room at the call of their ruler. They stood before the pharaoh and awaited his order. The pharaoh told the keyblade master, "Tell these men what you know about the Church, so that they can apprehend and kill them."

Leohart repeated the same things he told the pharaoh to the guards. He also described attires to search for, "Those who do the purifying will have blank eyes or wear something to conceal their faces. Those who go to places of dead will wear white and gold outfits. Remember to look for these things when hunting the Church of Light."

The pharaoh told the guards, "Now that you know what you need to know. Go out and protect Waset! Relay all this to the other soldiers as well."

"Yes, pharaoh!" the guards obeyed before they left to get started on the job.

With that done, Leohart said to his apprentices, "Come, you two. Now we must check on the state of this world and make sure nothing is out of the ordinary."

"Yes, master." "Yes, papa." Zephyr and Hitomi said simultaneously. Then they left the building and summoned their gliders to ride on and fly. The little girl used her senses to spot the location of the heart.

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The team soared over the sandy desert. They spotted a line of trees up ahead. An oasis! Zephyr suggested, "Hey, let's see if we can find the heart there."

"Very well then," Leohart replied, accepting the decision to land. They descended down to the edge of the oasis that was thick with palm trees and tropical bushes. They entered the jungle and trekked through it straight forward until they came to the end where they found a huge and deep lake surrounded by trees. It was a lot of water for an oasis, which might have been a rare thing.

Zephyr was amazed to see this kind of oasis. "Whoa... I didn't think there'd be an oasis like that." He always pictured oases to be a lot smaller than that like the ones he saw in the books.

The master said, "There are all kinds of oases, Zephyr. They can vary in sizes and forms."

"Amazing," the boy commented softly in wonder. They trekked through the desert jungle as Hitomi kept her senses alert for the heart's place. A world's heart tends to change locations every now and then in its planet. Wherever it was today may not be in the same place tomorrow.

Soon, the team encountered a curly-haired man rummaging through the bushes for something. He let out a short hum and then said, "Nope, not here." He got out of the bushes and turned around to see the trio. He greeted with a small smile, "Oh hello there. Nice day, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Zephyr replied. He recognized that man; he was one of the pair they passed by earlier. "You're the guy who's helping his friend save that girl." Leohart and Hitomi looked to the boy, wondering when did he know this fact about the stranger.

Even Tau was surprised at this, but he calmly said, "Ah, you overheard our conversation, didn't you? Yes, I am he. Baki, my friend, has a daughter who's been bed-ridden for days. He once had a wife, but sadly, she passed away. Now his only family left is on the verge of joining her."

Everyone felt sorry for Baki as Zephyr murmured, "That's pretty sad."

"It is," Tau replied with a sentimental frown. "Baki has been doing everything he can to save Safiya and working hard at it, too. Well, too hard for his own good. Sometimes, he would skip meals, sleep and chores just for another attempt at saving her."

Leohart questioned, "If nothing he's done has worked so far, wouldn't it be best to have her checked by a doctor?"

Tau said, "Oh he's tried and every one of them couldn't find out what's wrong with her and or, more so, cure her. So Baki's pretty much on his own there, though I do help him out sometimes. But I do wonder if we'll ever see Safiya wake up. It doesn't look like we've made any progress so far." The curly-haired man looked doubtful about the probability of having a happy ending in the future.

Zephyr thought about Baki's strong conviction and related to it. If that had been a friend like Glacies or Hitomi, he would fight to make sure they recover. The boy said, "Hey, don't be so down. Your friend wants to see Safiya walk again, doesn't he? You got to help him make that dream come true. You should have hope for him and for her." Then he offered, "Tell you what? We can help you find the cure."

Leohart immediately told the boy, "Zephyr, you can't make promises you can't keep. We have more important things to attend to; we must focus on the task at hand." As much as he pitied Baki's situation, this was trivial compared to the fate of the universe.

But the boy assured, "I know, master. But Chase says we only need four hours till we come back. Besides, while we're searching for the Church's damages, we might find some ingredients along the way."

The master insisted, "Maybe so, but still, you must keep your priorities straight. The hearts of this world and the people come first."

Tau gave Zephyr an appreciative smile, "Thanks, kid. But you don't need to worry about us, if you've got big stuff you need to take care of. Baki and I got it handled."

Zephyr insisted, "It's okay, I don't mind. I can do both. So, what herbs are you looking for?"

Tau answered, "Well, there's cumin, aloe vera, basil, and myrrh." He gave short descriptions of each one for the boy to memorize when on his search. The curly-haired man said, "So if you ever come across these herbs, go to where you saw Baki and I and send them to him at the door; that's where he lives. And be sure to tell him I sent you. The man's not keen on visits from strangers right now."

