

Life and Law – Iustitia

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The Lord Zeus was one of the most powerful gods yet rife with weakness; for good food, for good entertainment, for company of women. In the mortal maiden Timandra did he indulge in earthly pleasure. Smitten so with her he shunned the commitments that he had been bestowed. The other gods looked down unfavorably on their union. A curse fell upon him, denying his rank, his birthright, to succumb to the sadistic whims of the Moirai. Mortal he indulged in, and mortal he shall remain until the gods offered their mercy.

All things were not for a loss, as his most Chosen of mortals had bore him a child, one not unlike his former self. Their adulation was only temporary as the Lord over the Sun came down from Olympus to warn them of what was seen as blasphemy. This bastardization, a chimera no less, born under the constellation of Libra, was a mockery to Zeus' downfall. A blind child, and a girl, forever a reminder of what he had done wrong. "For she is Iustitia, Justice, the final say on what are your weaknesses. Cursed be you with this demented offspring, a monster. This is your final judgement, and she your judicator." Zeus and his wife cried out in woe, for what greater punishment would they need than that of a defective child.

–Benevo, Chosen of Iustitia, writing on the origins of Justice, circa 2379 B.C..

Athens was the pinnacle of culture and philosophy back in the day. A great many minds thronged to its bustling streets, from the destitute, to the slaves, to the traders and the Athenian elite. Even before the Hellenistic Era, Athens remained a mainstay for all things pre-Greek. This was the time of the most ancient Greeks, the ones from whom the myths of great battles between heroes and monsters, mortals and gods were conjured. Athens would have its day, but for now the shining star amongst the Aegean Sea was Helike, the fabled Atlantis of its time.

Helike was an island city state, renowned for its incredible wealth and technological advancements. Such things as running water, witchcraft to some, was a fact in even the most modest of Helike homes. Attributed to this accumulation of wealth and great inventors was the man who led this prosperous city, Sophocles. He was a man of rule and wit, able to tame the three Seasons and make them perform to his bidding. With this mastery the trade routes were his. The gold of Egypt, the vast spices that flowed through the Red Sea, all his. Anything he desired, he could have and control, and with these three Titans at his command, he could also conquer it all.

Anyone who dared to trade within the sea was a dead man. And any city that dare even whisper discontent was attacked. Ships with massive galleys, powered by prevailing winds would swoop in at night, and by the morning any city that wished to defy Helike was burnt to cinders by the Emperor's marauders, or befell a hellish torrent of either flame, lightning or ice. No city was a match for Sophocles' arsenal. The Seasons were monsters, lowly in the minds of humans but of a power that far exceeded the Taurus, or even the fearsome hydras, the Gyarados. Sophocles had mastered the art of

communication with the rarest and deadliest of the beasts, winning them to his side for whatever ideas his mind could conceive. Taming them was unthinkable; getting a monster to communicate with the god-given consciousness that was man.

Whatever drove these monsters, no one really knew. In Athens today, one man surely did, for he had once been one himself. Because of this, he was able to also attribute his successes where others had failed so miserably as of late. To no one other than his close relatives did he tell of this secret, and instead was indulging in the collective ignorance of his guests. Zeus, the most successful merchant and trader of his day was hosting a symposium, a testament to his ability to provide the very life blood to high Athenian society especially in this time of crisis.

Overlooking the coastline, secluded away from the rest of Athens was the villa of Zeus and his wife and only child. Rarely did anyone visit as the host was often away. Today was a special occasion, for which a symposium had been scheduled. The men and their adolescent sons were eager to visit, for a taste of the finest wine brought in from the far reaches of the Mediterranean. It was against the norm for any non-Athenian born male to be accepted into the fold as Zeus was. A trick on the mind and a little encouragement was all that was needed to establish himself, this was especially true when including the drink.

“And that just about does it.” Timandra looked over her work, carefully inspecting for any telltale flaw that could give her handiwork away. The woman brushed away a few strands of hair from her face, then briefly resumed her fixing before stepping away. “You’re ready, Iustitia.”

“Thank you, mother,” was the expression of gratitude given, though with a sullen gaze.

The pair were off in Iustitia’s room, preparing for the symposium. To an observer this would seem like normal interaction, a mother prepping her son for his father’s gathering. To those who knew, which were few, just about everything that was visible was also an incredible lie. Not a thing in the lives of Zeus, his wife Timandra or their child, Iustitia was built on a lick of truth.

