

Fire Emblem: Shadows of Aytolis

“A long, long time ago, there was a small kingdom where a sacred dragon made its home. However, it was not to last, as one day it was attacked by an evil dragon. There was no warning nor provocation, and the sacred dragon was locked in battle against her evil self. She confronted her evil counterpart, but she proved too strong to confront directly, making her resort to other means.

And so, the sacred dragons summoned all of her strength, managing to seal her foe away. Despite being victorious, she was mortally wounded from the battle, and the sacred dragon withdrew to the world tree... where she calmly awaited her end.

Though the sacred dragon’s time has long passed it is said that even now, high atop the world tree’s summit, two of her sharpest fangs still rest where she breathed last.

And yet, this was not the only measure she took. It is revealed only to the royal family and the heroes that will rise, that she did manage to hide a sliver of her power. Once the Shield of Flames resonated fully and should the situation become dire enough, a last resort would be unshackled to allow its wielder to use her power to protect what they loved.”

Queen Yelena’s narration held a steady cadence, almost as if she was reciting a story that had been told to children through generations in the kingdom of Aytolis. And yet Azura couldn’t help but feel infatuated by it while escorting her to the temple. No matter the world, no matter the age, everyone held secrets it seemed. And it was something that reminded her of many things... too many, which she held close to her heart and could not reveal.

It had been some time since the hostilities had come to an end, some of the heroes that had come from other worlds having returned to their respective homes. It was something quick and simple, a golden glow that diffuminated the silhouettes until there was nothing left.

Once the chaos dragon had been slain, peace was supposed to return, but it had not been so, and the situation was anything but simple. Not only did some remain, but roaming packs of monsters had appeared in the kingdom, the tales of monsters running amok being plenty and backed with facts. They were supposed to vanish, having lost their master and creator, but the scattered forces that had been deployed, led by some of the heroes that remained, showed otherwise.

With her children now leading the kingdom, Queen Yelena had informed some of them that their assistance would be needed to perform a ritual, one that would strengthen the Gleamstones and give them a deciding edge against these fiends. She had been rather discrete about details, but she had mentioned that it required someone with direct connection to the previous wielder of the power of each stone. It was a ritual to be conducted on an ancient temple, and they were to be on their way immediately.

The road to the temple had taken them some days, but been surprisingly calm and easy to realize. No one would have guessed monsters and fiends roamed the lands, as they walked under a radiant sun and surrounded by picturesque sights. An unending sea of greenery, stretching as far as the eye could see, while forests formed islands here and there. There was the occasional stream, swift and fresh shallow water, as well as some ruins. Decaying forts or houses that made manifest the scars of the fighting.

Lucina and Corrin, dextrous swordswomen, would protect the queen if necessary; while Hinoka kept a watchful eye from the skies above like a hawk looking for prey. Azura was able to keep them invigorated with her songs and dances, while Tiki could deal with any threats should it prove too much for the rest. A small group, but formed by nothing short of formidable fighters.

Their way had taken them to some highlands, some hills that slowly but surely climbed higher and higher, the dusty trail vanishing into soft grass. They went further and further away from civilization or human presence, the flora growing wild and strong as they walked trails no human had since long ago. And the temple was a good example of this.

Maybe calling it “temple” was generous, when compared to other colleagues in that category, but despite its simplicity, they could feel it oozed power. It was a structure of white stone, one that almost blended with the nature around it. Almost, as a set of small iron poles, connected with chains, separated the temple from the cliff behind it and a small kerb that delineated the confines of the building kept it at bay. This allowed the tiles and columns inside to remain in a pristine condition, while the altar stood in the middle of it, holding a golden idol of a serpentine dragon.

The group was scattered around the idol, having left all back at the camp following the queen’s instructions. It did not feel quite right leaving their weapons behind, particularly to the Hoshidan princess, who also left her pegasus. The queen would look after all of it, since she would remain in the camp, praying for their success. Still that would not stop her from fighting, even if it was with her bare fists, as she tried to stand guard leaning against a column.

“I didn’t realize we had climbed so high. It certainly didn’t feel like it...” mused Tiki, looking at the sea of clouds below. Her ears twitched at the voices of the conversation next to her.

“You have been quiet since sunrise, Azura. Something the matter?”

She was brought out of her thoughts by Corrin, always worried about her comrades and friends. And this time it was no exception. “You could say so. I have... some doubts.”

“Regarding the ritual?”

“Yes.”