Zephyr nodded, "Got it. I hope I find some."

"Me too, kid," Tau replied. Then they went their separate ways about their business.

As the team walked, Hitomi asked the boy, "Zephyr, do you really think you can find those herbs?"

Zephyr said, "Well, I got to at least try. I just want to make sure Baki gets his daughter back. I don't like people being sad all the time, so I try to help out anyone in need. You know? Be a hero."

"You're nice," the little girl commented in admiration beneath her stoic tone.

Zephyr made a small grin, "Thanks!" They kept on going as the boy kept an eye out for plants matching the descriptions of the herbs. They crossed the forested middle path that had another huge lake on the opposite side of the first one they saw. As they were getting closer to the end, strange sounds could be heard. The boy asked, "What was that?"

Leohart identified the noise as they got nearer, "Sounds like fighting; we should be careful." Shortly, a fireball flew towards them. Hitomi ducked as the males froze in their tracks with the boy letting out a startled cry. The fireball hit a tree and lit it ablaze on the spot it crashed into. Zephyr used an Aero spell to blow out the fire before it could spread throughout the oasis.

Hitomi noticed some figures made of light engaging another figure, whose energy source indicated it as a deity, past the coverings of the plants. She recognized the light beings, "Souldiers."

"Huh?" Zephyr asked before he and Leohart got a look at what the child was seeing. They saw a jackal-headed man fighting a pack of Souldiers that got him surrounded. He shot a pair of small lasers from his eyes at a flying Ruby Sun and destroyed it. Then he evaded a flying kick from a Purity before a couple of Shines jumped onto him from behind and pummeled his back. The boy cried, "He's in trouble! We got to help!" The team summoned their keyblades and the males rush to the end of the path to get to where Souldiers are. Hitomi stayed where she was at, but went a bit closer, so that she could aid her friends from afar better. As the jackal-headed man blasted the Shines off with his dark aura, Zephyr came at a Purity with a Sliding Dash, crashing into it with Spring Breeze's tip and knocking it several feet across the ground. A Ruby Sun cast a fireball at Leohart, but he used his Barrier Surge attack to block it and ram into the red-limbed creature. Hitomi used her Stop spell to freeze the Souldiers in time. The jackal-headed man rushed at the creatures and swung his scepter at each and every one of them. Earlier, he had killed some of these Souldiers and now he intended to finish the rest off. The lightbladers also struck at the Souldiers, too. Then they finished it off with their spells. Zephyr used Aerora to blow around at the surrounding creatures, while Leohart rained down lightning bolts with Thundera. The jackal-headed man used his own power in the form of sending mummy bandages over to the Souldiers and completely wrapping all of them inside their bond tombs. After the Stop spell wore off, the Souldiers felt the damages of the attacks done to them during their suspension. They screamed and thrashed around in their wrappings, in pain and confused as to how and when were they encased. With the snap of the jackal-headed man's fingers, the mummified creatures were set ablaze with darkness covering them and eating them alive.

The soldiers all cried out in agony as one screamed, "Oh Nuru!" Then they were consumed by the dark flames and destroyed, leaving behind dissipating particles of light.

The jackal-headed man turned to his rescuers and thanked them, "You have my gratitude for aiding me in this fight, mortals. May I know your names, so that I may remember your deed when you come to the

Duat?"

Zephyr gladly answered, "No problem, I'm Zephyr and this is Master Leohart. And-" He looked to where they left Hitomi at and saw that she was coming over to them, so he continued, "This is Hitomi."

Leohart, aware of the Egyptian pantheon's fancy and strange appearances, asked the jackal-headed man, "You must be one of the gods here. Might you be Anubis?"

Anubis confirmed, "Your guess is correct, Leohart. I am the god of death and embalming."

Zephyr recognized the god's name, "Wait, so you're the one who came to take Baki's daughter's soul?"

"Indeed," Anubis confirmed. "I was supposed to take her to Duat, but then a man in white appeared and sent his monsters to stop me."

Leohart asked, "A man in white, you say? It must be someone from the Church of Light." There was a good chance this Church member might still be here in this world. The team must scour the world for him.

The death god said, "He did not say where he was from, but perhaps he might be one of them."

The keyblade master asked, "Do you know where you've last seen him?" A known location would be a good place to start the hunt.

Anubis answered, "Yes, I do. He was over at Baki's home. I can take you there, because I must go back and take Safiya's soul to the afterlife."

Zephyr tried to talk the god out of this, "Now hold on, Baki really wants to keep his daughter alive. You can't just take people away like that!"

But Anubis firmly told him, "If you knew the condition of that girl's body, then you would not be speaking these words."

The boy looked at him in confusion and asked, "What condition?" It sounded like Safiya was in a worse predicament than he thought. If so, then it must mean...

