**Queen Returns to Mistran**

Queen arrives in Mistran just days after Brin’s death. She takes on a new disguise immediately, showing herself as a young girl. She shows great proficiency in all manner of schooling, and the church takes a special interest in her. Soon, she is rising through the ranks of the government, attaining a seat at the council of all settlements in the region. With some underhanded tactics, a bit of blackmail, and some simple intimidation, Queen gains some loyalists within the council. She pushes for expansion of Mistran, and consolidation of the settlements into one nation. It is named Nithran, representing strength and unity under Mistran.

Eventually, the council acquiesces, and the settlements unite as one. Queen works to raise living conditions in smaller settlements around Mistran, but focuses mainly on funneling resources to the main city. She puts major focus on technological progress, and experimentation with Aura. Mistran is soon a hub of researchers and industry. Aura quickly becomes more understood, leading to military efficiency improving rapidly. Large-scale metallurgy grows into its own industry, as well.

This unrestrained growth did not come without drawbacks, however. As technology progressed, quality of life in Mistran did as well. Quickly, demand for resources outgrew supply. Queen did nothing to assist the settlements supplying Mistran with its massive amounts of metals, fuel, and food. Resentment due to this grows as quickly as the population of Mistran. Queen sees great progress in the technology, especially in manipulation of Aura, and does not heed the growing sense of fracturing in the nation.

Secret tests for an Aura bomb are given the highest focus by Queen. The technology improves rapidly with the study of Aura. A stone infused with great amounts of Aura is electrically stimulated, causing rapid replication of the particles. As they breach containment, the Aura hits a critical pressure. The Aura seems to return to a neutral state, moving with the ethereal Aura that infuses everything. Aura that comes in contact with this neutral state also assumes a neutral state. The bomb explodes unimpressively, but the Aura shockwave extends beyond it, and lasts much longer--Hours to days.

Animals, plants, and even Elementals are dissolved by the effect. The Aura that infuses their bodies ‘forgets’ its source. It instantly begins moving with the ever-present waves of Aura that exist in a different plane than air or earth. The momentum shift tears living organisms apart at a molecular level. It is exactly what Queen wishes for. The issue is that the explosion still only affects an area of about a meter. Untold amounts of Aura would need to be focused into magnitudes stronger material in order to make the weapon more damaging.

Queen is done waiting, however. During a test, she walks out into the field and sends the command to fire. The bomb fires, and she pushes past confused security. A gray sizzling marks the area she strides towards. The area is evacuated, and the highest-level alarm is sounded. Queen stops as one researcher stumbles out of the lab after her. He yells out to Queen, begging her not to go any further. He begs her not to leave, understanding her intentions. Queen is quiet, but still.

The man asks why she would do this, why isn’t life worth living? At this, Queen turns. She says she hasn’t been living. Everything has been in pursuit of this. The researcher approaches further, repeating his plea. Queen turns back around, and takes a step. The man falls to his knees behind her, and states the royal pledge. He declares himself bound to her, that he would slay god, turn on his faith, if she asked.

Queen pauses again. Something in his words awakens an old feeling Queen remembers. Her goal in the Second Age…The memories she gained in her encounter with Nn. She’s succeeded in creating the glittering city she saw. Or…Has she? Was it a lie? It wasn’t the end… Queen’s thoughts spiral. She begins to hear the man’s words again. He’s talking about the nation’s collapse without her. Queen remembers the collapse of civilization under the Ash Elemental God. With a shock, she realizes that the being must still be around, clues in what researchers termed Dark Elementals pointing her to that conclusion.

She has to stay. To cease existence would be to sate the god that has tormented her with eternal life. What a pity it would be, to leave this world before seeing Nn’s fall. The world may be doomed to another Dark Age without her. Nn won’t put her through that again, and he won’t escape her wrath. Queen hefts the man to his feet, and begins to run. The fuzzy gray area of the Aura bomb expands slowly, eventually overtaking where both once stood.

The man, named Rion,