“You shouldn’t, we have been through much harsher challenges than this!” Corrin beamed. “I speak from experience.”

“Still, Queen Yelena expressed some concern over my ties with Nohr...”

“You are one of us Azura, part of our family. And no ritual is going to change that.”

Azura smiled for a moment, her lips curled in a small and kid smile. No wonder the siblings of both royal families held her in such high regard. Her optimism and hope could be contagious, but it was not to last, as the frown and concern returned to her face. There was more, of course there was, but she had preferred to keep it to herself. Like many things before.

Nearby, Lucina was lost in thought while bearing her own frowning expression, her eyes looking at the altar that held both the idol and gleamstones. She was no mage nor skilled in arcana, but her own experience let her know that things could go wrong with surprising ease.

“We defeated the source of chaos, so the fiends and monsters should have disappeared along with it. It happened with Grima and the Risen, but not this time... Maybe we overlooked something?”

The thought of postponing the ritual had crossed her mind, to conduct some additional research in this ritual that the Queen had kept for herself up until now. Wasn't an attack on her kingdom a good occasion to try and gather the gleamstones, more so to enhance them? Or when her children faced the chaos dragon? Still, her thoughts stopped when the stones glowed with a light that came from within, flickering at a steady pace.

“That should be it. Everyone, let's go.”

The women walked around the altar, each standing before their assigned stone. Hinoka before the crimson stone at the left and across Lucina, who stood before the blue. Tiki stood behind the altar, the golden stone's glow before almost completely matching that of the idol, while Corrin and Azura stood across her and side by side.

“Alright, now what?”

“According to Queen Yelena, we are to offer the stones to the dragon so that the gleamstones will merge with what little remains of her power.” Answered Lucina, just as skeptic as Hinoka.

“Could it be something akin to the creation of dragonstones? If so, I might be able to provide some suggestions.”

“I could too.” Pitched in Corrin, her bright and cheery mood a stark contrast to the moody and reserved dancer beside her. “If we work together, we’ll get through it.”

“The queen was rather... sparse with the details” elaborated Lucina “so we’ll have to make do with that.”

Following Tiki’s lead, each took the gleamstone before them, bending a knee before the altar. They raised their hands, holding the stones as an offering, and tried to concentrate. To focus on their glow, trying to visualize it as permanent, each of them imbued not only with their own power, but that of the stone and the sacred dragon.

Azura closed her eyes, trying to connect with it. She held her own connection to her own pendant, but this felt... off. The orb in her hands felt cold and hostile even, as if it rejected her touch. She pictured it in the dark, a glowing ball of purple, the one thing that stood alone in a foggy void that consumed all.

“LiAr...”

The fog swirled and moved around it, like a predator circling its prey and waiting for the moment to strike. It clung to the glowing orb, either trying to engulf it in a moment or cover it bit by bit. And even though she was nowhere to be seen in the void of her closed eyes, her hands felt cold, almost as if the coldness of the stone spread to her.

“LiAr...”

She furrowed her brow, trying to focus on the light and shove those thoughts aside. It was swirling without control, as the smoke threatened to consume her too. A cold and light caress that touched her body in a single spot before fading momentarily, or a swarm that came from everywhere at once and clung to her before letting go for now.

“Even though I was raised in Hoshido, I was born in Nohr.”

“LiAR...”

Smoke seemed to retreat for a moment, shifting and morphing into a landscape, and she wished it had not. It was a horrifying landscape, a vast barren steppe where little life could prosper; and before her, the city of Windmire, the capital of the Kingdom of Nohr, burned brightly.

Built along a series of concentric circular walls, the streets and buildings all were consumed by the same cold fire. And slightly off to the center, in the pit that went downwards, castle Krakenburg burned all the same. The excavated pit that held the bastion burned as if it was on the maw of a gigantic dragon, the very earth that tortured the nation having come to life and claiming it like a massive mouth.

She tried to protest, to look away, but she could only watch as everything burned. Flames erupted from everywhere, from windows and door flames, from the highest spires to the depths of the pit. What had been of the people? The royals? Of her family?

It was as if the very land had decided to fully rage against its inhabitants, reducing what remained to a uniform barren and blighted landscape. Even sunlight was rare, but now the very kingdom had become a blinding and blazing sun of its own. A barren land, untamed and perpetually in ruin, that would permanently be covered by a layer of dark smoke.

“LiAr...”

“They... they accepted me. I was one of them...”

“LiAR...”