Anubis murmured in a serious tone, "Safiya is inflicted with a fatal disease. Already, it has destroyed a part of her brain; she will never wake up again."

"What?!" Zephyr cried out in shock. Leohart and Hitomi felt sorry for poor girl.

The god continued, "Baki has tried for a long time to heal her, but her sickness never improved. Eventually, it got worse to the point of coma. Even the Esuna spells have lost their effect on relieving the symptoms. Now her heart is in torment for having being trapped in a mindless shell for a long time. This suffering is what drew me to her, to have me end it all for good. I am here to bring death to her, not out of cruelty, but out of compassion. I need to save her from the pain and to save Baki from his wasted time." The last part brought back the image of how sickly and weary the man looked in the boy's mind. The father must have been starving himself, worrying over his daughter.

Zephyr frowned and murmured, "Poor Baki. He's not going to be happy to hear this." He pitied the man as he could picture his despair from learning the revelation.

Anubis said, "I would have told him this, if that man in white had not intervened. Baki needs to understand that no amount of medicine will save a dying person, if it is impossible to do so."

The boy frowned, "So you're pretty much telling him to give up."

Anubis explained, "I understand the fact that many of you mortals have an aversion to death and I don't blame you for it. But death is a necessity in the universe." Then he asked, "Answer me this, Zephyr. Is it better to suffer for all eternity with no chance of recovery? Or would you prefer to die and be released of the pain, so that you may live on in the comfort of the afterlife?"

The boy pictured himself in a situation where he was dying painfully for a long time. He has heard of people begging to be killed when they were in such a state, but he was not sure what kind of fate he wanted for himself. Death was a scary thing for he would miss out on his dreams and all the good things he had yet to see and do in his life. But eternal torture was just as bad, too. The boy answered uncertainly, "That's kind of hard to answer."

Leohart said to the god, "It depends upon the person; some might brave the pain, while others... you know." He was hinting about suicide, but he did not want to say it in front of Hitomi. For she might get some wrong ideas when dealing with hurtful situations.

Then they heard rustling of plants nearby and saw Tau pushing himself through the thick path of plants, carrying herbs and muttering to himself, "Okay, I got what I need, I think... Boy, someone else who really needs these could be using them right now." Then he noticed the group in front of him and stopped. "Hey guys, I found some herbs. Did you get any?"

Zephyr shook his head, "Not yet, but..."

The boy was about to tell Tau the bad news, but the man saw Anubis and said, "Oh, lord Anubis! What a surprise to see you here. I take it this is about Safiya?" He wore a look, expecting something uneasy. He was right to feel that way for the group had something he needed to hear.

Leohart regretfully relayed the news to him, "It is; Anubis told us just now about her condition and that no treatment of any kind can save her."

Tau was stunned, "What? Seriously?" Everyone nodded silently. The man shook his head, looking at the herbs in his hand. He frowned, "I guess all of Baki's efforts had been for naught." He tossed away the herbs, knowing now that they were useless. "Well, I suppose we better go send her to the afterlife."

Anubis agreed, "Indeed. We must return to Waset and bring Safiya to the Duat."

Zephyr thought, *'Maybe, but will Baki accept her death so easily?'* He had not known the father long, but from what he saw and heard, the man would resist this kind of fate for his daughter. The boy would not blame him for that, understanding well how precious life is, especially those of loved ones.

Anubis transformed into his giant jackal form, which was bigger than a horse. He lowered himself to grant passage to any who wish to ride him. "Come," he said. "I'll take you back there."

Tau climbed onto the god's back and then looked to the other humans. He asked, "You aren't coming?"

Leohart answered, "I'm afraid not, sir. We have work that needs to be taken care of."

The Egyptian recalled that the team had their own purpose and replied, "Oh right! Well good luck with whatever it is you're doing." Anubis got up and ran with his four legs taking him through the oasis and across the desert.

After they were gone, they started to discuss the Church member. Zephyr said, "So the Church is here in this world, right? How do we find them?"

Leohart suggested, "Since we saw the Souldiers here, we should check the oasis for his whereabouts. He could be nearby."

The boy replied, "Good idea, let's get him." They began to search everywhere in the oasis to look for the Church man. As they went on for a while, Zephyr saw a tree with some orange fruits known as persimmons. He thought to share some of these fruits with his friend and his teacher. So as they went past the tree, the boy grabbed three from it. He looked to his teammates and offered, "Master Leohart, Hitomi, want to try these fruits? They could be tasty."

Hitomi held her hands out together and replied, "Sure."

The keyblade master said, "I suppose one on the go can't hurt." Zephyr gave each one a persimmon and they all ate the fruits.

