

Sequel to "Those With Virtue Dream For Better Nights". This story is about the one in red who will end all things.

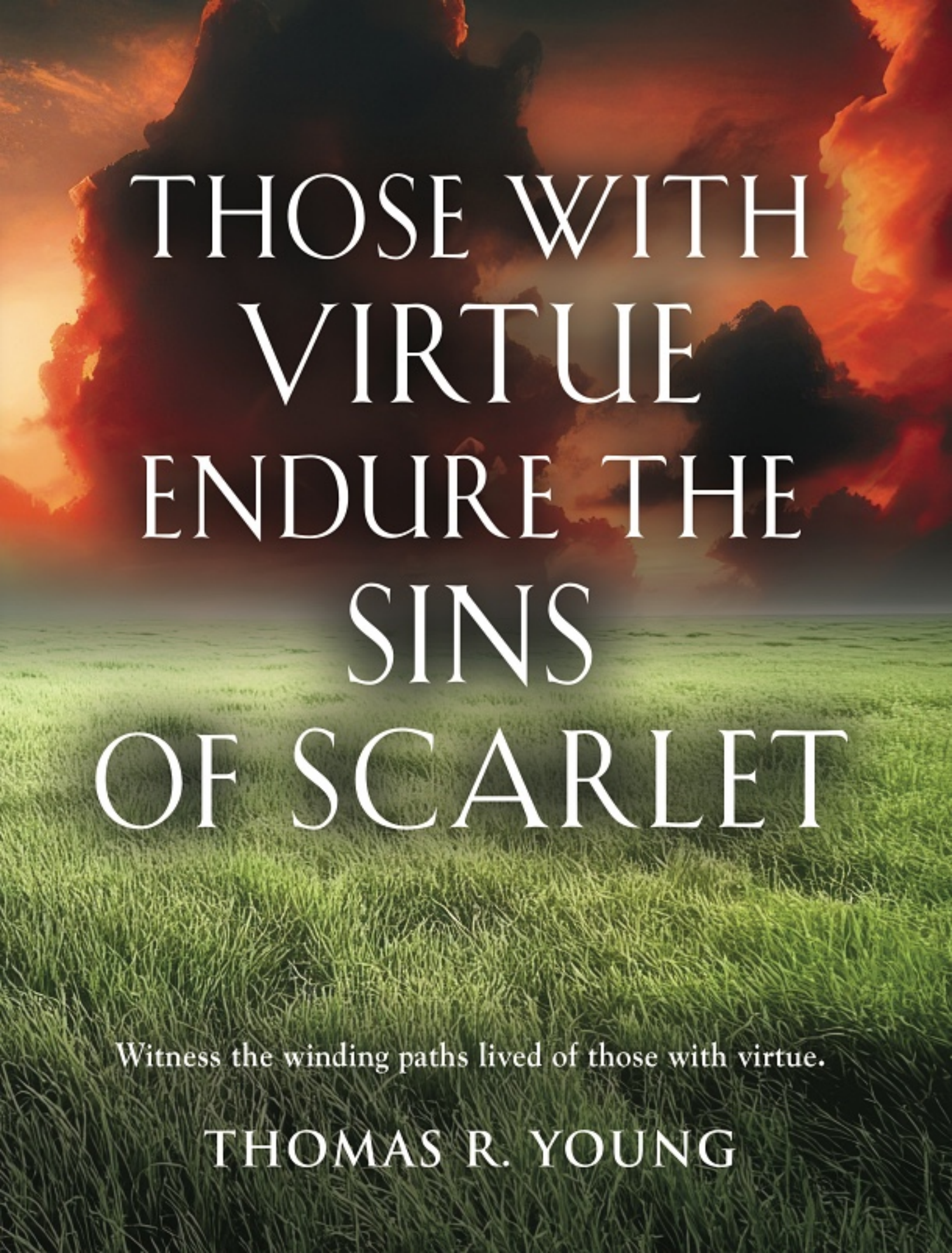
Those With Virtue Endure The Sins of Scarlet

By Thomas R. Young

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THOSE WITH
VIRTUE
ENDURE THE
SINS
OF SCARLET

Witness the winding paths lived of those with virtue.

THOMAS R. YOUNG

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Chapter 1: The World's Answer to the Tailor

Vastria, a world home to various races, numerous lands, and countless dreams of the future. As the world continues to grow, so do the many people that inhabit it. Many things change but also stay the same, much like the lands that make up Vastria. Two continents to be exact. The largest continent of Vastria was Tavrend. A land where many atrocities, pain, and sins took place throughout its history. But so did peace, compassion, and virtue.

At the frozen northwest point of Tavrend was the country of Frostilia. A far more peaceful and loved nation than it had been in the past. Tall mountains carved the border between there and Shipponia. Truth be told, each country had mountain passes to define their borders toward one another. Looking east-southeast of Frostilia, and east of Shipponia as a reference point, one would find the Dragonlands. A fierce and unforgiving land brimming with fire, lava, and brimstone perhaps due to activity of dragon kind there but none are sure of the temperature difference. The land of dragons, for the most part, keeps to itself. Landing to the west of the Dragonlands and south of Frostilia was Shipponia, nation of the animalia, at least those that migrated to the Tavrend continent. Many tribes of animalia migrated from their nation of origin across the sea, the continent of Animalonia, to call these lands home.

Next country of discussion was the Holy Empire of the Sun, the Golden Empire, sometimes referred to as the Golden Empire of the Sun. It has many names but all of which entail its pride and pure nature. Aside from the gradual decline in elevation to the westward ocean, most land masses of the Golden Empire were mountainous peaks sprawled out south of Shipponia whereby most inhabitants lived on raised ground reaching to the clouds high above in some parts of it. One particular far reaching mountain peak was the most revered spot on the whole continent, the Mother Springs, supplying a fresh water source to the rest of the countries. The nation had seen peace for many generations after the countless wars between the non-religious and the religious. After a long struggle the two parties finally came to a truce, accepting that an individual's strength should define the way forward be it a spiritually revered subject or not. An individual of substance and character is what the country desires. Despite this simple view, very few other nations truly trusted the Golden Empire, a wary eye kept on them for the different way of living that was deemed too vague and without written laws of succession.

Further south was the country of Vineland, at one time a prosperous nation by account of unknown history to most, a desert after that by way of unknown reasons, and now a rejuvenated landscape with abundant trees as far as the eyes could see thanks to the miraculous efforts of Princess Rebecca of Mezmaria long ago. Princess Rebecca, the bearer of Virtue once before, was Mezmaria's greatest user of magic. It was by her hand that the desert wasteland changed drastically and dramatically for the better if only to escape the continent's tailor.

The final two nations that made up Tavrend were Mezmaria and its sister nation, Veronome. The twin nations of Mezmaria and Veronome were the most well-known of all the lands in Tavrend. Many heroes and villains were born of these two prosperous nations. Mezmaria was east of Vineland in terms of

geography, Veronome to the south of Vineland. However, despite the tall mountains defining their borders, Vineland and Veronome shared the western border of Mezmaria.

For the first time in written history, the lands of both Mezmaria and Veronome were not ruled by celestial sisters but by one of their offspring. For Mezmaria's Queen Angelica sought out a suitor as her sister had done in the past and gave birth to a beautiful girl, Princess Rosaline. The young princess was beloved by her nation and, once she was of age, crowned the queen without opposition to the claim. The former queen, Angelica, and her betrothed settled down as they entered retirement with one last public news article of their departure into seclusion.

As for Veronome, the seat of succession passed to several. Queen Angelica's sister, Valentina, first held the crown but eventually handed her seat down to her daughter/other half, Vivian Midnight. Queen Vivian took on the responsibilities of the kingdom for a few decades before handing it down to her own children to pursue other passions. As an adventurer, the young woman was more suited to battle than the worries of a nation. The children of Vivian Midnight took on the crown with dutiful notions with the oldest sibling taking the role as queen, Nocturne Midnight.

These are the nations that make up Tavrend, one of two continents in the world of Vastria. It is important to note there are two areas of land uninhabited by large populations due to the difficulty living there. The first area of land was the desert wastelands south of Veronome and Mezmaria where the scorching sun is relentless and the sands howling across the endless landscape. At one time known for its train tracks and sparse settlements, the land is now even less settled than before despite many further attempts of it.