Another swirl of smoke and fog, as it contracted and expanded, changing the landscape into something else. From a flat and barren waste it expanded and shot upwards, forming a mountain that held a castle and a city on its side. A stark contrast from before, and nonetheless, it remained familiar all the same.

Shirasagi Castle, and the Hoshidan capital, was set ablaze just like its rival kingdom's seat of power. The castle stood on a sheer-sided mountain, tall and proud, while the rest of the buildings surrounded it. A peaceful and bucolic place that watched over the bountiful lands of Hoshido, now turned into an inferno that reached for the skies. A burning carcass that threatened to collapse and rain a fiery death upon those that had flocked to its side, crushed by their would-be protector.

The fire seemed to be just as fierce, but by consuming wood and paper it projected a column of dark smoke upwards. A reflection to its rival, one a pit of fire while the other gradually darkened the skies. It was as if the sun itself, after blessing the kingdom with so much prosperity and life, had crashed into it, consuming it with the very same light.

"Brothers... sisters..."

"LiaR..."

A parade of fire and destruction happened before her eyes. How many had perished? How many more would? It would become just as barren as Nohr, and the dark smoke would darken the skies, bringing ruin to both. And she would be alone, to be hunted down by the one true enemy of both.

"VALLITE"

She gasped, eyes snapping open as she looked to the void, heart pounding on her chest. It knew, it somehow knew. Her best kept secret, the one thing she kept closest to her chest and only one person knew. And that voice knew it.

"...ura?"

"...ell..."

"Az..."

"Are... u alrig..."

“Azura?”

The muffled words stopped being so, as she finally returned to her senses. Corrin was looking at her, concern clear in her crimson eyes. The blonde fixed her eyes on her, while Azura huffed and gasped for breath, trying to regain some sort of composure. She tried shaking off those images from her head. Rather tame, but not knowing what had happened to those she cherished...

“Azura, something wrong?”

She still held the gleamstone before her as an offering to the idol before them, but something else had caught Corrin’s gaze. And as she looked away from the songstress, her expression was just as worried if not more so, with confusion blending in.

“Girls? The idol is... reacting?”

She was right, as the altar was slowly leaking a cloud of dark smoke, crawling upwards from the base of it. Azura froze, her eyes locked on the smoke as it moved up. It turned and swirled playfully, as if it was mocking her. It knew, and it would give her no respite, chasing her wherever it had to.

There was an odd feeling on her hands, a gust of cold wind. Before her very eyes, the purple orb she held in her hands simply vanished. It seemed to evaporate, going up in a faint cloud of purple smoke. And even though she couldn’t feel the orb in her hands anymore, the smoke did remain, playfully sliding between her fingers and around her palms.

“I... did not expect this...”

“This can’t be good. Now what do we do? How do we explain this to Queen Yelena?” Asked Corrin, her voice confused and worried. “...Azura?”

Azura had closed her eyes again, clenching her teeth and furrowing her brow. She could barely hear the woman next to her, her voice muffled as she endured her own personal

torment. The voice was back, and it seemed furious, sending against her a barrage of hallucinations and nightmarish images.

“LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR...”

A marketplace in panic, as a rampaging monster tore everything apart, the body of a woman thrown on the ground nearby while a samurai readied his blade to strike it down. The beast controlled water, causing whirlpools and currents around it that reflected the cracking lightning of the sword, both combatants jumping at each other with a roar.

“I didn’t! I... I did not lie to them. They couldn’t know...”

“LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR...”

A landscape of a forest, her silhouette and another one running from their pursuers. Sometimes dressed in white and light armour, others in clanking heavy plate suits, and other times of a more sinister nature... but always after them. But there were others, some particular shadows, that stood out among the rank and file. And they chased them all the same.

A master swordsman, be it on foot or riding a mighty steed, clad in red or black. An eagle-eyed archer, those arcane shots barely missing their intended target, the two silhouettes that ran away. Only to be hounded by a variety of spells and magic, as fireballs exploded and lightning cracked, the very ground quaking under the steed of the young mounted mage. And above them two shadows competed to dive on them like birds of prey, a light and nimble woman riding a pegasus or the beauty carried by wyvern wings.

“No! They accepted me! They... accepted me. I was one of them... They were my family...”

“LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR...”

More flashing images. The young archer, defeated atop of a massive and mighty wall, the surrounding set ablaze. He gave them one last look, hatred imbued in his eyes, before falling

off the wall into the void and the ground below. The mighty samurai, broken and made to kneel as the castle burned and collapsed, sparing a glance of disappointment.