Timandra had been the Chosen to a Legendary Mew. In her role as his supporter, the two eventually grew close, fell in love and did the absolute unthinkable. Dumb luck was what best described the chances of her conceiving, yet somehow she did. Such a copulation was forbidden, and as punishment Ho-oh demoted Mew’s role as a Legendary, forcibly burdening him with the human frame he preferred to masquerade as, and along with it, a mortal life. The loss of a powerful body was a drain on Zeus’ powers, his current capabilities nowhere near as impressive as its former. This could not be said for either Timandra or Iustitia.

Timandra was a relatively young woman, a healthy twenty-five by most casual observations. Often she lied about her age, adding nearly ten years whenever asked. Iustitia was her only child, and while Timandra looked like her rightful age, Iustitia did not, and for this she was forced to compensate. Not everything about her was a fabrication. She sported the brown hair and tanned skin that was common to the local population, her origins specifically from the highlands surrounding the populace city of Athens. Unlike most girls, she had been rambunctious, deeply fascinated with the ideas of

these exotic, powerful monsters and what they could do. Her curiosity led her on many mini adventures, and eventually to her Legendary Mew. People considered it odd that as a child, she did not play with the other girls, and opted to go scampering off as she did so often. Those from nearby could not say what had happened to her. At fifteen she left, never to come back. Only several months later did she turn up in Athens with a baby and a husband that no one knew, but for some strange reason were instantly receptive of. The small family chose then to reside a bit further off from the city, with no one seeing the infant until the child was of school age.

There was a lot of reasons Zeus and Timandra had decided to remain within comfortable travelling distance of the city, yet quiet and to themselves. They saw benefits in Athenian tutelage and opportunities that any father across the great sea could only dream of for a son. The problem was, that their child was no son, but a daughter. Even for millennia to come, women in Grecian societies were basically slaves. They were property of their fathers, then to be property of their husbands and their families. Women could not be educated, could not own land, could not enter the bath houses, the gymnasiums, or any recreational facility where men treaded. In Legendary society, every position could be filled by either a male or a female, they were equal, and the mentality that here they were not abhorred Zeus greatly. Timandra might have been complacent with the idea, though she too agreed that for their only offspring, to be under a man's foot was simply not her place.

Part of preparing Iustitia for show was to make her look like a boy. For years they had disguised her to look like one. It was not something that was considered particularly challenging for her. She was a tomboy at heart, though without the breast bindings and illusionary details that masculinized her features, she was as exotic looking, if not more so than her father. At a very tall 5'8", the golden haired blonde was as goddess-like as her genetics foretold. Being the chimera that she was, she took the human traits from her mother enhanced with the Legendary traits from her father. Her eyes held a whimsical sparkle of great status, her body the perfect tone. A Mew's fine hair lent to her locks being silky smooth, glistening, and skin of the most perfect peachy hue. As a boy disguised, she did look girly, though in such a society androgynous males were highly sought after by both women and men alike. In a way, she seemed perfect, besides being female.

One of the skills that Timandra and Zeus had spent hours upon hours working on with Iustitia was how to maintain her illusion, build it herself, and be the absolute master of deception. A hybrid of a Mew and a human was a thing of genetic impossibilities, with it came its flaws. No matter how expertly crafted an illusion could be, there was no way for Iustitia to see her reflection in the polished bronze mirror. She was utterly blind. Even with the ocean blue eyes, her pupils were forever a murky hue, there being no physical way for her to see. With practice she moved about effortlessly, and was able to pretend to focus on obstacles in front of her. Some would call her out as a daydreamer, sometimes brought on by her gaze looking just slightly elsewhere or her pupils failing to increase and decrease with a change of visual interest. No matter, people were gullible, and this was proven so as the lies went even further.