The second area of land is east of Mezmaria. Far reaching plains extend to the horizon in what are called the Plains of Existence for the beautiful sightseeing hiking one could take that way. But it is advised not to stay in the plains too long for the Mother Spring's waters don't reach all areas of them. It could be a livable area of land but most don't want to chance it outside of those mysterious individuals in their floating castle far east.

There was another lesser known continent than Tavrend in the world of Vastria. The land few knew for it isolated itself, and its concerns from others. The populace of Tavrend didn't even know a continent existed in the past far west across the ocean had it not been for random migrants traveling abroad. The next largest continent of Vastria was Animalonia, birthplace and home to the various species of animalia such like kitsune, lycan, griffon, harpy, and many others humanoid individuals but portraying animalistic characteristics. Over the many centuries in seclusion, the animalia of that continent had become more accepted in, and accepting of, the other continent, Tavrend. As such, the animalia became more common in their migration there.

The animalia that migrated were subjected to the atrocities beset upon the lands of Tavrend. What originated in slavery within certain countries leading to freedom afterward was still beset by witnessing conflict, war, and harm done by persons of interest in that new land. Strangely enough, after finally gaining peaceful transition and settlement in the land of Shipponia upon the continent of Tavrend, the animalia witnessed a desperate struggle throughout the years by the hands of Violet Diamond, small town tailor of

Vanillaville, and various differing groups of individuals dubbed ‘Violet’s Army’ against what appeared to be unimaginable confrontations coming and going quickly but repeatedly. Animalia were used to seclusion but soon felt inclusion in the continent’s struggle for peace by witnessing that tailor in her struggles throughout the years.

Despite the numerous victories in the name of peace, the world is closer to destruction than ever before. A threat greater than any before has finally matured. Soon, the horror will eclipse the entire planet and way life that had been lived up until that point.

An airship arrived at the frozen northwestern tip of Tavrend, right outside the Puregloss Kingdom, capital city of Frostilia, albeit lost in a whiteout. The military aircraft was able to skirt the encompassing mountainous ranges of Shipponia’s northern border in this endeavor beforehand. Snow and ice covered the windows of the airship making it difficult to see the countryside properly for a snowstorm had brewed. Due to the dangerous weather conditions common to Frostilia, the airship needed to touch down in the snow to ascertain their location and destination. The mission of those aboard was to make a vital escort to the capital for an important world leader meeting.

As it landed, the doors to this airship opened and a small group moved out suited in military garb except for the regal wear of two women. One woman was older with auburn hair and a stern look in her eyes. The other woman was younger with strawberry blonde hair and a softer expression. The military soldiers, that of Mezmaria, protecting the two women weren't entirely sure if the Puregloss Kingdom docking port was close enough aside from approximate navigation means but would need to set out on foot in search of it. Despite the white out enveloping them, the royal Mezmarian soldiers surrounding the ones being escorted pointed out a glowing pinkish glow in the distance emanating through the snow's raging winds.

"Miss Chambers! Puregloss Kingdom looks to be that way!" one of the royal guards shouted pointing to the pinkish glow while glancing back to the woman with strawberry blonde hair.

Sabrina Chambers, the one to whom the royal guard was speaking, stretched slightly and shivered in the extreme cold as she looked at the soldier then where they were pointing. “Oh, um...yeah! I can...kinda see that!”

The young woman was young, early twenties at the most. She wore a green cloak over a white dress with pink trimming. Her hair was strawberry blonde that fell to her shoulders.

“Such a beautiful land. Wouldn’t you say, dear?” The older woman spoke from behind the younger one. This older woman was young, at least in appearance. She had a more formal dress on then the younger woman, her auburn hair cut short.

Sabrina nodded quickly as the freezing wind blew upon the small group causing her hair to whip in the cold breeze. “Oh, yes...it certainly is.”

The older woman chuckled softly as she moved to Sabrina's side. "This is very important. Remember that. Best behavior now."

"I'm not a child," Sabrina said as she looked away.

"Then don't act it," the older woman remarked with a raised chin. "Proper prose, dear."

The royal guard that had pointed out the pinkish glow saluted the two women as another freezing breeze hit the small group. "Terribly sorry for the walk, ma'ams! We will bring the airship into port as soon as we can once we get you two safely to the capital! Just following orders to get you both to the meeting as soon as possible!"

"Forcing a delicate woman such as myself to walk is such a cruel thing to do," the older woman pouted at the royal guard.

"Who's acting like a child now?" Sabrina muttered under her breath.

The guard profusely apologized once more but knew reprimands awaited them for not getting through the nation's whiteout to the port properly, promptly, and without incident. A freezing wind whipped across the landscape, blowing right through the small group. The guard had to keep his hand held onto his helmet to keep it from falling off. With a few more apologies, he and the other royal guards began leading the two women across the billowing snowy lands toward the pinkish glow.

The pinkish glow grew bigger and bigger the closer they got to it. Mesmerizing. If only it could give their numb appendages some of its warmth from the frozen death outside.

Approaching the pinkish glow, the strawberry blonde woman in a green cloak noted it belonged to a barrier encompassing a massive city. While she was looking at it, her foot caught onto something, and she tripped. Catching herself to not land face first into the snow, the young woman looked behind her to what she had tripped on. Something that looked like a hand with a heart-shaped ring on one finger was poking out of the ground.

Sabrina straightened herself then quickly pointed a finger in the frozen hand's direction that was sticking out of the ground. "Oh god! I think there was a hand or something in the snow! Did you see it, mom?!"

As the older woman glanced to it, the leading royal guard quickly brushed off Sabrina to get the snow off. The guard then took a closer look at the hand poking out of the snow as the other soldiers did. "Looks like another one was unburied. Don't worry, Miss Chambers. This is common here."

"What?" Sabrina blinked at that trying to gain an explanation shortly before her mother, the older woman let out an annoyed groan as the small group stood freezing in the snow.

“Sabrina! We have places to be! A meeting that cannot be missed due to its importance! You know this! We can’t be stopping for every distraction, now can we!?” Sabrina’s mother shouted at the younger woman.

“Yeah, but-” Sabrina started but was swiftly cut off.

“-The Queen of Puregloss is expecting us! Not only her but every nation’s leader! We cannot keep them waiting!” Sabrina’s mother glared at her.

"Yes, ma'am. We cannot keep the Queen of Mezmaria and others waiting," the royal guard nodded, agreeing with Sabrina’s mother. As Sabrina sighed, the royal guard began leading the small group toward the pinkish barrier. After a few minutes, he glanced back at Sabrina and pointed at it. "Miss Chambers, that barrier is what keeps the inhabitants of this nation alive during snowstorms. There are not many options for fire or other natural sources of warmth. Lack of trees and vegetation, you see. Those stuck out in the snowstorm like the frozen hand you saw are the unlucky individuals caught without safety of the capital’s barrier."

“Oh...that poor dear...” Sabrina grimaced as she looked backwards trying to observe the hidden hand with the heart-shaped ring among the snow, invisible now in the white out.

“Eyes in the front like a proper lady, dear. Always forwards, never to the past,” the mother said as she followed the guard.

“R-right...” Sabrina softly spoke as she hurried back to her mother’s side.

On approach of the pinkish barrier, foreign guards of Puregloss stepped out of it to wave the small group in, assuring them to simply pass on through for safety from the storm. As Sabrina passed through the barrier, she was greeted with a pristine warm whitish city perfect in all ways visibly whereby the central building, Castle North Star, extended high enough to pierce the storm's clouds. Upon the top of the castle, Sabrina could only see an outline, but she knew about the nation's heart-shaped gem that sustained the barrier protecting the city from reading books on it.

“They weren’t kidding about it feeling way warmer in here,” Sabrina remarked in awe while observing the city’s layout.

Their royal guard saluted the two women then pointed to the castle. "Right on time for the meeting. We made it. Phew, I won’t be reprimanded this time."

“Thank goodness,” Sabrina said as she wiped the newly forming sweat from her brow.