A young girl, her long hair tied in twintails, slain by the sword that had protected her for so long. Terror and despair mixed and blended in the warrior's voice and gaze, setting the girl down with gentle delicacy, before charging in a last attempt to strike them down, driven by grief. He fell all the same as the castle around him burned.

"Brothers... sisters..."

"LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR... LIAR..."

"No! I-I did no such thing! I tried to prevent it!"

"LIAR. LIAR. LIAR. LIAR. LIAR. LIAR."

The nightmare parade carried on, showing her the demise of her loved ones. The dragon riding woman, shot down by a barrage of arrows, plummeting to her demise below. The young girl riding a pegasus, struck by magic as it spiralled out of control in a ball of fire. The young mage, cut down by his foes as his strength ran out and left him defenceless, while the pink haired young girl was crushed by rubble, trying to help the wounded evacuate during a siege.

There was a tingling sensation through her body, one that had spread from her hands across her arms, and was quickly making its way to her chest. But she paid little attention to it, as she tried to pull herself together, with small success against the barrage of torment. Both kingdoms burned, skies clogged with smoke and ash. They wouldn't be so different soon.

"VALLITE."

A single work made her skin crawl. A new landscape spread before her, an archipelago of floating pieces of land, the land itself having been torn asunder by some unstoppable force. Ruins of buildings dotted these islands, remnants of an old civilization, while a dark orb in

the distance pulled all towards it. And as it devoured them, a massive shadow flew in circled around her.

The nightmare that haunted her since long ago, the one responsible for her solitude. The dragon was long past its prime, but it was a terrifying sight to behold, landing before her with its towering figure. She was motionless, maybe having lost all hope, maybe finally giving up, but she was unfazed when the maw of the creature opened and an orb holding many eyes spun. Always fixed on her.

“...ura?”

“Az...?”

“Azura?”

Corrin’s voice. She couldn’t help but let a small smile run free. She was too kind for her own good, always trying to see the good in others, even at her own risk. An idealist that walked the thin line with naivete, but that always tried to face whatever came her way. And that should be her greatest pride. The woman had found out her secret, jumping at the end of the Bottomless Canyon without thinking it twice. Someone to share her burden with...

The stone she had been holding materialised before her, floating gently as the massive drake squinted its eyes. The words of the Queen echoed in her mind. The power of a sacred artefact, now imbued by the Sacred Dragon. The power to face down what came her way and cast away her fears and loneliness. The power to keep her loved ones safe.

She held the stone with both hands, the orb glowing with an inner light that only grew brighter and stronger. Smoke started leaking again, but she was not letting go, even as the drake lunged forward with a roar and the light and smoke overshadowed everything. She had enough.

“Azura?” Corrin called again. “Azura are you alright? Please answer me!”

Her lips curled into a twisted smirk. “I have never been better.”

She opened her eyes, her vision now with a slight purplish hue and earning gasps of surprise and shock from the rest of the women around her. Azura's eyes, formerly golden, had turned into blank orbs or purple, the shade hue of the gleamstone she held. She had made her choice, spreading her arms and raising them skyward.

The temple was deathly silent, until a noise broke the spell. It started quiet, growing louder in a crescendo that matched Azura's transformation. The woman had closed her eyes, tilting her head backwards as she let the power become one with her. The same feeling as when the stone vanished now spread through her entire body, filling her with renewed confidence and resolve.

Her eyelids hardened into purple stone, the wave quickly claiming the rest of her face, as her see-through veil allowed her smirk to be seen turning into a gesture of delight. The songstress remained immobile, as the stone spread through her while taking advantage of the shock of the other women. Her long azure hair turned into a cascade of purple, while the hue quickly made her way down her neck, into her bust and arms.

Her limbs, still stretched skyward as if she was receiving a blessing from the skies, quickly hardened. As the wave of power spread and advanced, they changed from flesh and bone to hard stone, retaining their grace while having none of the previous weaknesses. And the same rang true to her trunk, as the wave of power left behind smooth and flawless gemstone, a new body able to hold her new boon. Her breasts hardened under her outfit, now much more sensitive, each crowned by a now pebble-like nipple.

The curves of her body, a result of her dancing and training, were rendered into stone. Gone were the supple and soft feeling, replaced by a firm and smooth surface in its stead. And while it felt different, the purple hue and the glossy surface only added to the allure. For the briefest moment the thought of putting a show, with water and song and dance, crossed her mind. How would she look if she tried? It was brief, but turned her expression into a more honest one, as the stone claimed her thighs and rear.