The reason why Timandra lied about her age, as Zeus had pointed out in dismay, was that their child, for whatever reason, *needed* to be more like a Mew than anything else. Even as a baby, her growth was accelerated until it reached its optimum physical

and mental potential. Without the illusion, and in a side-by-side view with her mother, Iustitia looked to be in her early twenties when in fact she was roughly ten years of age. People marveled at the growth spurts of her illusion, as by the time she herself was six, she already had the frame of a twelve year old. This all meant that Iustitia had to avoid more physical contact to not give away the fact that she really was several inches taller than her illusion was. Wrestling was a combat art, where she purposely went out of her way to call it primitive, just to avoid the problems that could be caused by a headlock that went for her head, when it would have been at her actual shoulders. Further awkward moments of interaction also included her body's unexplained transition to something more immortal, the lack of breathing, eating and sleeping. Since about seven years of age, Iustitia could not stomach anything, which was why at the moment she was attempting to arrive late at her father's own symposium. If some obnoxious guest offered Zeus a toast, a good host was obliged to share in it, and vomiting was definitely not a favorite hobby of hers.

"Benevo is here," Timandra mused quietly. As a woman, she and the hired commoners for the day were to spend their time over the cooking fires and serving the many male guests. The only time the women, workers or slaves would be about was if they were serving food or drink. Any female that actually participated was either a prostitute, or one of the men's personal slave concubines. "He came in a few minutes ago while I was passing through."

Iustitia's face lit-up. At the formal education they both attended, her persona and Benevo were friends. There was no guarantee that Benevo would show up for parties in part because of his nature, and that from his villa to hers, the time taken was roughly three hours by foot. Where she was verbally outspoken and quick to draw her steel, Benevo was the type to read and write, concocting stories and being shy. Iustitia, which meant 'Justice' in English, loved the idea of perfect balance. He complimented her well.

"You're the best," Iustitia said breezily, briefly grabbing her mother's shoulders so she could plant a firm kiss on her cheek. "I'll help you with cleaning after this is all over." Timandra sure would appreciate the offer. Symposiums and the following aftermath were a nightmare to clean, even with two psychics in the house.

"... and thank you for continued services to this great city. Here."

"Here, here."

"Opa!"

Fully engrossed in her Justin persona, Iustitia rolled her eyes. She had just missed another drunken toast, able to guess by the sound of the giddy slur who started it. Her psychic aptitude was high, and even without sight she could still sniff and feel for the aura that matched that of her favorite person. With practiced confidence, she sidled up next to the sixteen year old, her illusion matching the same physical age of her friend.

"Where were you?" the boy asked.

"One of the goats tried to make a break for it. Was chasing it down," Iustitia lied. "How many toasts has Dionysus made now?" she sneered over to the boy. Because she knew what he was like, it was easy for her to set her outward mood to reflect his. The response from him was a further smirk, his voice matching her snarky tone.

"That is six now. If I ever write about this man, I swear I would proclaim him as the 'God of Wine', a man of such great debauchery that he would be the almighty of it,"

he further emphasized his conceptualization with wide, sweeping hand gestures to match the man's perceived grandeur.

Iustitia laughed in kind saying, "I'm looking forward to hearing more about it." Benevo typically smiled and blushed slightly at any compliment. From conversation of other boys pointing this out, did she realize it, and could only suspect he was doing so now.

"Got to fill my make-believe Pantheon with something."

"And a god with Dionysus as the inspiration is one of them?" Iustitia said with a continuing smirk. "If the heavens were run by this lot, imagine what Athens would be like. 'O' we mortals could not compare to the *magnificence* of these most finest of gods," Iustitia was nearly laughing as she went, "'for we are too simple to understand their auspicious ways.'" She could hear that went over well as Benevo was trying to muffle his laughter behind his hand.

"Shh, shh. Someone just raised their glass." The crowd grew silent as one of the leading council members waved over Zeus. Like his family, he was not fond of symposiums either, but this was one of the few ways that he maintained his status, and thus put up with the charade that was the drunken fest. Though like a good host, he raised what was a rare, jeweled goblet to the crowd, showing his finery and awaiting the endless praise that he received.

"I offer a toast to Zeus for his continued support in these most trying of times." The man turned away from the crowd, and to his host that despite what he thought, he knew so little about. "Zeus, you have managed, time and time again to keep your ship safe, your crew unharmed, to navigate the dangerous and uncharted waters and to bring glory and wealth to our fair city. Even as that *bastard* Sophocles is readying to rapt upon Athens' door, your efforts is what fuels our prosperity and survival. No finer a man is here today than you." Zeus was accepting the congratulations with a smile, though inside deeply annoyed with this routine. Even with the ouzo, wine and hard spirits, it took time before the collective was put out. His annoyance turned to hidden outrage as the man giving the toast continued to speak still.