“Maybe next time we don’t get distracted by street gutter outside city walls? Hmm?” Mrs. Chambers said without turning towards her daughter. “In any case, we can’t be late for the meeting.”

"Yes, ma'am," their guard saluted Mrs. Chambers, starting to lead the way once more.

The warmth of the city within the pinkish barrier quickly heated up the traveling group. The snow melting and hitting the ground evaporated or fell into an intricate sewer system on the sides of the inner streets. Sabrina noticed that light was everywhere in the city even without visible sources. There were no shadows. Every corner, nook, and cranny had a pleasant whitish glow to it.

"Pretty bright in here," Sabrina noted to herself. "Almost makes you forget the cold outside of this place."

Mrs. Chambers, Sabrina, and the other soldiers followed their leading guard as he escorted them to the tall castle.

"It's like a heat lamp," their leading guard joked, entering the courtyard before the tall castle where not even a shadow was there, too.

"You're not wrong about that," a Puregloss soldier remarked, nodding to the women with a tip of a hat upon his head. "Ladies. Pleasure to see Mezmaria's representation in the capital this day."

"Oh, um..." Sabrina quickly bowed her head after her mother gave a warning look. "T-thank you."

"Just a shame we won't be here for too long," Mrs. Chambers said while focusing her gaze on the Puregloss soldier.

Both Sabrina and her mother separated from their Mezmarian escort to one of Puregloss. Their own nation's soldiers remained outside the castle's walls. The two women were led into the grand entrance of Castle North Star where two fountains were spraying water hundreds of feet into the air. The entrance led into a grand hallway laden with rose-tinted trimming along the walls and floor. The two were then led further down this grand hallway to the very end noticing two grand staircases on both ends of the hall. However, at the end of the grand hall in the middle, the ground had a gradual decline to royal double doors that, when opened, revealed the World Leader Conference room in all its lavish glory.

Arraigned seating was established in the conference room with various rulers and their escorts partaking in the summons. King Derax of Dragonlands, an older dragon, sat very still gripping his scepter next to a younger youthful dragon emanating a smoky aura, his son, Pyrius Mire Blackwater. Queen Winter Fria of Shipponia, a silent snowhare animalia, sat beside a golden-haired kitsune Sabrina hadn't seen before. Tiny King Kilby of the Golden Empire, a human child with angel wings, fluttered above his chair with a happy smile, harpies and griffons sitting nearby in white robes. King Barone of Vineland, dressed in lavish purple kimono wear, sat next to his two daughters, Savita and Kagumi, one dressed in red kimono and the other blue. Queen Nocturne of Veronome was seated with her family right next to the one Sabrina and her mother had been trying to reach in their travel, Queen Rosaline of Mezmaria, accompanied by her many royal guards. Sabrina was in awe of so many royals in one place as she and her mother quickly went to Queen Rosaline's seating area in the room.

“I can’t believe we’re here,” Sabrina whispered softly.

“Oh, but we are, and we have business here,” Mrs. Chambers whispered. “Chin up and pay attention.”

As the two approached, they found Queen Rosaline in mid conversation. The youthful queen was young in appearance with long black hair flowing down her back. The person the Queen of Mezmaria was speaking with wore a blue gown with a set of wings protruding from the back.

“...They’ll be arriving very shortly. When they do, you’ll be accompanying them. Hopefully things won’t be...too difficult with the Diamond.” The Queen of Mezmaria, Rosaline, spoke of this to the person in the blue gown before her eyes drifted to the approaching pair. “Oh my, here at last, I see. Took your time, huh?”

Queen Nocturne of Veronome and her family turned their attention to view Sabrina and her mother arriving agreeing with the Mezmarian queen that the two did, indeed, take their time in getting there.

"She sure did~" a woman whispered into Sabrina's ear from behind. Turning around, she saw Queen Courtney of Puregloss, dressed in a lavish white gown with pink seams embroidered into various patterns upon it. Pink embroidery that matched the tall woman's hair. One of the most beautiful women in Tavrend by according to many others' opinion of her appearance.

Sabrina did her best to suppress a yelp of surprise at the sudden appearance of Queen Courtney. Following behind Queen Courtney was a redheaded woman, her hair tied in a bun with a bit of hair loose to one side. She watched the others silently, expressionless as she took her role of attending Queen Courtney seriously.

“Y-your highnesses...” Sabrina shakingly took a bow to both Queen Rosaline and Queen Courtney, never imagining she’d be in the company of the most powerful Tavrend rulers. “I-it’s a great honor to be here!”

Queen Rosaline chuckled softly to herself as she got up and moved closer. Her hands remained behind her back as she moved closer to the young Miss Chambers.

“This is your daughter, Sarah? Last I’d heard she was studying in Veronome,” The Queen of Mezmaria said as she measured up and down Sabrina with her eyes.

“Fresh out of the academy,” Sarah Chambers, mother of Sabrina, nodded.

"She's welcome to stay in my nation anytime. In fact, I'd love her to someday," Queen Courtney smiled at the small group, apologizing to Sabrina for scaring her. The Queen of Puregloss figured it was time and headed to the front with the redheaded woman in tow towards a podium to address the room. As soon as Queen Courtney spoke, everyone in the room paid her careful attention. "Such a lovely day and lovely crowd of world-renowned leaders! Before we address the central matter of the summons, I'd like to

extend a warm welcome to new faces. Over there is Pyrius Blackwater of Dragonlands accompanying his father, King Derax. Over there is Sabrina of Mezmaria accompanied by her mother, Sarah Chambers. Right next to me is Viola, a dear friend and special guest from afar. Last, but not least, is an extra special guest. Queen Yoko of Animalonia has joined us this day! Isn't that great everyone?!"

"Hello, hello, hello!" the golden-haired kitsune waved to everyone shaking the sleeve of her yellowish kimono wildly, nine tails swaying behind her. A few waved back though King Barone pulled out a milkshake to sip instead. Sabrina waved to the crowds sheepishly.

"It is an honor to be in your presence," Viola remarked when introduced.

"Let's go with introductions. Tell us a little about yourselves. Hmm, youngest first," Queen Courtney pointed to Sabrina and her mother, winking at the older woman in a gesture of complimenting age.

Sabrina was a deer in headlights as she looked over the crowd as they turned their eyes to her.

Sarah cleared her throat and quickly spoke for her daughter to refrain from further embarrassment in the following younger girl's silence. "It's a pleasure to be here, of course. I am Sarah Chambers, noble of Mezmaria. This is my daughter, Sabrina, a scholar of the magical arts. National winner of every magic user competition. Her capabilities are said to even surpass Princess Rebecca's or so I've been told by many, and I do so believe them witnessing what my little girl can do."

King Barone raised an eyebrow hearing of Princess Rebecca now gaining curiosity in Sabrina setting down his drink. Further silence ensued as Sabrina remained silent as a bright blush crossed her face while her mother hissed for the girl to respond to the world leaders.

"Such a shy girl, this Sabrina," Queen Courtney giggled, raising a hand to her lips. "I do simply adore what you're wearing Sarah Chambers. I'd like to mention that, too. And now to Viola. I like that name."

The woman turned to the redheaded girl as Sarah looked herself over then nodded quickly. "T-thank you."

The redheaded girl, Viola, dutifully spoke. "Thank you. Viola Pyrite, at your service. I have been blessed with the honor of serving Queen Courtney. Seeing so many esteemed guests today, I feel like my family will be blessed with this memory for many generations to come."

"Blessed~! Hooray~!" King Kilby of the Golden Empire squealed while doing somersaults in the air above his chair.

"Viola, my newest favorite noble," Queen Courtney smiled then turned to the dragon prince. "Your turn, Mr. Pyrite...I mean, Pyrius."

"That's my name," Pyrius snorted black smoke while emanating it from his skin, crossing both arms. "Just here to observe. Not be family or a close friend to others."

"My turn!" Queen Yoko of Animalonia shouted, no longer able to wait, as she hopped onto her table, tails swaying, nine of them, kimono shifting left and right. "Hailing from Animalonia, I'm Yoko! I have a 'Go-go' attitude! I wanted to see Tavrend for myself. So many interesting sights and smells. So many people and places to see!"