Her mind froze for a moment, as the wave claimed her crotch, a bolt of pleasure shaking her to her very soul. Luckily, her legs only trembled for a moment, as the wave washed over them

and rendered into glossy and smooth gleamstone, giving her the firmest footing while she kept her beauty and grace. She had become one with the stone, the power of it and the sacred dragon running through her.

“Oh, isn’t this wonderful...”

“I knew it!” Lucina snapped “We should have not conducted the ritual!”

“Quite the contrary, Lucina. This is what we needed, the power that will change the course of events.”

The smirk returned, as any piece of cloth on her vanished in a cloud of smoke. It felt very good and she was somewhat upset to get rid of the outfit, since the dark colours almost completely blended with her new self. The small details and accessories that dotted it gave it some contrast, a couple of golden ribbons here and there, some flowers, the golden edge of the veil... It all vanished, fully revealing and displaying her new self, an alluring being of purple gleamstone, but with the beauty and grace of the songstress.

“Now, let us proceed.”

*You are the destiny's chosen ones, offered to wield
Might to overcome, foe and doubt within
Against what what might defy your will
The might is yours to claim*

The songstress’ voice was familiar, but at the same time it was completely different. It carried an echo, a tone that left them stunned, even as Azura took a couple of steps towards Corrin and Tiki slowly lowered her hands from her mouth, seemingly lost in thought.. The moment she had started singing, she had closed her eyes, only to open them again shortly, as she extended a hand to Corrin.

“Hey! Get away from her!” Hinoka barked, still finding herself paralyzed.

“A...zu...ra?”

With sacred light, a hand reaches you
Doubt and lies alike tear your heart apart
Binds and ties break away
Accept your true whole self

Corrin closed her eyes, be it due to disbelief, denial or an attempt at resisting the songstress' advance. But Azura waited, as the woman that had been so kind to her furrowed her brow and gritted her teeth. It tore her heart apart, seeing Corrin undergo her own torment. What were her visions about? Maybe that fateful day in the hoshidan market? The horrifying reality of war? Her insurmountable attempt at bringing together two irreconcilable opposites?

She had long lost track of time, but it was something she did not worry about any longer. Hinoka could protest all she wanted, still rooted in place, while Lucina was trying to break free from the paralysis. She would deal with her soon enough...

Corrin's expression relaxed, as whatever nightmares were hounding her seemed to finally come to an end. Her furrowed brow faded, as well as the tension in her jaws, all of it replaced by an expression of serene tranquillity.

"This is why you acted that way before?"

"Corrin! Snap out of it!" Shouted Hinoka behind her.

"We all hold regrets and fears. No matter how close we try to hide them."

"That's what I saw? That's what you have seen?"

"Yes."

"Then I have made up my mind as well. I will walk this path along with you."

Azura felt a small surge of warmth through her, as her glossy lips curled into a caring smile at the answer. A smile that only widened as Corrin opened her eyes, having lost their red pupils

and now blank silvery-white orbs. Much like her own, as the stone quickly started spreading all over the woman, claiming her face and turning it into a flawless sculpture, before spreading to her long hair.

Corrin's long mane went from her blonde colour to the silvery white that had belonged to the gleamstone she had offered, as strands of it merged into thick locks, hardening to the same cracking tune that Azura had transformed to. She had been in a slightly awkward pose previously, her arms flared out. Now she relaxed, looking at her hands, covered by her usual outfit of black and silver.

It made Azura chuckle, despite her undergoing transformation, she was still as candid as before. It had been that idealism and maybe naivete that had brought them together, and their bond had only grown stronger, even despite her cold demeanour and secretive behaviour. The more the transformation spread across the woman, the more that bond grew. She felt different, unlike any relationship or bond before. They had been both blessed, as Corrin hugged the curves of her body but each retained their uniqueness. Two members of a quickly growing group.

“That’s enough!”

With a shout, Lucina had managed to break free from the paralysis, the woman panting as she brought out Falchion. They were supposed to come unarmed, but it was of little relevance, as the blade shook in the warrior’s grasp. She was panting, her breathing heavy and laboured, but taking a steady stance nonetheless.

“I... I knew something was wrong.” She panted “I will stop you!”

“Are you certain about that?”