"As a gift from the house of Leonidas we have a special surprise for you. Bring it in!" Leonidas called out to the courtyard to his slave collective. He returned to his gracious host to introduce the present. "Brought from inland, this specimen was a challenge to catch and chain, and will provide such a spectacle for you and your beloved guests."

The crowd broke away to make room for the new arrival in a curious clamber of murmurs. Tied in chains, with a painful loop running between the nasal cavities was a type of bear, an Ursaring to be more specific. Its pained bellows pulled on Iustitia's heartstrings, just as much as it did for her father and her mother who took a peek to see what the commotion was about.

The slaves lashed the Ursaring's binds to any available column, sticking it into place. Next to the bear, there was another slave brandishing sharp sticks and copper-tipped spears. A form of entertainment amongst the wealthy was to capture wild animals and monsters, tie them up and poke at their writhing forms until they died. Usually such a gesture was well-received, and despite having been a Mew, the Protector of Pokémon no less, to save face was hard for Zeus to stomach.

"I give my thanks to the house of Leonidas for this display," he smiled curtly, his glass raised.

<No, they cannot just kill an Ursaring like that!> Timandra hissed at her two family members. Some of Iustitia and Zeus' psychic potential had rubbed off on her, allowing her enough capacity to project her disdain to them in private telepathy. She used to play with the cubs, the little Teddiursas as a child.

<What can I do? It's a gift,> Zeus grimaced back to his wife, watching as some of his more sloshed guests tested the weight of the various poking apparati. Iustitia was a bit more delayed in her response, weighing several options in her mind. One idea was to get her father to express concern over staining the artful mosaics, though dampening the mood of those gathered would sour their impressions.

"Do you have your sword today?" Iustitia hurriedly whispered to her friend.

". . . Yes?" Benevo received no answer as Iustitia offered comfort to her parents and went about her idea.

<I have this covered.> To the group she shouted brazenly. "What are you, cowards? You tear into a tied and defenseless animal for your amusement when a *real* man is a show of his skill. Untie that poor beast and I and Benevo here will show you what a true man is made of," Iustitia then made her proposal. "A duel, blindfolded with solid, sharpened steel. That is a real sport to behold."

"Justin!" Benevo whimpered in dismay, knowing just what Iustitia had in mind as the crowd too caught on and roared their approval. Having the outspoken son of Zeus to speak for animal activism brought anger to the elders, but for most, the idea of watching this particular pair of individuals spar was far more tantalizing than poking sticks at a shrieking creature. For those with a need for that, there were always slaves to punish on a whim and their mules to lash. As Iustitia had guessed, people were predictable.

"You'll be fine," she quickly spoke her quiet encouragement to Benevo, then went back to engaging the excited audience. What she added next smothered the disdain of the rest, giving the impression that Justin was more appreciative of true finery over barbarianism. To speak against the son of Zeus was a sign that someone was of lesser taste. "Cut that smelly beast loose and make some space. That thing better be out of my sight by the time I get back." Iustitia was quick to leave and fetch her things as promised, while Zeus gave a sympathetic, albeit, relieved pat to his patron.

"There, there. Those two boys don't just put on a show for anybody. I shall consider it admission of sorts." Leonidas gave a dejected glare, annoyed that his idea of a goodtime was received as being tasteless.

Iustitia took off to one of the backrooms where no other patrons were present to grab a weapon that was truly her own. Many had assumed that because of her father's wealth that the particular type of weapon that she and Benevo carried were part of one of Zeus' trades with a civilization of advanced technology. Bronze and electrum were the two most commonly smelted metals available. Higher grade, but expensive tools were often cast from bronze, and rarely did anyone but the military elite had them at the time. The extraction and smelting of any less malleable metals was beyond anyone's scope, and to make it to such a fine quality as what Benevo and Iustitia carried was reserved to that of artisans of immense talent.

Despite the fib she had told Benevo when she presented him his impressively smooth, keenly edged iron sword, it was not actually a piece of advanced technology from a far off land. During a trade, Zeus had acquired the metal. Useless as it was, Iustitia had insisted if he got it for her, she could do something with it. Being the doting father, Zeus humored his much littler girl at the time and brought her the metal. Within the region a young sub-Legendary Moltres resided, someone Iustitia had an affinity with and together the pair worked tirelessly to shape the metal into something feasible. After a great deal of trial, error and patience, Iustitia had patented her first sword and gifted it to Benevo.