"The Queen of Animalonia here as well is quite the surprise..." Mrs. Chambers whispered perhaps a little too loudly.

"A bit I'd say," Queen Rosaline agreed.

"Oh, don't climb on furniture. Tavrend tradition. I remember. Apologies," Queen Yoko spoke, taking a bow then quickly took her seat again.

"Now that we've had the good news. Let's get to the matter at hand," Queen Courtney spoke with a serious tone addressing the room with a short pause then turned her head to address the most important Tavrend queen in the room. "Queen Rosaline, would you like to speak on the recent matter with Violet Diamond of Mezmaria? How close are we to our goal?"

Eyes shifted among one another in the room at the tailor's mention. Most unhappy that this would be coming up yet again.

"Closer now for sure. If I may speak on it..." Queen Rosaline moved to the podium. Queen Courtney quickly moved aside to allow the young queen some space.

Queen Nocturne gave an audible sigh then spoke up. "Are we really bringing this up again? Leave her alone already. Each one of you has tried various setups, plans, and traps."

"And it pains me that we even had to do so," Queen Rosaline said as she leaned on the podium nodding at Nocturne's words. The young queen pondered a moment before shaking a thought away. "Thing is this Miss...or is it Mrs. Diamond...? This Violet Diamond has had control over the Stones of Virtue for...well longer than some of us have even been alive. My mother told me once when I was younger that Violet was determined to retain them as long as she could. In my research, it's more like stubbornness to relinquish those stones to more capable hands."

"Father agrees with the 'stubbornness' remark," Savita spoke up for King Barone.

"We've voted on this before, yes," Queen Courtney nodded. "It was nearly unanimous that Violet Diamond of Mezmaria be considered a lifelong war criminal. It is not in our worst endeavors that we'd like to do...what we need to...However, time and time again, her actions have caused so much destruction in all of our nations. King Kilby remembers the time her group destroyed that entire mountain."

"That I do," King Kilby agreed. "Rude~ Rude~"

"There appears to be multiple events like this. Including, for some reason...fighting a snail for a prolonged period of time to the point of ecological damage exceeding ten years of recovery," Viola noted having prepared documentation on the matter.

"Goodness..." Queen Yoko blinked in surprise.

"That's why she needs be reined in," Queen Rosaline nodded before looking to Viola.

"My goodness...that long for a snail. What in Vastria was Violet and her army doing...?" Kagumi of Vineland spoke concerning the matter to her father, King Barone, though he did not answer.

"I'd like to mention that we dragons have declared peace for many years now. And this 'Violet Diamond' came across our borders unannounced and three volcanoes erupted in her army's approach. We're still not sure how, but the aftermath led to many dragons being obliterated. We feel the snail's pain," King Derax of Dragonlands remarked, tapping his scepter on the ground.

Sabrina's eyes twitched hearing the horror stories about Violet Diamond.

"Father would like to point out our nation was founded on trying to get away from her. Yet, right now, she's within our borders," Savita remarked.

"Within your borders, you say?" Sarah Chambers, Sabrina's mother, asked.

"Yes, we've asked her to leave repeatedly," Savita nodded. "Well, not me. But the guards."

"Yes, at the moment, we know the general area where Violet is located," Queen Rosaline quickly spoke to gain everyone's attention. "With this information, we have the best chance to obtain the Stones of Virtue and restrain the mad Diamond once and for all."

"...This seems surprisingly tame considering the multiple accounts of trespassing inside castles of royalty and higher nobility. Including, but not limited to, one several years back where she broke into a noble's bedchambers in the middle of the night to lecture them for hours on how horrible nobility is. Along with 'improperly rearranging their silverware'...though that seems less important," Viola shook her head at the strange records she'd brought and recounted.

"The stories are true then!" Queen Yoko gasped, remembering certain tales.

Sabrina put a hand to her face, unsure how anyone could have such a terrible record. Viola was leafing through a folder that looked more like a dictionary of Violet's strange crimes she researched.

"Wait....didn't her long past wolf husband bath in our clean Mother Springs...?" King Kilby pondered.

“I’ve heard the two were skinny dipping at one point,” Sarah Chambers pondered.

“Unclean~!” King Kilby squeaked clasping both hands to his face.

“That incident did appear to be a genuine accident,” Viola remarked, reading over her notes. “It was well documented due to a recording by a ‘Miss Penelope Parish’. Although, immediately following the incident, Miss Parish was accosted and had her helicopter hijacked by the group.”

"Don't worry, everyone! Queen Rosaline has chosen our savior to take it upon themselves to rectify the terror we've all been facing! Sabrina! The one finally capable of confronting the tailor!" Queen Courtney announced happily to some cheering.

Queen Nocturne scoffed at this. Viola clapped as Courtney was clapping.

“Ah, yes. You are correct, Queen Courtney,” Rosaline nodded. “This was the reason you were summoned here, Miss Sabrina Chambers. To undertake this critical task.”

Sabrina was taking a sip of water then nearly spit it across the table at the Mezmarian Queen’s words, her mother glaring at the girl for the disgusting action.

The Mezmarian Queen moved closer to Sabrina as eyes in the room landed on the young magic user. “We have utmost faith in you, Miss Chambers. You’ll do our nation, and the rest of the world, this great favor.”

“Me? You want me to-” Sabrina chocked out.

“-Negotiate with Violet Diamond,” Queen Rosaline nodded. “If possible, of course. Chances are she won’t. In that case, force will need to be used. By any means necessary, eliminate the threat of Tavrend.”

“E-eliminate...” Sabrina whispered to herself while in shock.

The Mezmarian Queen walked over and grabbed the winged woman in blue. “With that in mind, I acquired a bodyguard for the two of you.”

"That brings into question what a satisfactory outcome of negotiation would be. Is it her going into exile in Vanillaville or facing more severe judgement for her crimes?" Viola paused as though pondering it. "If it's the latter, then we could mention dropping charges on her many accomplices as she is the clear leader. We might also need to prepare a lawyer as Miss Violet has a record of... interesting defense strategies. ...Mainly one where she claimed to 'feel guilty' when asked how she pleads then tried to strike that from the record."

"Viola brings up some excellent suggestions," Queen Courtney nodded.

"What's a lawyer? Is that a bird?" Queen Yoko raised her hand.

"Anyone could be a lawyer," Queen Rosaline said before looking to Viola. "So informed! I gotta write some of this down."

"On it, my queen," a Mezmarian royal guard quickly took notes to Rosaline's satisfaction.

"Apologies, Queen Yoko. I, perhaps, didn't properly answer your question. The Mezmarian justice system usually involves having additional parties to professionally argue for, and against, the one charges were brought against," Queen Rosaline clarified to the golden-haired kitsune.

"Oh..." Queen Yoko tapped a finger to her chin, tails swaying. "We animalia normally set up a duel to settle the score and see if the guilty party survives...I'm joking. Those that oversee the lands have a consulting group to decide what should be done."

"Sounds barbaric~" tiny King Kilby spoke, landing on his table, tucking both angelic wings in.

"In any case..." Queen Rosaline moved the woman in the blue dress closer to Sabrina and Sarah Chambers. "This is Lydia Wolfe of the Golden Empire, and she'll be escorting you."

Queen Rosaline would have tried to send Viola as well with how knowledgeable she was on the matter concerning the tailor but knew the red-haired woman likely had other plans.

"How qualified for this mission is Ms. Wolfe?" Queen Courtney asked. Lydia's eyes shifted nervously as she was presented to the crowd.

"She comes from a long line of trackers and bodyguards. Also, the blood of the Empire's founder runs through her veins. So, I have full confidence in her abilities," Queen Rosaline nodded.

"I approve~" tiny King Kilby giggled on his spot.

"Queen Fria, we should send a representative of Animalonia in an attempt to provide support." Queen Yoko looked at the regal silent snowhare. "A show of good faith between different cultures that is long overdue. What about Sage? The one you recommended so earnestly to me?"

"The kitsune pop star? Well, from my understanding, she's the daughter of a friend of Violet's," Viola remarked on the matter. "That sounds risky much like the security measures of this room."

"This 'Sage', Queen Yoko? Is she a friend of Violet? Or just a connection by circumstance in family relations?" Queen Courtney asked.