Hitomi tasted the mild & sweet flavor that resembled that of honey. Liking it, she asked the boy, "Zephyr, can I have more?"

Zephyr answered, "Sure, as soon as I see another one." They kept on going through the oasis as their search continued.

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Anubis ran fast across the sandy desert under the glaring rays of the sun up high. His sleek, black fur gleamed from the sunlight. As he was rushing back to the city of Waset, the god suddenly sensed a disturbance happening somewhere in this world. He let out a growl of discontent. Tau heard that and asked, "Lord Anubis, what's wrong?"

The giant jackal slowed down to a stop and answered, "I feel something is happening in the Duat and Aaru. As if the dead are being stolen away." As the god of death, it was his role to guide the departed souls to the afterlife where he would judge them and determine if they were worthy enough to get their eternal peace. If there was something preventing that, he must go and stop it.

Tau was surprised, "No way, how?"

Anubis answered, "I do not know. I will take you home first, then I shall look into the source of this problem." He resumed his way to Waset, so that he would not take the mortal into any possible dangers the disturbance might have.

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Inside the pyramid was a burial chamber that belonged to a king that lived years ago. The tomb that had once been sealed closed was now open with the cover having been slid off to the side. A bright light flashed out of the tomb, coming from a portal that led to the Duat. The bishop came out of the tomb and the Duat's portal, which had been forced open by the Corridor of Light, sealed itself. The mummy in the tomb can be seen again now that the portal did not cover it. The bishop said to himself, "That was a lot of wandering souls I gathered. Lady Nuru will be pleased to have a lot of Souldiers in her army. We can use them against the gods in this world if need be." Then he thought about a certain god, "Speaking of, I wonder if those Souldiers took care of Anubis. I hope they have them defeated. I better go check." He closed the tomb before he went to leave the pyramid to look for the death god. Upon exiting the building, the bishop saw a giant black jackal running towards him from the horizon. Bewildered by the unusual sight of the creature, he murmured, "What's this?"

The jackal got close enough to a stop and then a shroud of darkness covered it as shrunk down and transformed into Anubis. The god held his scepter straight out, pointing it at the bishop, and accused the man harshly, "I sensed something going on in the Duat and Aaru, and I have a bad feeling that you were

involved. Tell me, I demand to know what were you doing there!"

The unfazed man answered truthfully without any fear of the god, "Why I was merely gathering new servants for the great goddess, Nuru. You see? The Church of Light needs to grow our army as much as possible to stop all who would get in the way of our ultimate goal." He smiled slyly, "And that includes you and other lesser gods like you."

Anubis looked at him sternly with a hard frown, "And what is that goal?" He had a feeling it was nothing good.

The bishop answered, "To rid the universe of all traces of darkness and make it all light."

The god swung his scepter to the side as he scolded, "This is madness! You should not destroy the darkness. The universe needs it to exist the way it is!"

But the man disagreed, "The way the universe is, it's heavily flawed and will only continue to bring more suffering. That's why the Church and I are working to rectify that."

Anubis frowned, "You are a foolish man if you truly believe this. I will put a stop to you."

The bishop smiled confidently, "Let's see if you can." Then he summoned a bunch of Shines, Purities and a couple of Musclemen to the fight. The last summoned Souldier to appear was a giant Sphinx-like creature.

Though the souls' appearances were changed, Anubis could easily identify which person they used to be. Looking at the Sphinx, who was the most notable out of all of the Souldiers, the god said to him, "You! You're the soul of one of the pharaohs who died a long time ago."

The Sphinx sounded regretful to be engaged in combat, "Anubis, I have always been one of your most faithful worshipers, but now I must serve Nuru." Even the other Souldiers did not want to fight the god, but their new hard-wired instincts told them to fight for their new goddess.

Anubis was angry at how these poor souls were forced into doing these biddings against their will. He yelled, "You! If this is how your goddess intends to bring about her paradise, then she deserves no fruition." He got into his fighting stance, ready to fight the bishop and hopefully free these Souldiers from their servitude, so that they may return to the afterlife.

The bishop told him, "If this is how you feel, then you will be eliminated." Then he pointed at the god as he ordered the creatures, "Souldiers, attack!" The Shines, Purities and the Musclemen all charged at the god with the intent to fight. Anubis whacked away the lesser Souldiers who got too close to him, but then a Muscleman punched him hard with its huge fist, sending the god flying across the ground. Then the Sphinx fired a laser from the crystal on his nemes.

Anubis saw the beam coming at him and narrowly rolled out of the way to avoid the shot. The blast sent a powerful shockwave that sent the god flying cross the ground as he let out a cry, "Gah!" He fell face flat on the ground and the Shines & Purities went to pummel him with their fists and feet. The god was hurting all over before he covered himself in a dark aura that blasted the attacking Souldiers away off him. He got up and scowled at the white creatures, ready to take more hits as he dished out some of his own against them.