Iustitia's weapon, despite her awareness of their being similar, future counterparts, was wholly unique. With her hand outstretched she called forth to some distant plain off in the universe, a skill that was innate to her. She did not have to be told she could do this as she manifested a double-edged sword in her open palm. This was something that she had always known about, just like the pair of scales that she used to weigh all her concerns. These sword and scales, symbols of her name, were to her, always present in her mind yet capable of physical presence if she called them forth. For now, the sword would do, as well as the two halves of a rag. With her things gathered she raced back to the main room.

Sword in hand, the beautiful young man made his approach, marching confidently up to Benevo. "This is yours," Iustitia said as she handed over one of the two pieces of cloth. Before putting it on, Benevo turned to the crowd.

"I have to apologize. I am not nearly as good as Justin is at this," apologized the boy. Swordplay in fog, dim light, and with blindfolds were all things they had tried to help each other better their fencing skills. With no one else to use such weapons, they only had each other to test on and develop their expertise. Iustitia was naturally skilled, and the better of the two. Benevo proceeded to wrap the cloth around his face, making sure to pull back his brown, mullet cut away from his cheeks to reduce any distractions. Iustitia made the act of blinding herself. She had to admit the rag was a nuisance, but unlike Benevo, she did not need to see to fight.

"No blood. Sword to sword only. We go until one disarms the other, falls or admits defeat," Iustitia stated, issuing the rules of engagement.

"Agreed," reaffirmed the competitor, preparing a two-handed, defensive stance.

Iustitia rose to the balls of her feet, allowing her to essentially dance as she moved. With most of her weight located in her hips, she could afford to move in a manner that was smooth and without the momentum-disabling jerks that made up most male fighting styles. Preferably left-handed, though ambidextrous, she swung in from the left, bringing her sword hard against that of Benevo's, before ending in a guard stance in anticipation of his retaliation.

Maybe Benevo was glad he was wearing the blindfold. He knew that swing, and what Justin looked like when he did it. He was not going to admit it, ever, but there was something strangely persuasive in that motion that was distracting. For some of the men around, the thought of two boys in short tunics, whirling about was quite a prospect, especially given that one of them was the beautiful blond boy that none knew was no boy at all.

“Ha!” Benevo yelled, keeping his stance a bit lower, his legs spread as he wielded his sword with both hands, hacking into Iustitia’s raised one. She braced, blocking the blow. An inexperienced individual would easily have had their blade shaken straight out of their hands, the strikes solid and hard. Iustitia felt herself move back a little to compensate.

A swing whistled through the air, catching to Iustitia’s ears as she wailed at the blade with her own, locking the pair’s swords together. In an attempt to push one another around, they began to circle, swords still joined before the clashing swings started up again, all the while trying to drive the other into any available vertical surface. The crowd started to shift about as the pair moved.

Most present had never heard iron smashing iron, the sound electrifying yet frightening. The loudness of the sounds were a sign of brute force. At the same time both of the competitors kept constantly reworking their angles of strike, hoping to hit in such a way that the grip on their hilts would be jostled enough for their swords to fall loose.

Iustitia had switched hands, though still taking defense with only one hand. She had far better stamina and speed than Benevo, but a single, over-powered hit from him weakened her arms quickly. The group did not understand that her switch of hands was not just a pure sign of her arrogance and skill, it was the fact that Benevo swung under the best control, and evidently his hardest when using two hands.

Another near shattering clang as Iustitia let Benevo push her back. The harder he swung, the faster he would tire and fall. A twirl, a block. Another twirl in the opposite direction and another block, always keeping her body as far away from her sword as possible while she let him direct her around. In a way, she was in more control here. If she pushed into Benevo, he might hit a person, or a table and fall much quicker than she intended. If the guests bored, then they might go and retrieve the bear. With a brush of her heel, she found the edge of a lounge and backwards jumped atop of it, much to the amazement of the crowd. Benevo had an idea that she had just done some sort of trick, though dismissed it and continued.

Taking the high ground, Iustitia teased the motions out of Benevo with her sword, him quick to notice the change of force, meaning that she had mounted some piece of furniture. “Really?” he smirked, ramming his thigh into the lounge in the middle of a hold.