"I don't recall if the two are acquainted," Queen Yoko spoke in simple terms. "But Sage is highly recommended for this."

The World Leaders looked at one another not wanting to risk this. Queen Courtney spoke after a few moments. "We should refrain from sending those that 'could' become friends with Violet in this matter."

"Of course. Of course. A wise decision," Queen Yoko nodded, handing Queen Winter Fria of Shipponia a note, hidden in her tail concerning Sage. The silent snowhare read the note and said nothing on it nor expressed anything about it.

"You all keep speaking as if I'm not here!" Queen Nocturne suddenly remarked, folding her arms. "I said to leave her alone!"

"With that, our plan is under way," Queen Rosaline smiled as she moved to take her seat. "Any other questions?"

Sabrina felt bad for Queen Nocturne. Viola soon spoke up to address the Veronome leader's concerns. "If I may, Queen Nocturne. I apologize for being insensitive about your relations with Violet in this matter. However, everyone's situation is a bit strained at the damage she has caused and her flagrant disregard for any laws she disliked. There appears to have been attempts to reconcile this by having her stay within Vanillaville of Mezmaria but...every time she's placed in there, she vanishes to cause havoc. Is there really another way to solve this? It's been far too long with no solutions in the matter. I understand you like her on a personal level, but it doesn't bode well if Mezmaria cannot reign her in at all."

"I'll agree with Miss Viola," Queen Rosaline nodded looking away from Queen Nocturne to the podium. "My mother was pretty relaxed with Mrs. Violet Diamond. A lot of stuff happened because of that laxness."

Queen Nocturne looked off to the side. "I'll admit I don't have another way to go about what's happened. It's just...never mind...Sabrina, was it? Try to keep it civil the best you can."

"Of course, your highness," Sabrina said with a quick bow. Her head nearly hit the table as she did so.

There was a collective silence for a good long while. Queen Courtney smiled. "Right-o, with that, the meeting is over. Let us all meet again with further unity. Thank you all, oh so very much for traveling here on such short notice."

King Kilby fluttered over to Lydia, blessing her for the journey on behalf of all Golden Empire citizens. Lydia closed her eyes as she received the blessing.

Queen Rosaline moved to her cousin, Queen Nocturne. "I've never met her, but I'm sure the Chambers will handle the situation as peacefully as possible. Don't worry about it."

Queen Nocturne slowly nodded at Queen Rosaline's words. Sarah Chambers strolled over to Viola to ask an important question. "I doubt the others will ask, but are you available for this little trip of ours?"

"Unfortunately, not this time. I feel the need to address the multiple security risks to the crown of our empire," Viola remarked.

"...But I have a security detail...." Queen Courtney spoke softly.

"Pity but understandable." Sarah Chambers moved back to her daughter's side. King Barone silently sipped a milkshake watching the others.

Viola turned an eye to Queen Courtney. "I am unsure of their job at this point. When I checked, I found no additional methods of escape. Nor ventilation to prevent the flow of air being cut off if the only entrance to this room is blocked."

Sabrina blinked as she heard that. "...There's no ventilation in here...?"

"Oh goodness, I certainly wouldn't want closed off rooms," Queen Courtney gasped. "I'm all about safety concerns in the empire. Everyone here knows it."

Sabrina nodded lightly to herself hearing the Queen of Puregloss's words. With the end of the meeting announced by Queen Courtney, Sarah Chambers and Sabrina stood up to collect themselves much like a few others did.

"Father says we'll...well, I'll see you in Vineland," Savita, King Barone's daughter, dressed in a red kimono spoke in Sabrina's direction.

"Of course," Sabrina nodded lightly observing the Vineland woman run a hand along the length of her red hair.

"A little bit of an ambush I hope," Sarah Chambers pondered aloud. The bodyguard assigned to Sabrina and her mother, Lydia, kept close.

"Question. Are you good at climbing ladders?" Kagumi suddenly asked, King Barone's daughter dressed in a blue kimono with hair to match the color.

"Ladders?" Sabrina asked, a bit confused.

"Yes. Are you?" Kagumi looked Sabrina over from a distance away.

"Maybe?" Sabrina tilted her head.

"Alright, see you later," Kagumi smiled.

"Oh, thank you. See you later, too," Sabrina smiled though caught off guard by the woman's words.

Queen Rosaline watched Sabrina and Sarah Chambers as they started to leave the conference room.

"I think an extra pair of eyes might be in order," the Mezmarian Queen whispered to no one in particular. As she said this, her shadow shifted slightly.

The Mezmarian guard from earlier in his escort of Sabrina and Sarah Chambers awaited outside the building per protocol, saluting the two women when seeing them, then addressing the younger female. "Ma'am, the airship awaits in the south-eastern port. The storm has died down for the moment so we're clear to leave when ready. But it is advised that it be as soon as possible."

"Do you...um, mind if I get changed?" the bodyguard, Lily, asked softly looking to Sabrina to which the Mezmarian woman nodded.

Sarah Chambers sighed and nodded, too. "Be quick. We don't want the storm to get stronger again, now do we?"

Lydia Wolfe quickly ran off for a nearby building with a duffle bag she quickly retrieved in custody of a Puregloss soldier whose orders were to retain large storage equipment outside of the conference hall. In almost no time, the girl was back. The woman, Lydia, now wore a blue skirt with a pink coat over top of it with a hat atop her head. Her feet now bared showed the birdlike talons of a harpy. "Sorry, I felt a little constricted back there."

The Mezmarian guard escorting Sabrina and her mother whistled not expecting that change.

Lydia shuffled a little. "Oh, um...thank you."

"Enough eying the harpy! We have an airship to get to!" Sarah Chambers snapped at the Mezmarian guard.

"S-sorry, ma'am! I won't question what I actually saw! On our way! Move out, everyone!" the Mezmarian guard motioned to other guards on approach, prompting the small group to start leading the women back to the airship sitting in port.

On their way to the port, Sabrina successfully caught a piece of paper that was about to fly into her face. When she looked at it, these words were written: *"Yet another false place and lie that led to my mother's death. Was it the poison or just a reprehensible hateful life that took her from me? How many mothers and fathers do I have to lose in order to be happy? What even is happiness when so much was lost? Why do we have to live so long in such a miserable place of existence? Is there no way out?"*

"What...Who...Where?" Sabrina looked around to see if she could find the person who dropped the piece of paper after reading it, stopping in her walk. She found that the small group were now nearly leaving her behind with the Mezmarian guard calling out to the girl. There were no other oddities to see flying

through the air, only a calm stillness and odd quiet tone filling the air. Sabrina yelped then rushed back to the group so as not to be left behind.

The Mezmarian guards quickly led the small group aboard the airship when reaching the port and, with a quick takeoff, were airborne once more. Their speed in this departure was to avoid the coming of another winter storm from the northern seas.

Sabrina, her mother, and Lydia made their way to a room aboard the airship to settle and get refreshed. The harpy placed the duffle bag down on the bed.

“The Queen of Mezmara asked me to...um, give you this,” Lydia remarked to Sabrina as she reached into the bag and pulled a magic wand out, handing it over. “Just in case.”

“Thank you. That’s very appreciated,” Sabrina smiled, accepting the wand.

“I-I have a few more of those if you’d like one Mrs. Sarah Chambers,” Lydia said as she looked to the older woman.

“Oh my, no. I’m not the fighting type,” Sarah Chambers scoffed, waving her hand dismissively.

The airship moved southward and entered Shipponian airspace. As it did so, Sabrina looked out the eastern window and saw King Derax and his son flying back to the Dragonlands. She also began to see settlements of animalia below in Shipponia's many, many endlessly swaying trees. Sabrina fiddled with the wand as she watched the landscape below in curiosity. The harpy, Lydia Wolfe, pulled out a long rifle from the duffle bag and strapped it over her shoulder. Sarah Chambers retired to her bed for a short nap.

As Sabrina watched the trees and clouds go by, the animalia settlements were more concentrated in the center of the country. They had better structure, too, with even a carnival set up. All of this land was encompassed by massive mountain ranges in the distance on all sides. Sabrina was amazed at all the sights that passed. Lydia sprawled out on a nearby chair when sitting down. Her wings went limp at the sides of the chair she was sitting.