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The team searched the oasis for a while, but they were coming up empty-handed with no sign of the church member anywhere in this place. Zephyr was getting tired of walking around on this futile search. He complained, "Ugh, just where could he be? We looked all over and we can't find him!"

Leohart suggested, "It's possible may have left this world by now. If so, then we have no more business in this world." They will just have to either return to the Land of Departure or spend a minor amount of time in another world to fill up the last hour.

The boy frowned, "I sure hope we didn't miss him. Who knows how many Souldiers he's made." The innocent dead should not be made into weapons for someone's else like this. They should be at peace in the afterlife. It disturbed him how a supposedly good organization would force people like that.

The man replied, "Me too, Zephyr. The quicker we find him the better." Then Hitomi saw a great light in the distance and looked far off into the space outside the oasis. The silhouette of light was hanging on the horizon. Her father noticed her staring at a certain direction and asked her, "What is it, Hitomi?"

The girl answered, "Souldier, a strong one."

The males looked off into the distance, past the trees, and saw silhouettes of a certain jackal-headed god fighting a large sphinx-like Souldier, who swiped his claw at him. The god evaded before he was punched down by a Muscleman. Seeing him in danger, Zephyr cried, "That's Anubis! We got to go help him!" He ran towards the fight as the others followed him.

Leohart thought, *'Perhaps we'll find the Church of Light over there this time. My daughter said this large Souldier was strong. We had best be careful.'*

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By now, Anubis has eliminated most of the Souldiers. The last Muscleman came down at him from the air with a fist punching down towards him. The god evaded it and swung his scepter hard at the muscular Souldier, destroying it as it dissipated into vanishing light particles. The only creature left now was the Sphinx and he was the toughest of them all. The Sphinx had given the god some trouble in this

fight. And if that was not bad enough, the bishop himself had participated in the battle as well, mostly using his ranged attacks. He had prepared his shotlock power to use against Anubis and sent out a bunch of homing light shards that flew to him. The god was stabbed by the sharp, radiant shards pierced into his skin. He released an agonized scream as his body jerked in reaction to the pain. Blood oozed out from his wounds and then the Sphinx swatted him down with his paw. Anubis struggled to pick himself up back on his feet. The pain and blood loss were weakening him. He was uncertain if he would be able to fight much longer. The Sphinx went over to him and raised his leonine paw over the god. He apologized, "Forgive me, Anubis." He brought paw down, aiming to crush the deity.

But then help arrived in the form of Zephyr rushing in and casting his healing magic, "Heal!" The Cure spell pushed the shards out of Anubis's body as it sealed up the wounds to prevent further bleeding. With his energy regained, the god zipped out of the way of his doom.

Anubis saw the boy running into the fight and said, "The boy; you're here!" Once again, he was grateful for his rescue.

Zephyr said to him, "We're here to help! We won't let the Church mess around with this world anymore."

Leohart and Hitomi were still running towards the scene. They were a distance behind since Zephyr was the fastest runner out of them. Leohart had to slow himself down to allow Hitomi to keep up, since she had shorter legs than the older ones. They were getting closer to the fight, but the man did not want his daughter being put in any danger. So he told her, "Stay here, Hitomi. Zephyr and I can handle this ourselves." The girl nodded obediently and got to a stop safe away from the battlefield. She looked at the giant Souldier and sensed its power. She knew her spells would be powerless against it, so sitting this fight out was the best course of option. Leohart went on to aid his other apprentice and Anubis.

The god appreciated the boy's alliance, "Thank you for your help again, Zephyr. Now let us defeat this madman!" The three males faced the bishop and the Sphinx, ready to fight.

The bishop looked at the newcomers, "New enemies, I see. It matters not how many I face; Lady Nuru will grant me victory!" Then he raised his keyblade and cast, "Bright Thundaga!" White lightning bolts, endued with the power of light, came crashing down towards his foes. Zephyr let out a frightened cry as he dodge-rolled and Leohart & Anubis ran out of the way before they could get zapped. The boy threw his wind-endued keyblade like a boomerang at the bishop. "Ow!" the man cried as the Aero Raid hit him. Leohart went to follow that up with his Barrier Surge. He cloaked himself with a barrier as he zipped towards the bishop with his keyblade ready to strike. But the Sphinx's giant paw swipe at him, breaking the barrier and knocking the master away to protect the bishop. Anubis fired a pair of laser eye shots at the bishop, burning holes on his robe and scorching the skin underneath as the man jerked and let out a pained shout. Then the god shot at the Sphinx's cheek, making the Souldier wince. The lightbladers cast their fire spells at the Sphinx's paws, Zephyr's Fire hitting the left and Leohart's Firaga hitting the right. The Sphinx's paws were set ablaze and he screamed aloud in pain. He beat them down

hysterically on the sand, trying to put out the fires. The bishop, still hurting from the laser burns, glared at the lightbladers. He stared at them for a short while before he pointed his keyblade at them and shouted, "Light!" A few shards were shotlock out of his weapon and they flew fast at the pair. The duo screamed as the shards sank deep into their flesh like knives. Hitomi saw the shards, heard their pain and gasped, worried and fearful for their wellbeing.