Iustitia did not fall, she merely slipped off the toppled furniture and let her blade taste steel once more. Benevo pushed against the sword and tried to see where else he could direct her while still in the midst of dealing a battery of swings. From what the spectators with military training could observe, Iustitia was taking Benevo for a fool, where to everyone else, he seemed to be mastering the fight. Despite the fact that Benevo had the upper hand, he knew from experience that eventually his friend would best him, and that what they were doing now was mostly for show.

“Hyup,” Iustitia exhaled as she jumped onto a long table. The sound that one used when getting onto things signaled to Benevo that Iustitia had taken the high ground again. “Scared of heights?” Iustitia taunted, pulling her sword back as she waited for Benevo to prove his bravado and his athleticism. A position change let her know where the edges of the table were, and she was ready to meet her opponent.

The table was not that high, and Benevo made a dogged jump onto it. “Careful, you might fall,” he gave a competitive jeer, trying to hide how nervous he was about

being blind and a few feet off of the floor. Iustitia let him come at her, this time deciding to use both hands. At that point, both were trying to knock the other off of the narrow table, this being the perfect piece of equipment to test the other's footing.

Back and forth the pair slashed at the steel, wearing one another down, battling for position on the high table. Iustitia would push a ways, with Benevo pushing right back. The blond dismissively kicked metal platters to the floor, spilling their contents about, whilst Benevo began to swing harder, hoping to use the last of his waning stamina.

Iustitia let him exert himself, though her arms were feeling the strain of blocking. With the table over, she dismounted to the floor, sword up again. Benevo heard the thump, and figuring the end was near, he took a rather mighty leap to the tiles as well. Hearing his thud, she reached her sword out to touch his as a sign of courtesy. There would be no blood here, so they were not going to start swinging at thin air.

With the floor littered with food, there were more new hazards about other than stray furniture and the odd liquid spill. Iustitia's bare feet grazed across more than one olive, their viscosity enough to create a surface of little friction. She pressed on, forcing down useless panting as best as she could. Her lungs did not need air, and the instinctive reflex to pant when overexerted alone was tiring. Benevo in turn was not as she was, and his panting was because he actually needed the oxygen in his system. With his sword getting heavier in his arms, and the strain of keeping such an aggressive pace, Benevo began to wear down, lending to carelessness.

Some of the crowd was up, about to warn Benevo of the upcoming hazard but then he stepped on it. A lone fig was enough to bring the great fighter down as it slipped out from under him, along with his feet, and with that he fell to the floor. His crafted steel clattered a few feet away to the sounds of roaring cheers.

"Looks like you lose," Iustitia stood over her friend, sword pointed at his throat while she coyly peaked from under her blindfold at him just to be more of a tease.

"Yep, you got me," Benevo smiled, blindfold also pulled back and his hands raised in surrender. In a symbol of no hard feelings, Iustitia helped Benevo to his feet, hardly worse for the wear.

"That was pretty good," she complimented Benevo's skill, noticing a marked improvement. Any further praise was interrupted by Benevo's father.

"Now see my friends, that is a son that any father can be proud of," Galen gestured to his boy. "He is both smart and capable of handling such a fine weapon," then to his neighbor he turned and began to praise his offspring further. "My Benevo could best almost any man on that sword, and surely would make a fine addition to the military."

Benevo gave a sideways glance to Iustitia, having overheard the latter mention. She too did not like the idea of military service. There had been recruitment plans in the works for obvious reasons, of which neither wanted to participate in. Maybe the idea of serving Athens seemed grand, but in reality there was no way to defend off the forces that the intended recruitment was for. Putting the articulate Benevo, who was more comfortable with creative writing, into active duty was a waste of a person. As for Iustitia, she was barely getting away with her non-conformist antics, and in that situation no matter how good her illusions could be, she was sure to be caught.

"Military you say? You do know that Helike's Emperor has those dreaded birds. At this point we would need a beast-caller, someone who can talk to those animals and

use them for our cause,” Iustitia and Benevo could hear the man talking back to Galen. Another man then joined their conversation.

“You mean the Seasons? I heard they come in the dead of night, all fire and cold. Burn. Burn everything to the ground, nothing is left.”

“Still, isn’t there someone like Sophocles that can tame one of those monsters? If we had even one of those, not even their three buzzards and ten thousand of their men could best one of ours and us.”