An announcement came over the intercom that they were now entering the Golden Empire's airspace while heading south. Mountaintops littered the sky, sitting atop beds of clouds. Sabrina caught sight of tiny King Kilby leading a flock of griffons and harpies back to what she presumed was the capital. Looking up a bit, toward the horizon in that direction, her eyes landed on the biggest mountain she'd ever seen. She could only assume this to be the Mother Springs taught back in the academy's history lessons that supplied Tavrend with fresh water.

“The Mother Springs...” Sabrina said in awe. “It’s so much bigger than I’d have thought.”

“Yeah...it’s big, for sure. King Kilby is pretty protective of it. Of its purity and all,” Lydia chimed in from her chair observing the woman looking outside.

Heading further south, Sabrina felt like her ears needed to be popped signaling a significant loss in altitude though still pretty high up. She could see the Golden Empire's westward coastline where a bay town took up harbor next to the massive western ocean.

Sabrina did her best to pop her ears as she watched the ship pass the western ocean. "The ocean is so vast..."

"Honestly, the deep ocean is the scariest thing to me," Lydia remarked as she went to stand and peer outside with the woman. "Never know what's under that water."

Another announcement came over the intercom relaying news of the airship's entry into Vineland's airspace. Although 'vine' was in the name, and there were many trees, Sabrina still caught sight of that one peculiar volcano on its northern border before the forest overtook visuals.

"Oh, darn. We're already here?" Sabrina gasped.

"Pretty quick to say the least," Lydia nodded gently. "The marvels of modern engineering."

Sarah Chamber promptly returned to the other two when hearing the announcement. "A little more rest would have been nice. Our bodyguard should be a little more proper I feel what with the slouching."

Lydia nodded lightly. "S-sorry."

There was a knock at the door followed by a voice. "We're about to touch down in Woodhaven, capital of Vineland. Please take caution as we do so."

Sabrina, Sarah, and Lydia grabbed onto the room's walls so as to not fall over when touching down while peering outside the window. In what seemed like many miles stretching onward in one direction, an elaborate, elegant, and ornate city started to come into view. Sabrina noticed their airship approaching what looked to be a picture-perfect cultural city, vibrant and full of life. The trees and forest around it were shaped in a way to complement the curvature of each building.

Sabrina's eyes drifted to the picture-perfect city taking in each detail. "It looks better than Perfelot in some ways."

"They tidied this forest up for certain," Sarah Chambers nodded. "Goes to show what the best magic user of Mezmaria could do. One you will succeed someday."

"...Yes, mother," Sabrina sighed slowly as a way to relieve rising stress in the expectation.

The airship began its final descent into the tree line obstructing Sabrina's view. With a jolt, they suddenly landed. An amateurish landing probably from a pilot in training. A silence hung in the air with the

rumbling engines dying down. Sabrina and her mother managed to stay upright the entire landing. The harpy, however, was flung to the floor.

“Such a clumsy bodyguard,” Sarah Chambers scoffed.

"I'm here to escort you once more," the Mezmarian guard from Puregloss in his escort of the women to the conference called out through their door. "Something happened and...uh...I didn't expect this to actually happen but...uh...never mind, they told me to not say anything. Open the door when you're ready."

Sarah Chambers was the first to the door shoving past the guard heading to the airship's exit as Sabrina helped Lydia to her feet. "Did you hire a child to fly this!? So much incompetence!"

"No, ma'am. Just my younger cousin straight out of flight school. He's getting better. I'm terribly sorry about the rough landing," the Mezmarian guard profusely apologized to Mrs. Chambers as Sabrina rushed to join her mother with Lydia in tow.

“If I wasn't a proper lady...” Sarah stared daggers at the man then ran a finger along her throat to indicate something.

Sabrina rushed over with hands outstretched between the bewildered guard and her mother. “It's fine! Everything is fine. We should get going.”

The Mezmarian guard had a look of fear in his eyes, knowing the woman's political power over his employment. When Sabrina interrupted, the guard tried to calm his nerves and look her way instead. Sarah Chambers rolled her eyes and continued to the airship's exit. Sabrina smiled at the guard to reassure him then followed after her mother. Lydia carried her duffle bag and rushed after the two Chambers.

At the airship's exit, two guards stood at the ready to open the door for the women. As they opened the door, a flood of light entered the airship. Light that dimmed enough to showcase the most curious sight of innumerable Woodhaven citizens awaiting Sabrina's arrival. Savita and Kagumi were the first to greet the visitors and, as they did with synchronized elegant bows, a blast of fireworks launched into the air in a dazzling display followed up with perfect choreography in dancing from the gathered crowd.

Taking further steps out of the airship, Sabrina, Sarah, Lydia, and the Mezmarian guards saw jugglers and fire breathers. All the Woodhaven citizens were performing in synchronous activity, hands, feet, and more. This sight distracted Sabrina and the others as they suddenly stepped onto a parade float which then began leading them down the street, the city's main one. Woodhaven citizens moved in front and behind the float with synchronized steps and fanfare.

Sabrina was rather impressed by the synchronized movements of the various performers. She certainly wasn't expecting a parade to announce their arrival.

“Impressive,” Sarah Chambers smiled. “Quite the show.”

"Do you like it? We don't get many Mezmarian visitors of such high stature," Savita beamed to Sabrina and the others. "Unless, of course, this is too over the top. We can tone it down if you like."

"No, no," Sabrina said quickly as she waved her hands. "This is great. Thank you so much for this."

Savita and Kagumi both nodded in synchronized action. The parade continued with ever increasing fanfare. From the top of the parade float upon which Sabrina, Sarah, and Lydia were standing, a green mist appeared. Confetti and glitter exploded from the mist and a kitsune appeared.

"I couldn't have asked for a better response to my arrival!" the kitsune chuckled as she sidled over in between Savita and Kagumi both of which raised an eyebrow. The kitsune had green hair and a green tail with glitter and flowers throughout it. She wore a sparkly red dress and fancy red shoes moving quickly to Sabrina. Savita and Kagumi both expressed surprised looks at one another in unison at the kitsune's arrival. As the parade continued down Woodhaven's street, the fox took a few bows as she pulled out a microphone from her pocket and spun it. "My name is Sage! Popstar Sage!"

Sabrina was flabbergasted and feeling somewhat overwhelmed by both the parade and this strange kitsune's arrival. Her mother had an aggravated look and Lydia was confused.

"If you're willing, could you sing for us?" Savita asked the kitsune as the parade continued forward. "In commemoration of Sabrina's arrival?"

The green-haired kitsune, Sage, put her left hand into the air as she raised the mic to her mouth with the other hand. "Oh, you don't have to ask me twice!"

The kitsune teleported to a higher section of the float as spotlights shining from an unknown source began to shine down on her. Without delay, the kitsune began to sing for the crowds and especially Sabrina. The Mezmarian woman smiled hearing the singing until her mother, Sarah, sharply jabbed her in the side pointing out a nearby café. Sabrina looked to where her mother pointed and noticed a purple haired woman sitting at an outdoor cafe sipping tea and watching the parade.

Sabrina blinked seeing the woman at the café as the parade float passed by it. "Wait...! Was that...!?"

Sarah Chambers looked to Sabrina then the direction their parade float had passed. "Well, I'll be...we found her."

Sabrina didn't waste any more time and jumped from the parade float with her mother right behind, pulling the harpy with her. Savita and Kagumi glanced over in unison. Sabrina was in a rush trying to get through the crowds to the café.

The fanfare from the Woodhaven citizens immediately died down as they looked on to Sabrina and those with her. Savita and Kagumi hopped down from the parade float to follow. The crowds separated in unison for Sabrina and went back to their daily activities, thanking her one-by-one for coming.

Sabrina wasn't paying much attention to the crowds and their odd behavior. Lydia found their actions really odd while pulled by the other woman.

"Goodness, I suppose it's over as fast as it came about," Sabrina heard the purple haired woman at the outdoor café remark before catching sight of her. Upon approach, the purple haired woman didn't see Sabrina approaching, simply drinking tea and staring forward to the street.