She focused her attention on Corrin, as the woman took her hand and closed the gap. The transformation was well underway, reshaping her to a much adequate form, and was slightly surprised when she threw both arms around her. How long had it been since she had been shown affection so openly? She simply hugged back, feeling the woman transform.

She was lovely, feeling her next to her, in ways she couldn't have even imagined before, and started to move her hands across her form. Corrin squirmed and reacted to the lightest touch, and the feeling of her body fully petrifying into gleamstone was just as fabulous. The two of them remained locked in a hug, playfully teasing back and forth, as she made sure that the transformation changed her fully.

Azura had not even bothered to look at her, instead focused on Corrin as the woman took her outstretched hand and joined her in a tender hug. Her transformation was almost complete, as the power ran through her, making her body fit for it. And the two women were happy to savour it, Corrin squirming at Azura's touch and trying her best to give back.

Lucina had been stopped on her tracks, as she stumbled backwards. Before her stood Tiki, her arms fully stretched to the sides and her green eyes now blank golden orbs. She stumbled backwards, trying to understand.

“Tiki?! Why?”

“It must happen.”

“Why?!”

“For the sake of this realm. To ensure order and peace reign supreme.”

“That's not peace, that's stagnation!”

She swung Falchion at her, but the blade feeble in her hands. Her movement was slow and sloppy, as if it was the first time she picked up the sword. In fact, Tiki caught her arm effortlessly, simply stopping her attack as the sword slipped out of her hand and fell to the ground with a metallic clang.

“You are not incorrect. But would you rather have that? Or risk this realm becoming the same wasteland as our own? Would you risk the rise of another Grima?”

Lucina stumbled backward, breaking her arm free from Tiki's grasp, who offered no resistance. This was the voice of her goddess before her, who had helped her travel through time itself to right the wrongs and save her home from Grima's wrath. Ylisse, Regna Ferox, the empire of Valm... None had been spared, not even Plegia itself, which worshipped the beast.

A variety of images flashed in her mind in quick succession. A world set ablaze, flames consuming everything from Ylissol to the Mila Tree while clogging the skies with smoke. The sight of clashing armies and dead bodies, only for the fallen to rise again some time after serving a new master. The downfall of everyone she knew and loved. And, above all of them, a massive silhouette, a winged serpent that blotted out the sun and covered it all with its shadow.

"That fear has been tormenting you for some time, hasn't it?" Tiki said. "What comes after. We are out of place, and out of time. And our home, our original home, is no more. We are no different than drifters."

The cracking noise kept sounding, like a song that would not cease. And it was not from Corrin alone, but also Tiki, as the golden stone started to spread across her face and head. It was mesmerising, watching how her skin and flesh turned into smooth stone, hardening into a living idol of her divine connection to Naga.

"We have been given the chance to bid farewell on our terms." Tiki said, coming closer to her and kneeling before her. There was no hostility in her voice, but a firm reassurance, something that her blank golden eyes reflected. "We have a chance, *a choice*, to belong somewhere."

Lucina merely stared, her mouth open. There was someone shouting in the background, but she had eyes only for tiki. The ritual was probably taking a toll on her, or maybe it had been her bottled up fears or the way up to the temple. Or a blend of it all, but her vision was blurry and there was a bluish shade that permeated it all.

"From now on, we belong together."

She gave no answer nor moved as Tiki leaned closer, feeling her golden lips interlace with her own fleshy ones. They felt wonderful, and not like anything she had imagined. She could feel something else. Her face and head, turning into something similar, as a wave spread from her eyes. It was surprisingly pleasant, as it turned the flesh and bone into firm and smooth gleamstone.

There was also something else. She felt something, she felt *them*. Tiki, becoming one with her, and Azura and Corrin nearby, their presences clinging to each other. And there was another one too, a very faint one, almost imperceptible...

However, she focused on Tiki, pushing back with her own tongue and trying to even the advance. Never letting go of the kiss, she felt the wave move into her hair after having transformed her head, while making its way down her neck into her shoulders. She raised a trembling hand and slowly approached her spontaneous lover's form, doubtful, only to be reassured as she felt a hand get her own. She guided her slip past those feelings, allowing her to touch her hardening body and making Tiki purr in delight.

She felt wonderful to the touch, and the feeling of the woman transforming and hardening under her own fingers... She could not describe it, but she did feel somewhat guilty of now being to offer Tiki something similar. She wasn't as wise or alluring, but she would do her best for her, as she had done before for Naga. She did not have to worry though, as their sudden burst of passion was something that translated to their kiss, as Tiki pushed forward once again, and she was happy to push back.