“June, why are they doing this?” Iustitia asked, chucking another piece of driftwood into the fire. It had been a long day, night had fallen and Iustitia could finally escape the symposium, the restrictive binds, and the illusions that concealed her. On a secluded outcrop overlooking the blackened sea, she was able to be herself, along with the only friend she completely trusted. The nights were long for her, with no capacity to sleep or dream. All she could do was think and thankfully June was there today to humor her.

Given the topic of conversation, June knew this was a serious question as she addressed the girl. Her communication methods were that of any bird, but as Iustitia was what she was, it could have been any language to her and she would still understand. She had to think before answering, and finally said, “I am not sure, but I have some ideas,” to her friend.

“But you’re a Moltres. Are you sure you don’t have a positive idea? You have public forums and ways to communicate with each other; otherwise, this world would be plunged into discord.” Iustitia further pressed the sub-Legendary firebird for answers. June, whose full name was actually ‘Flaming June’ looked over, somewhat ashamed that she really did not know much.

“We do what is expected of us but with the way the Legendary Birds are at the moment, this isn’t normal. We respect people, and can work with them, but never would we just bend to the whims of one. Either he made a convincing argument, some sort of wager and they decided to go along with it. I can’t imagine that Sophocles would have threatened them. He might have a lot of ships, but they’re just wood,” hypothesized the sub-Legendary, carefully mulling over it. “Why though, I really do not know. Once they made their contract with him they stopped going to our gatherings, whether amongst our own species, or with the actual Legendaries themselves. Sophocles must be some sweet talker.”

“Then why is no one dealing with them? From what I have perceived was that defectors were punished and killed.”

June actually knew more about Iustitia than even the girl’s parents did. Iustitia was special, there was no doubt about it. Her psychic potential, while always masked, was huge. The blonde could manifest a sword and scales from beyond the void. She was a talented flier and Teleporter, both innate Mew skills. Before her body had completely sloughed off its mortality, she use to have vivid, audible dreams pertaining to a specific individual far in the future, and even one further in the past. Some of the things she brought up had been so incredulous that Zeus had beat her to quiet the very mention of them. Only in confidence with June did she tell her of what she witnessed with such a peculiar level of foresight and hindsight.

“In the situations where these Legendaries were too out-of-control, overpowering everyone else, there was a Decider of Fate to deal with them. Maybe now is the time for a Legendary to step forth and take the title.” Iustitia was straight with her words.

“Sometimes the only way to resolve the problem is by getting rid of it completely. You can all discuss and debate, but if no one steps up, takes control then everyone is harmed, and soon starts to die, and before you know it, it’s a world without nobody in it. It has happened before with Vita Sanguinece, and might not even start for Letum Falcifer if there is nothing here left to save.”

These two names came up often, and Flaming June was familiar with them. Both carried or would eventually carry the title of Decider of Fate. Vita Sanguinece was from the distance past, and in her world an Articuno had caused a global catastrophe, wiping out almost everything alive. The solution for that was to kill the Articuno. The other one mentioned, this fearsome ‘Death Carrying a Scythe’ as it were, Flaming June was not particularly fond of hearing about. In her apparent future scenario, she would face off against an energy siphoning Deoxys and kill it using something called ‘End To all Things’. Even though Letum would die in the end, the potential of something dire occurring was disturbing. Iustitia spent a lot more time worrying over Letum than June thought she should, since some part of Iustitia believed that she could fix things and make it better for this distant Decider of Fate, maybe prevent her from resorting to being the ultimate killing machine brought on by sheer misery.

Her dreams had always been haunted with the sounds of the pair, and sometimes in the moments of daydream, when she could no longer sleep, she thought about them.

“Now that you don’t sleep anymore, you think those thoughts would go away. What is it like to not sleep, dream normally?” June asked, not able to fathom it for herself. A sub-Legendary needed rest just as much as anyone else, where Iustitia obviously was not normal by any means.

“It is not much of a difference to me. When my mind chooses to wander, only then I think about them. When I was younger, I was forced to dream about the Deciders of Fate, always. Sleep, is something I do not miss.” Hearing Letum Falcifer scream out of anguish in her head was something she could not shake completely, the memory an unsettling one to revisit.

“Still, thinking about things you cannot control will make you go crazy. The future is hypothetical and not set in stone,” June warned with a flap of her wings. She watched as Iustitia hugged her knees to her chest, already deep in thought.