Anubis was annoyed with the bishop's particular attack. He had suffered this and he would not allow that to hurt his allies. "Enough of this!" he grunted before he slammed the bottom tip of his scepter on the sand. Bandages came out from under the startled bishop and began to wrap themselves around him like snakes. They completely covered him from head to toe. The bishop squirmed as he tries to wiggle and break himself free, but the bandages were too strong.

Zephyr and Leohart got back up and ran at the Sphinx as they held their keyblades with the intent to strike. The Souldier was still trying to pat out the flames before he noticed his enemies. When they got too close, he spun around full circle fast with his claw slashing and swatting them away. "Gah!" the pair cried out as they flew backwards before hitting the sand where they slid several feet. The claw had left tears on their clothes and bleeding cuts where it scratched.

Anubis enveloped the bishop with darkness and burned him. At first, the man screamed out his agony. But then rays of light flashed out through the tiny gaps of the bandages. They dispelled some of the darkness as the god watched in surprise, "What?!" Then an aura of light blasted through the bandages, tearing and burning most of them into small shreds. The light-covered bishop was now free from his prison. He zipped towards Anubis with a thrust crashing against his bare chest. "Gargh!" the god cried out upon being hit by the Light Dash. Anubis staggered before he regained his balance and clutched a hand to where he had been hit.

The bishop's light aura vanished as he boasted, "It'll take more than darkness to defeat me!"

The Sphinx had finally patted out the fires on his paws. Immediately after, Leohart held his keyblade up high for the spell, "Thunder!" A Thundera bolt shot down from the sky and struck the crystal on the forehead of the Souldier's nemes. The Sphinx screamed out in agony as he clutched his forehead, covering the crystal, with his paw.

Anubis and the bishop got locked in physical combat with each other, parrying and blocking each other's swings. If one were to watch this fight, it may seem like they were equally skilled. This went on for a little while until the bishop decided to dodge instead and then take advantage of the god's opening to unleash a flurry of swings from his light-imbued keyblade on him. This was a technique known as Light Arcanum.

Having seen the Souldier in great pain, Leohart looked to his apprentice and told him, "Zephyr, the Souldier's crystal is its weakspot. We must strike it there if we're to win."

"Okay, got it!" replied Zephyr before he saw Anubis getting pummeled hit after hit by the bishop. In an urgent to save the god, the boy said to his mentor, "Hold up, I'll be right there, master!" He ran over to the one-sided fight and cast at the bishop, "Confuse!" A white flash appeared and then a purple energy wave spread out towards the target, hitting him with a white swirl that grew larger into a purple & black form before evaporating.

The bishop's sense of reality became warped; the man started seeing the sky turning green, the sand becoming pink, and the world all around becoming trippy. The Sphinx was now a giant chimera in the form of flesh as opposed to soul and their enemies were nowhere to be found. The man was bewildered and frightened by what he saw. "Wh-what is this? The world has become distorted? Sweet Nuru, what is happening?!"

Anubis picked himself up and clutched his arm. He huffed and puffed as he gathered his strength and stamina to get back into the fight. Taking advantage of the status-inflicted bishop, he yelled and went to whack the man over the head with his scepter. The bishop fell down flat on his back and the god struck him over and over again, breaking his nose, leaving bruises and rendering the man unconscious.

With one foe out of the fight, all they had left to take care of was the Sphinx, who swatted his claw at the evading master. Zephyr relayed the information to the god, "Anubis, the Sphinx's crystal is the weak point. We have to hit it there!"

Anubis replied, "Take you for telling me this, Zephyr." Then he charged energy into his eyes before he fired out lasers at the Soldier's crystal.

The Sphinx let out another scream before he swiped at the sand, throwing sand clouds at the keybladers, but missing the god who dodged it. The lightbladers cried out in pain from the debris hitting their eyes and they instinctively shielded their faces. Zephyr was rubbing his arm on his closed eyes as he attempted to get the sand out. The Sphinx fired a beam down at them in retaliation for damaging his crystal. The pair was blasted with an intense burn on their bodies as they screamed out in agony. Hitomi saw the beam and heard them as she shouted in fright, "No!"