They were kneeling next to a pillar, the two of them using it for support as they kissed and touched. Her outfit left little room for advances, but Tiki managed, getting a hold of her rear and making sure she felt the pleasure fully as the transformation washed over them. It had advanced down their bodies with a steady pace, and the touch of her smooth fingers while her butt cheeks hardened now sent Lucina on the offensive.

They pushed back and forth, as the power surged through them. It was a gentle and gradual growth, like a small stream that grew to become a bountiful river, or a small flicker of light that grew brighter and brighter, until it illuminated all. They basked in that bliss, enjoying the

pleasure they shared as the last vestiges of the transforming wave slowly faded away. They had somewhere, someone, they belonged with.

Azura and Corrin clung to each other, their forehead pressed against the other's. There were no words, not a sound besides the fading cracking of the transformation. A fitting vessel for the power they now wielded. If they chose to ignore Hinoka's shouts, that was.

"Corrin, snap out of it! Corrin!"

Azura found herself somewhat enjoying the situation, there was a perverse glee in watching the woman shout and slowly despair. Always blunt and rash, filled to the brim with bravado and always putting up a façade. She would not blame her for caring for her family, but she had not thought twice before chasing them down back in their own world, giving her a cocky smirk.

"I'll kill you! Even if it's the last thing I do!"

The paralysis finally faded. It had lasted much longer than first expected, ever since the damn altar had started leaking that dark smoke and she had sung those verses, but Hinoka's body finally started moving again. Corrin's outfit was gradually vanishing, vaporising into a cloud of smoke as she held her, and Hinoka made her move.

She was always a nimble and swift fighter, as expected from a pegasus auriga, but the power that devoured her and her song had taken their toll. She had jumped towards her and Corrin, still in her embrace, but she was slow and sloppy.

Holding on to Corrin, the songstress had the two of them spin around, easily evading the coming attack as Corrin was left fully nude. She was just as wonderful. A statuesque figure, with beautifully carved features and sculpted curves. Her long hair, now an elaborated and detailed carved piece, cascaded behind her as the two living statues spun around. And all the while Corrin giggled playfully, enjoying the sudden dance.

Hinoka missed, her attempt at tackling them ending with her hitting the ground, the woman grunting as she hit her head. She had grossly miscalculated the extent of the ritual and the song. But she was trying to stand back up. She certainly had spirit.

“T-that won’t work again! I’ll bring you two back, even if it kills me!”

“Bring us back? We are right here, Hinoka!” Said Corrin, finally parting from Azura’s embrace. “We are all here, waiting for you.”

“She’s correct. And besides, it’s not just the two of us...” Smirked Azura “Isn’t that right?”

As expected, Hinoka looked where Tiki and Lucina were, now suspiciously silent. Despite her façade, Azura saw despair enter her gaze as she looked at Tiki. The manakete, the voice of naga, the divine dragon was golden from head to toe. She still wore her clothes, the red visibly contrasting with her new self and fully revealing the curves of her body, even as it covered the most intimate areas..

Her long ears poked out of a solid and detailed stone hair, her ponytail now holding on its own without need for any garments, and she wore an overall stern expression. One complemented by the right hand on her hip.

“Certainly. Now, let us finish this, Lucina.”

As she stepped aside, she revealed the woman she had been kissing. The young woman, the one that defied time itself, knelt behind the pillar while her mouth was still open, her blue blank eyes staring into the void. It took her a moment, but she quickly did as her peer asked of her.

Taking the hand the golden woman offered her, she stood up, the outfits of both vanishing in a cloud of dark smoke. They were gorgeous, and Azura couldn’t help but feel a tinge of pride. They were marvellous, as much as her dear Corrin was. And as befitted someone wielding such power. Idols and effigies of timeless beauty, a golden age that would never be threatened nor fade away. And they would make sure of that.

As Tiki and Lucina closed the distance, Falchion left behind, they came to stand next to Azura and Corrin. The four of them towered over Hinoka, who knelt on the floor after falling with her attack and had not managed to stand up again. And now, her eyes went from one blank stare to another, trying to find anything to hold on to.

“Corrin, Azura... please, stop this. This is not you. Please, just... come home.”

“We can’t, Hinoka.”

At Corrin’s words, Hinoka’s face fell. “Wha- why?”

“We belong here. With each other.”

