

Relic

By Xenny Diemes

The ever-busy Dr. Runeblade is a woman with mastery of both machines and the biosciences on one hand, and a brutal bruiser on the other, Creator and unfortunate user of the hypernites that made her into the powerful soldier she is today. Now as a formidable operative of Interrealm's military sector, her skills and abilities makes her more than just a meek lab-rat, There hasn't been an adventure she has lost yet where brains and brawn have come into play. Surely it became as a surprise to her when the red dragoness request some time off to her superiors. This came after she returned from her last mission, a tenth in the last six months, with her body swollen with muscle and battle scars quickly healing up. She is close to wondering if all this would make her too hard, too hungry for battles instead of feeding another hunger: Knowledge.

After that ordeal, she faces her superior officer and requests to take a leave to "compose" herself and they quickly agreed, mostly because they notice it too and worry about a plague of over-hardened operatives making it difficult to readjust to civilian life. And like that, Evelynnn gets her time off, but now it leaves her with the question of how she will use it? She can catch up on lost research papers on biochemical processes, go to the beach, go work on improving the current medical nanites, but she decides to take on a different discipline altogether. Something she took as a minor in Oxford but never waned interest in, especially in her line of work: Archeology. Going to alternate worlds and learning of their histories really but a whole new perspective on her own of what could have been. She learns of an upcoming tour to a world on Prometheus where she can do work there. Perhaps her mind and strength can be of use once she arrives.

On the planet Gelise in the largest universe in the region, Evelynnn, still in her Interrealm external wear joins a expeditionary group to a vast ruin in the middle of the desert. It was typical and bound to be a memorable experience for Evelynnn as she will spend hours of the day digging, dusting

and reading out whatever elements they would find in the ruins. However, those wishes for a peaceful vacation away from the mission has instead become one. One day as she was looking deep into a deep valley with a human explorer named Jean, a single misstep causes the floor of the ruins to cave in taking Evelynn and Jean down with her. Grabbing the woman and opening her wings to slow their descent, the two landed over three hundred feet down into a long hallway. After shaking off the dust, they decided to wave caution to the wind and look further down.

At the end of the hallway lies a great chamber, and in the center of that chamber is a column with a black box, lined with red lines and of unknown origin. A quick, analytical search reveals that this black box was more than just a box, there was nothing in Interrealm's vast data banks that can read out it's words or what material its made of. And then the Jean touches it, the contact makes the box glowed and released a flash of light that knocked the both of them down. Emerging from that light is a projection that took shape of a very tall woman with barely little clothes and a soft toned voice that Evelynn's translators can't speculate. But its expression is that of sadness and it is trying to tell them of what it is of what befell their civilization before its signal went out. It was clearly something that is worth looking more into and Evelynn takes the block. But then as the two came out of the long hallway, they are approached by a rush of air and then a swift punch to the face. Evelynn slowly ways up tied up and hearing the worried cries and shouts of the explorers who are now held hostage by a group of marauders who are here to raid ruins for profit.

They are a group of dimension traveling pirates and racketeers who go from planet to planet, seeking anything that they can profit of and kill those who get in their way. Evelynn has her priorities set, as much as she wanted to learn more about the secrets of the cube, the explorers come first. Which is problematic since it was too late that they have captured of all people, Lady Evelynn. Activating her hypernites, her muscles expand and so did her strength a hundredfold to break free from her bonds and deliver the serious pain only a giant red dragoness can deliver. Ships destroyed, enemies set aflame and one guy could only bare witness to watch his high-powered rifle get crushed

with one hand. The fight was over before it was even started with most of them either running away or tied up by the team, awaiting authorities to pick them up. Jean thanks the dragon for saving her twice and tells her to don't mention it. With the danger out of the way, the box is going to need further research.

With special pass in hand Jean is with Evelyn in the agency's research labs and try to learn more of the box and the woman's message. What they did find was startling, the age of the box far exceeds the age of the known universe along with the other items that were collected. Then there was the indecipherable message. It still remained untranslated until the doors opened and to their surprise, It is Xararuna, the mystical phoenix and Director of the Vela's Great Chronometer. She came in because she "felt" the presence of the object and asks to two of them of where they have found it. Jean tells the phoenix that they have found it in Gelise. Jean asks Xararuna if she knows anything about it but didn't speak instead she activates it and shows the message again. Hearing the woman's message, Xararuna vocally translates for them.

"To whatever beings that come across these ruins, let my story become a caution to those who refuse to stand down in the face of death. Eons ago before the Great Collapse, we were once part of a civilization that spanned the stars in our one universe without fear, without death and without limitation. Our technologies and brilliance help kept our kind alive until the Great Collapse has happened. Countless worlds and galaxies burned as the universe slowly began to contract and in our desperation, created vast planet-sized vessels to survive the collapse but what we didn't predict that our once great universe became a multiverse in what became the great light and my kind have scattered across the expanse leaving us to fend for ourselves. What was one, became many as they say and we endured through the best and worst of it. We made new civilizations before the first galaxies formed and we thrived. But we then soon realized that we are now limited. Our powers, knowledge and capacity to expand were capped by the physics and rules this new universe imposed on all of us.

Again, desperation sets in, and in our panic, we radically changed ourselves.”

Evelynn wondered what the woman meant by that and the translation continues.

“All to overcome those limitations and survive, but what resulted instead was war, death, the very thing we were trying to avoid and the downfall of our entire civilization. I don’t know what to make of everything we try to do, instead of adapting to our now home, we went against it and the universe fought back and we lost. It all comes back to my warning earlier. I don’t know of the fate of those who destroyed us or the tools we developed to stop them in the first place, but I know that they would endure for who knows how long and if anyone of your kind comes across mine...”

And in a shocking turn, Xararuna crushes the cube in her hand. Evelynn and Jean are shocked and angered by her actions, Jean the most for destroying not just an artifact but the only piece of evidence of time before time and a warning to all of us. Xararuna believes otherwise and looks sternly at the both of them, the phoenix that whatever that woman said is a myth. Those beings couldn’t have survived and the weapons would have aged with time. But her justification of crushing the cube in the first place is more personal, mortals are better off in blissful ignorance rather than knowing something that would have dangerous consequences later. Evelynn knew Xararuna and never once has she acted anything like this, Jean feels insulted and wants to give her a piece of her mind but Evelynn stops her. Messing with someone who is technically a god isn’t a good idea but that doesn’t stop her for having to answer for her actions if she is wrong.

Xararuna herself feels lament and regret for what she had to do, Jean has every right to chew her out because she would have nothing but love for the lower beings to expand their knowledge, but there are things that are better off not knowing at all even if it means lying, against the agency she swears to serve to protect them. Meanwhile, back on Gelise, the bodies of various Interrealm and

Imperial personnel are strewn across the sandy landscape, not dead but knocked out and two beings stand before them looking around at the ruins. The first looked at the other and urges to just kill them but the other stops its actions, for they do not want attention from these creatures and their time will come when they gather all that they need. The other huffs at his resistance and wonders why bother. The other's answer is simple: They will get their one universe back. They soon closed hands and opened the ruins, underneath the gigantic walls reveals a great crystal, one the size of a small house as it rose between them and in a flash, vanished with it without a trace. Little did they know that the chamber had more of the cubes, hopefully full of info of what could be the beginning of the end of the Multiverse.