Anubis avoided the immediate swipe by the Sphinx before he saw the badly injured mortals on the ground. Their clothes were damaged and they had burns on their bodies. He sensed that they were dying. Normally, the death god did not interfere with the fates of mortals, but this was not the right time for them to succumb to doom; they needed to work together to take down the Sphinx. He cast his dark magic on them, which was an embalming spell to extend some amount of life time to their bodies, so that their souls do not leave too soon. Whether they would survive their fatal injuries or not was left to be seen. Anubis hoped that Zephyr was able to use his healing magic again to recover in time before it was too late. The boy used a lot of his strength to push his weary body up off the ground to the point where he was on his fours. Oh boy, did he and Leohart both hurt all over. There was no way they could fight like this, unless... Zephyr hoped his healing magic recharged for this; they needed to recover and survive this battle. The fate of the universe depended on them. Chase having less people to help would

be a problem since his group was small. The boy lifted his keyblade with his arm on the same height of his head. He winced as he moved his arm and gritted his teeth in pain. "C...cure..." he stammered weakly. Fortunately, the green light appeared around him and Leohart, restoring their strength and healing some of their wounds. The master pushed himself up and got to his feet.

The Sphinx swat down his paw at them, but the pair moved out of the way in separate directions. Leohart struck three times at the Sphinx's right paw using his Wishing Edge technique. He hit the toes and the joint. At the same time, Zephyr did a Sliding Dash on the left paw for a hard hit. The Souldier reared up slightly to take his paws away from the attackers. Zephyr immediately cast Aerora between the hindfeet, striking both feet with harmful winds. The Sphinx was swept off his feet and he fell down on his underbelly. Anubis summoned bandages to cover the Souldier's neck and hold him down to the ground. The Sphinx grunted as he struggled to break free and rise. Anubis dashed over to the creature and jumped high up to the crystal. He swung down his scepter at it with a yell and smashed it to pieces. Light flashed out from where the crystal used to be and the Sphinx screamed out in agony. Soon, the screams stopped and the monster became weary. As he was in the process of disappearing back to Aaru, the Sphinx spoke his last words, "Thank you..." He was happy to be freed of his slavery. With a flash of light, he was gone. In his place was a shower of light particles that soon vanished as they fell.

The bishop woke up and saw his strongest Souldier being destroyed. He frowned and lamented, "So it seems I've been defeated." Everyone heard him and turned their heads towards him. The bishop got up as he looked at the bright side, "But no matter, I got what I came here for. I still have many new Souldiers for the Church to share. I'll be taking my leave now." He summoned a Corridor of Light behind him.

Zephyr tried to tell him, "Wait! You don't know what you're doing! The Church will-" His words went ignored as the bishop left the world and the Corridor vanished. The boy sighed, "He didn't stop to listen." He would have told the man that the Church's actions would have destroyed the universe.

Hitomi walked over to her teammates with a smile as she softly said, "Papa... Zephyr."

She hugged onto her adoptive father's leg as he smiled at her and patted her head. He cooed, "We're alright now, Hitomi. We won."

Anubis was relieved, "I am pleased that this is over now." Then he looked to the humans and asked them, "You are fighting against the Church of Light, am I correct?"

Zephyr nodded and confirmed, "Yeah! I also got more friends beside Hitomi and Master Leohart going against them, too."

"I see," the god replied. Then he cautioned them with a warning, "As noble as your cause is, the fight against the Church will not be as easy as you might think. Their goddess, Nuru, is at the head of it all, and her powers and strength are greater than that of gods like me and even more so than any mortal's."

Leohart said, "We are quite well aware of that, thank you. But regardless, we must do everything they can to try and save the Realm In-Between."

Anubis commented, "I see your resolve is strong. Very well, I wish you all good luck in your fight against the Church of Light." With a smile, he added, "And once again, thank you for coming to my rescue. Now I must return over to Baki's house and take Safiya to the Duat. Farewell, mortals; may your mission succeed." Then he transformed into his giant jackal form and ran across the desert, making his way back to Tau.

The trio watched him go as Zephyr imagined the distraught and sorrow Baki would face at the news of his daughter's incurable condition. There was no doubt that this would devastate the man. The loss of a loved one was just too tragic. He knew this as Glacies and her mother had taken Mr. Gallimore's death just as hard. He wondered if they have gotten over it by now. If that was not bad enough for Glacies, there was also still the possibility of Mrs. Gallimore dying, even after having been cured, which Etutu predicted and warned of. After thinking more about the subject of death, his thoughts turned to his old cat, Marlow. He'll have to accept her passing away eventually and learn to live with the loneliness at home somehow. Boy, death was just not the nicest to anyone, living or dead. His thoughts were cut when a trio of lights appeared on the team's hands. These lights then took the shape into ankh keychains. Zephyr looked at it in surprise, "Whoa! Is that a new keychain?" Hitomi looked at hers with curiosity.