Sabrina stopped at the purple-haired woman's table, panting heavily as she doubled over, breathing heavily. "V-violet...Diamond...found you..."

"Oh, hello there," the purple-haired woman at the outdoor café, Violet, spoke looking at Sabrina. "Are you okay, darling? You seem a bit tired. Can take a seat if you like. I see you have company, too."

Sabrina panted a little as she looked at the chair and slowly took it, her mother and the harpy doing the same. "T-thank you."

The woman at the café, Violet, observed the three individuals now sitting at her table with curiosity. Glancing at the wings of the harpy, Violet found the pattern to be different than other harpies. Looking closer, she saw they looked like the pattern a certain pair of harpies used to showcase. Putting that thought aside, Violet ordered some tea for the three that came to the table from a begrudging waitress.

The tailor took a sip of her tea eyeing the three that came to the table as they did with the purple-haired woman in what followed as an awkward silence befell them. She slowly lowered the cup to the table. "Well, I surmise this meeting is to be of a different variety than Vineland's. You three don't seem to be from around here."

"Yes, Miss Violet," Sabrina said lightly as she took newly arriving tea for the table to her lips. "We aren't from around here. In fact, we were actually looking for you."

"Oh, lovely," Violet smiled at Sabrina noticing the older woman, Sarah, intensely staring at the tailor. "Might I inquire as to who I have the honor of meeting this fine day?"

Savita and Kagumi arrived to take a seat next to the three borrowing two chairs from a nearby table. The tailor blinked at the new arrivals...then slowly ordered two more drinks of tea for them.

"...What is happening...?" Violet whispered to herself.

Sabrina glanced at Savita and Kagumi then back to Violet. "Oh, um...We had something to ask of you Miss...or do you go by Mrs.?"

Violet blushed, rubbing the back of her neck. "I don't...rightly know. Used to be a Mrs. I suppose Ms. now...unfortunately."

“Oh...I’m sorry,” Sabrina grimaced. “I learned a lot about you in magic school. That reverse barrier is still being discussed to this da-”

Sabrina started before her mother nudged her hard to get back on track.

The woman winced a little then began again under her mother’s scrutinous glare. “Sorry to ask this of you, Ms. Violet...but, um, could we have the Stones of Virtue? We were kinda asked by Queen Rosaline to bring them back to Mezmaria.”

"No need to be sorry, darling. I'd be more than willing to teach you reverse barrier magical theory," Violet smiled. A smile that turned into a confused look then realization. Her smile faltered. "...Queen Rosaline. I see now. Mezmaria still wants the stones in their possession despite such a long passing. Is that correct?"

“Um, yes,” Sabrina nodded lightly. “The royal line has been passed down. So...new management I guess you could say.”

"Alright then. First things first, who am I speaking with? Secondly, what do you know of the stones?" Violet asked the girl curiously, sipping her tea.

“Oh, yes, right. Introductions first,” the woman spoke as she fumbled with her cup to put it down. “I’m Sabrina Chambers of Mezmaria.”

"Hello, Sabrina," Violet smiled.

“And, as for the stones, I only know what I’ve read on them,” Sabrina said.

"What would you do if given the choice in freedom between doing what's right and doing what's wrong?" Violet asked curiously. A question that threw Sabrina for a loop and caused confusion among the others at the table.

“Oh, um...I guess what’s right?” Sabrina pondered.

"I extend the question to the others at the table, too," Violet said, motioning with her eyes at the others.

Savita and Kagumi expressed confusion at the question, not saying anything.

“In my experience, doing what’s right and wrong is in the eye of the beholder,” Sarah Chambers said.

The harpy grimaced not sure what to say.

"Would you say slavery is wrong? Because that's what this nation originally had occurring in its lands when the stones came about, far before its days as a desert wasteland then this rebuilt city," Violet remarked, looking at the table's occupants curiously.

Savita and Kagumi looked to Sabrina's group for their answer. The Mezmarian guards began to surround the café, and Violet took notice of that keeping her eyes focused on the group at the table while taking a breath.

"Slavery? I can't even imagine such a thing. It's certainly wrong," Sabrina said rather quickly.

Sarah Chambers folded her arms. "These days certain forms of services are just another form of slavery. In my opinion."

The harpy, Lydia, looked at Violet. "As a harpy...slavery is definitely wrong."

"Slavery is certainly wrong, Miss Sabrina, and I certainly would expect a harpy to see it in a negative light, too," Violet nodded at the two. She then looked at Mrs. Chambers. "I assume you're Miss Sabrina's grandmother. What do you mean 'forms of service', darling?"

"G-grandmother!?" Sarah scoffed nearly dropping her cup of tea staring daggers at the tailor, speaking with a bit of insult in her voice. "How dare y-! What I meant was we're all slaves to something."

As the group conversed, the green-haired kitsune, Sage, slowly crept up to the table and silently pulled over a chair. Violet was starting to get worried with yet another visitor. "W-what in Vastria is happening today?!"

Sage lightly waved to Violet. "Sorry, I was getting a little bored out in the crowds. They kinda stopped paying attention to my singing when everyone headed here."

"T-that's okay, sweetheart," Violet said, taking a few deep breaths then looking back to Sabrina. "Oh, right. Mezmaria's eternal concern with Stones of Virtue. I'll answer about them now. Simply put, I don't have them. I let them wander free a good while back."

"Oh..." Sabrina put a hand to her cheek in thought.

"You let them run free!?" Sarah Chambers shouted, slamming her fist on the café table causing both Violet and Sabrina to jolt a bit.

"Why yes, I did," Violet remarked to Mrs. Chambers. "You see, everyone keeps thinking I'm the central problem. The central problem has ever been our own perceptions. The way we are. The way we think. The way we act. I could have tried my best to hold onto them with the best of intentions but then realized nature taking its course would reveal those with the best ideals to save our way of living."

Sarah Chambers waved a finger in the tailor's direction in an aggressive manner. "Oh, I've read up on you, Ms. Diamond. You were insistent that the stones stay in *your* hold. But, as expected, and was more or less told to you, you couldn't hold onto them. Your failure is going to be our undoing, mark my words. The Mezmarian treasury room would have done the exact job that you did and wouldn't had failed us all."

"That's Mezmaria old way of thinking on the matter. The stones would have drilled right out of the treasury room, darling. And what then? Let unguided anarchy rule without understanding as to why some are gaining massive strengthening to their own personal ideals?" Violet tilted her head, looking at Mrs. Chambers, lip raising a bit at the corner, with a followed-up sigh. "If the blind lead the blind with such weapons, then we're all doomed. I had to take up the role I knew to be the central core of the future. Our children. Their ideals are what make up the future. And right now, the harpy...and Sabrina, here, have laid true right before me that *they* know what's right from wrong."

"Oh, you mistake my words, Ms. Violet. I said that you and the treasury room have the same job. The stones are drawn to you after they've finished their work. As such, you are a beacon to them, correct?" Mrs. Chambers said with annoyance.

Sabrina and Lydia looked to one another at being called the future then back to Violet.

"I'm not a magnet, darling," Violet giggled, standing up from the café table. "When they're finished with their current 'work', they simply wander until the next time. I have taken care of them in a half-sense to find one holder then the next. The ones that know what's right from wrong. At least until I find a way to neutralize what's increasingly becoming too dangerous for our world."

"Even so, if we say...brought you to Mezmaria there's a chance they'll eventually gather there since you have such a strong connection to them," Sarah Chambers said as she watched Violet stand up.

"Separate the heart from the world's functioning, and you'll see much worse happen," Violet expressed a serious look toward Mrs. Chambers.

"Oh, I'm sure I will with everything coming," Sarah said while still eying Violet.

Violet eyed the woman for a long while then turned to take her leave. "This has been a pleasure, but I need to return to my sis-"

Military folk of Woodhaven suddenly began to surround the café with a man dressed in black with short black hair and solid piercing blue eyes leading them. He gestured to Sabrina that they were back up much like the surrounding Mezmarian guards.

The tailor eyed the men in uniform then turned her eyes to the group she'd been sitting with at the café. "...I shouldn't have of come. Darn it..."