“This power we have been given does not come from the gleamstones alone, but from the divine dragons. Without us here... who knows the consequences that could bring.” Tiki explained.

“And besides... we most likely do not have a home to return to.” Added Azura.

“That’s not true! What about Hoshido? You have lived there, Azura! And Corrin belongs there too! We can still be a family.”

“How long have we been here, in Aytolis, Hinoka?” Asked the songstress..

“Why does that matter now?!”

“There is no guarantee time flows the same in different worlds. One day here might have been several in Hoshido.” Said Lucina.

“So I just give up?! What about my brothers? What about Sakura? They went back!”

“Just like their Nohrian counterparts.” Said Corrin. “Xander, Leo and Elise also went back.”

“Then-”

“There is little reason to go back. What is waiting there? War and carnage?”

“How about home?”

“The royal siblings have disappeared, Hinoka, do you think opportunists and warlords won’t have taken the chance to bid for power?” Pressed Azura. “Besides, do you honestly believe Nohr was the threat to Hoshido?”

“Wh-what?”

“Hinoka, please, listen to me.” Said Corrin, her blank silvery eyes looking at her with warmth and care. “I still recall what you told me long ago. When I was kidnapped, you were angry and lost. You tried to rescue me on your own. Remember that?”

“That drove you for so many years. But I’m here now, and I would like you to remain with us. You have the same power as us. I- we can feel it within you. Stay here with us, with *me*, to keep Aytolis safe and in order.”

Hinoka remained silent, her eyes looking at the ground, while the statues looked at her. They bore into her very soul with their blank gazes. The power of her gleamstone flowed and palpitated, growing steadily stronger. She was one of them, she belonged with them.

“There is nothing but war, help us achieve peace.”

“The past cannot be changed, but your future is before you.”

“Let the power free, let the power of the dragons and gleamstone free.”

“Remain with us. With me. Please...”

Their presence allowed their power to resonate with hers, growing stronger, harder to contain. It reached for its peers, the other gleamstone women. And as it grew, the cacophony of voices only added fuel to that fire. Memories of the war they had recently waged came to mind, their

heroics against their foes and monsters bringing peace to the realm. Their visages replaced the ones that concerned her before. A golden priestess, a blue traveller, a silver noblewoman, a purple songstress.

Hinoka knelt before them in complete silence, as the dark smoke that leaked from the altar started fading. They felt her, just as strong and powerful. Just as bright and radiant. Hinoka finally looked up, her eyes blank orbs of red stone.

Her transformation was swift and efficient. Under the gaze of the four of them, the transforming wave spread across Hinoka's form, replacing flesh and bone with smooth and firm gleamstone. Her messy short red hair became a carved and elaborated piece, while her face reddened into the same sheen of her eyes.

Her figure, light and lithe, was rendered into stone as the transformation wave swept across her. Just as nimble, just as swift, but much more resistant to anything that could come her way. Her limbs were light and flexible, and felt like it, despite being made of solid red gleamstone.

She had never been excessively curvy nor well-endowed, similar to her blue peer, but as her body was turned into a stone masterwork she held an aura of otherworldly beauty. An appearance that was beyond conventions, one that had been blessed by the sacred dragon and carried fabulous power within.

And yet, Azura held a chuckle as the clothes Hinoka still wore brushed against her body. She was much more sensitive now, something she could relate to. Something they all could relate to, and maybe something that could be explored later... A thought that remained in her mind as the woman stood up and faced her peers.

As the dark smoke from the altar vanished, so did Hinoka's clothes with a swirl of dark mist, fully revealing her new self. Her gleamstone body was as alluring as the rest, a lithe and light figure, with small and perky breasts and a shapely rear. She gleamed just like the rest of them, her power resonating with each of their own. They were all, they were complete.

"My bad for the doubts." Hinoka said, shily scratching the back of her stone hair.

“No need to apologise.” Reassured Azura. “You are wonderful.”

She was pleased, most pleased. The ritual had concluded, and the gleamstones had been blessed by the powers of the sacred dragons. By both of them. They were to report back to Queen Yelena and plan their next move.

“It is done. Let’s get going ladies, the Queen is waiting.”

Azura turned around and started walking, back to the camp, back to the Queen. She was a whole new self, and so were her peers... maybe something more than peers. She felt them, wherever they would be, and they would feel her. A connection that transcended anything they could have imagined, one free of past burdens, and that she- that all of them would protect no matter what. And she was certain of that.