Leohart explained, "It is the world granting us new keyblades. It is usually a reward for doing a great deed in a world we're at. Though, it is rare for worlds to give people keyblades, so cherish this moment if you please."

The boy grinned in excitement like a kid with a new toy, "Wow! A new keyblade. I can't wait to try it out!"

Leohart told his apprentices, "Come, we must leave and return to Chase." The males turned their keyblades into gliders and they all rode on off back to the Land of Departure.

As they flew through the Ocean Between, Zephyr started a conversation with the others, "You know? This is like the longest time I've been in another world. Well, the Keyblade Sanctuary was long, but we didn't the time to check it out. Maybe once this is all over and I become a keyblade master, I'm going to explore the worlds." He added to Hitomi, "I'll even tell you all about them, if you want." The girl was not too interested in learning about the other worlds, but she will let her friend tell her about them anyway.

Leohart replied, "Very well, keep doing good in my lessons and eventually, you'll get your dream."

"I will," the boy intended.

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Baki watched over his daughter as he waited for his friend to return with the medical herbs. Eventually, Tau came into the room as he said, "Baki, I'm back."

The haggard father turned to his friend, asking, "Did you find the herbs, Tau?"

The curly-haired man did not want to be the bearer of bad news, but he had to spill it out anyway, "Yeah... about that... Baki, Anubis told me what's going on with Safiya."

"What is it?"

Tau answered with regret, "Her brain has been damaged and her soul is in pain. I'm sorry to say this, but... we have to let her die." He did not want to say that last part out, knowing how this would make his friend upset.

Indeed, the father became angry as he loudly refused, "No... No, I won't do this! Tau, how could you suggest such a thing? That's my daughter you want dead!"

Tau flinched at the volume and tone before saying, "I know that. I don't want Safiya gone either, but she needs to die for her suffering to end. Please listen to me."

Baki asked harshly, "And how do you know she's suffering, dear friend? How do you know if she really does want to leave this world?"

"Well... that..." Tau could not really answer that as he could not ask this question to a girl in comatose.

Then Anubis came in, saying, "If you knew what was in her heart, then you would know the answer."

Baki turned to the god and pleaded, "Please Anubis, I already told you. I'm not letting Safiya go. I beg you, spare her!"

But the god refused, "If Safiya can be cured and awakened, I would not be here in this room. But unfortunately, that is not the case. You need to let me take her to the Duat." The father was still hesitant about this until Anubis continued, "I can sense what's going on with her. Her heart is going mad and that it's crying out for the soul to be freed." He used his magic to project an image from Safiya's heart.

Everyone saw the girl surrounded by complete darkness. She looked to be in a panic as she cried, "Help! Get me out!... I don't want to be here; it's too lonely... Help me!"

Baki, now realizing that the god was in the right, murmured to the girl, "Safiya...I didn't know... I just wanted you to see daylight again." He felt guilty about prolonged her spiritual suffering. He looked to the god sadly and said, "Anubis, I now understand what you have to do, but I'm not sure if I can just simply let my daughter go."

Tau sympathized, "Hey, the death of someone you love is always the hardest and saddest; I get that. But we all got to go where we need to be if we need peace."

Anubis agreed, "He is indeed correct. I understand how you feel about this. I have seen many mortals in my life grieve over the loss of their family and friends, but this is something that needs to be done."

With a heavy sigh, Baki permitted, "Very well, take her to the Duat. Give her the peace, she desires." He gave way to let the god through to his daughter.

Anubis went over to Safiya's body and laid his hand on her chest. Her body glowed a dim light as he used his magic to release her soul and send her to the Duat. He said, "It is done now; I shall take my leave now." A dark hole appeared behind him and the god sank below it. The hole disappeared when he was gone out of sight.

Baki got on his knees and broke down crying and sobbing, "It's over; I'm all alone now." No wife, no daughter, he himself was all that was left of this family.

Tau knelt down beside his friend to comfort him, "No, you're not; you still have me, you know. I'll always be there for you. Not saying I'll replace Safiya, but you know what I mean. Besides, she's not gone forever. You'll see her again in the Aaru."

Baki choked, "I hope I will, my friend."

Tau gave him an assuring smile, "Trust me, you will. You and I know she's a good girl, she'll pass the Weighing of the Heart. And when she does, she'll be living the good life, being with her mother and keeping her company." Aaru was Ancient Egypt's heaven; a paradise where good people go to when they pass Anubis's Weighing of the Heart. Yes, Baki could see Safiya and his life living there happily, never to suffer another dreadful thing like illnesses again. He wished to see her smile and his wife's again when it was his time to pass away.