“It’s okay! It’s okay...” Sabrina said quickly, rising from the table with arms outstretched between the military folk and the tailor. “Everything is fine. There’s no need to escalate this any further. I’m sorry, Ms. Violet, but could you please come with us? I—we—don’t mean you harm.”

"Will do, Sabrina. Captain Warrick of the Vineland army and his men will remain on standby but nearby," the black-haired man with piercing blue eyes nodded at the girl. Savita and Kagumi both got up and moved behind Sabrina looking on at the situation.

Mrs. Chambers sat back in her chair with folded arms. Violet looked between Sabrina and the others with a worried look.

Sage teleported from her chair in between the Chambers and Violet. “Things are getting a little bit too serious around here, huh? Pretty sure I agreed to a song. Not some ambush. Besides, I need Violet’s help on something. So, I kinda can’t have her being arrested.”

Violet thought about it for a moment. "Hmm, how about a duel, Sabrina? I’m sure one of the magical academic lifestyle would find that to your liking. Outside the city limits so innocent lives aren't harmed.”

“A-a duel...with the great Violet Diamond?” Sabrina said with widened eyes.

“A pointless endeavor,” Mrs. Chambers said. “Why would we do that?”

"If you have confidence in her ability to overcome me in this attempted arrest, then there should be no issue," Violet smiled.

“I don’t. My daughter is the greatest magic user since the time of Princess Rebecca,” Sarah spoke with confidence. “If that’s the only way you’ll agree to imprisonment, then I don’t have a choice now, do I?”

Sabrina was practically fangirling over the thought of dueling Violet.

"Sabrina, darling, walk with me. I'll let you know some things on the way there," Violet smiled, gesturing the girl closer. On the way to the city outskirts, the tailor taught Sabrina the basics in different kinds of magical theories. Warrick, his men, Savita, and Kagumi followed in perfect synchronized steps, keeping the small traveling group encircled. The Mezmarian guards formed a tighter circle to protect the Chambers in case the tailor did something. Sage watched the Vineland individuals in their synchronized steps. Sabrina was very excited to learn from such a skilled magician. Mrs. Chambers and Lydia stayed together as they followed Violet.

Once outside city limits, standing amid a clearing in the endlessly swaying trees, Violet took position twenty feet from Sabrina. After a light cordial bow was given, she pulled out a rapier and casted barrier magic on herself. "When you're ready."

Sabrina nodded quickly rushing to her position. Violet awaited Sabrina's first move while eyeing the surroundings carefully. Sage was on Violet's side of the field with a mic in her hand. Mrs. Chambers and Lydia were on Sabrina's side of the field.

While Violet was eyeing the surroundings with confidence that her barrier would take the hits of whatever came her way, Sabrina had pulled out a thick book from her side, opening it, then started to cast a spell. The ground began to shake violently forcing the tailor's eyes forward once more in shock.

Violet should have been focusing on Sabrina since the very start as powerful magic came her way, more powerful than she'd seen in a very long time, greatly reminding the tailor of Princess Rebecca's mastery of it, perhaps even greater. The fireball and flamethrower combo sent Violet's way as a first action not only took off the tailor's barrier but nearly burned her hands clean off in trying to quickly raise a second barrier to stop the attack's continuous scorching flames. Violet then was forced to dodge a massive bolt of lightning that nearly hit Sage, splitting eleven trees in half. The tailor's eyes widened as she was soon forced to teleport, avoiding a frigid beam of frost leaving her previous standing spot entirely frozen.

Violet blinked looking on at Sabrina with greater focus this time, panting heavily when the smoke cleared, more than a bit worried. "...Your affinity is higher than any I've seen before..."

"Oh, uh, thank you. These were beginner spells," Sabrina nodded, leafing through the book.

The tailor didn't take any more chances. She raised her hand and used a spell of blinding light on everyone in the clearing. A spell she made sure not to discuss with Sabrina when heading out of the city. Sabrina yelped as she put her hands up to block instead of trying to dodge the blast of magic from the woman or, at the very least, close her eyes. Everyone in the clearing except Sage were blinded by the bright light momentarily as the kitsune had covered her eyes perceiving the tailor's attack before it happened.

"Sabrina, you cow! Your reflective barrier! You should had used it!" Mrs. Chambers screeched, rubbing her eyes. Sarah clenched her fist then pointed two fingers at Violet's last known location firing a beam of green energy. Mrs. Chambers vaguely saw Violet look at her then teleport outside of the encircling soldiers, running for it, Sage in tow.

"W-what happened...?" Sabrina rubbed her eyes. Lydia rushed to the woman's side as did the Mezmarian guards.

"She's getting away!" Mrs. Chambers shouted, trying to fire a second green beam of magic, but it was nowhere near Violet.

Captain Warrick and his men quickly pursued the tailor and the green-haired kitsune on foot, disappearing into the tree line. As Sabrina observed explosions coming from the trees and activity that headed further south, she saw a figure peeking out from the woods. A woman, blonde and red, disappearing only moments later. A piece of paper drifted through the rising dust and smoke in front of Sabrina which she took hold of and read.

Sabrina staggered a little as an explosion rocked the ground. Her eyes had fixated on the blonde and red figure before its disappearance. Her gaze turned to the paper that drifted to her hand. She read the words to herself as quickly as she was able.

The piece of paper had this written upon it. *"Another land of lies. Blue for loss of breath and life. White for essentially the same. Why did we ever help? Just to be hated? Just to be wronged? Were we the true slaves all along from the very beginning? What first felt like relief and happiness in helping...turned into disappointment, resentment, and utter frustration...I hate the lies. The only truth is that this wrong. The only truth is that everything is a lie."*

"Wh-what...does this all mean?" Sabrina asked herself as she looked the paper over multiple times. The woman felt a hard tug as her mother pulled an arm.

"The Diamond is escaping! No time to daydream or whatever you're doing!" Sarah shouted at her daughter.

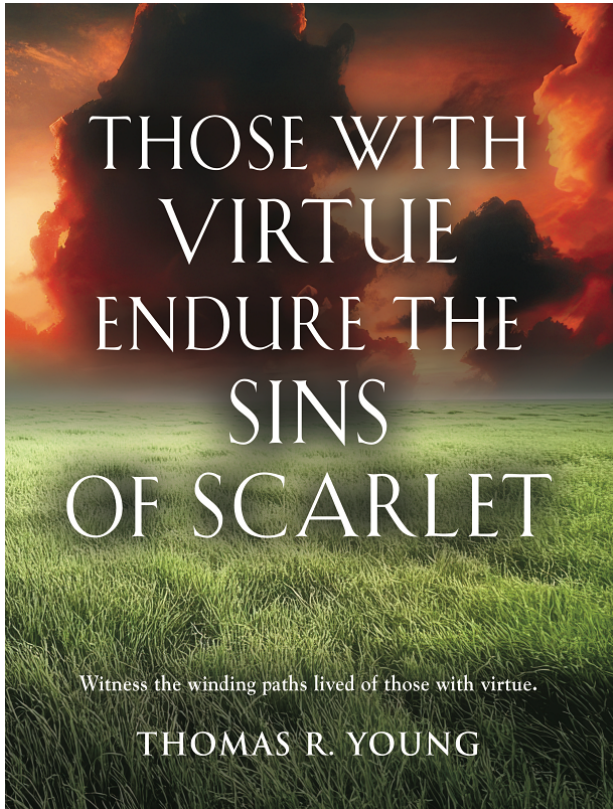
Savita quickly approached doing the same as Sabrina's mother, tugging on Sabrina. "You're our only hope. Get Violet. I saw it. You truly are capable of being the first to take her down in so many years. None have been able to bust her barrier let alone put her on the ropes in one single strike."

"I-I am?" Sabrina asked earnestly.

"Most aren't able to penetrate that barrier magic, and you did it on the first strike," Savita marveled at Sabrina's capabilities.

"Oh I-I didn't notice..." Sabrina said absentmindedly, looking to the endlessly swaying trees.

"You are the world's answer to the tailor," Savita smiled at the woman with reassurance Sabrina could only accept with a light nod.



Sequel to "Those With Virtue Dream For Better Nights". This story is about the one in red who will end all things.

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