“There has to be a solution for everything that works. The only time things do not make sense is when we do not want to understand them. I don’t want what happened to Vita Sanguinece to happen to us, and I do not want anyone to suffer as Letum might.” June could only imagine what was going through Iustitia’s mind at the moment. The golden scales, the things the girl turned to for answers refused to move when the questions involved the Deciders of Fate. As Iustitia was beginning to find out, they refused to move for her particular situation as well.

School was a yearly activity outside of the demands of the peak seasons for those who were the sons of fisherman, farmers and sheep herders. While Athenian society prided itself in education for all free born Athenians, not everyone could afford to post their sons

in the elite schools, or lived close enough for their offspring to travel to them. The demands of daily life, and the overall uselessness of education for a tradesman or working hand made it so those that did attend school to be of the most privy of society. Most of those that attended were of the aristocratic folds, along with the sons of traders, loan officers, scholars and long-running state officials. Wealthy merchant families, like the one that Iustitia represented were sparse, but still present within the group. She did not board in any of the neighboring rooming houses, and while questionable as to how she made the total four hour journey each day without fuss, no one pressed that matter. The only thing that was being pressed at the time was the apparent boy's stance on a free Athens for all.

Disguised as her Justin persona, Iustitia had just scoffed at the idea of one of the boy's and his notions that any foreigner, even those three generations in, could never understand the concepts of their sophisticated society. "They grow up within an Athenian system, raised by their fathers, and their forefathers, to live, breathe and walk within Athenian life. How is someone like that not an Athenian?"

"They are slaves. They are born ignorant," stated Iustitia's adversary, George, as he turned his cheek. By his logic, because she was both non-Athenian, and a woman, and worse yet, part monster, Iustitia had no place, let alone capacity to engage in said argument. She was not going to make any of those three points, though went on to another.

"So a man, born of an Athenian family takes to the wilds for years; disgraces his family, friends, cultural; comes back after many years. Is he still Athenian?" Before the boy could interject, Iustitia raised her hand to signal she was not done. "Even though he spits on Athens and all its good glory?"

"Surely, he's Athenian," whispered one of the other lads within this conversational circle. "Athens is like family. If he were my brother, no matter what, he would be welcomed in my heart," was the soft-spoken reply from one. The one that Iustitia had been arguing with was a notoriously aggressive individual. His family had been known for inner feuds that lasted for decades.

"Rot to all of them," snarled George. "If you cannot appreciate our way of life, you don't deserve to be an Athenian."

"Yet those that are not your version of a 'proper' Athenian show appreciation through their humble ways and generous behavior. Wouldn't you rather have someone loyal to be your Athenian brother-in-arms than some unappreciative ruffian?"

One of the military minded individuals spoke out of turn. He was a stupid one, but at least his common sense was sound. "If it were me on a march, I would always want someone loyal to me. A backstabber is a backstabber, whether he be a friend, a brother or the enemy." Satisfied with himself, he stood back and proudly crossed his arms. Iustitia had a knowing smirk as her adversary let the telling silence loom. There was no denying to the starter of the argument that the value of someone was that of the individual, not his class.

"Fine, Justin. You win. Gods, you argue like a woman." The circle of boys hooted and laughed at the insult, clapping at the jibe but also for Iustitia's logic. The only real Athenian was one who felt united with the whole, anyone else was not. Maybe women would never earn their rights in society, this mostly because most men never asked them

for their opinions. Iustitia reached forward and gave a sympathetic pat to George's shoulder.

"Fierce loyalty is as valuable as knowing who to trust with it," she smiled encouragingly, showing no resentment in her voice. At this point the attention was turning back to the yard where some of the other pupils were in the middle of their sparring practice.

In one of the chalk circles stood Benevo, paired up against a much more brawny male. Like before in his show fight with Iustitia, Benevo was armed with his stunning piece of futuristic metal; whereas, his opponent was using a thick, bronze blade and small buckler. At the age of sixteen and seventeen, both of the young men were allowed to spar with honed weapons if they chose, as long as they did not aim for damaging strikes. A few bruises and shallow cuts were fine, anything else was punishable.

"Yaah!" yelled Ares, rushing with his buckler, sword coming up from behind. Overpowered moves made sidestepping the lunge too easy, Benevo letting him pass. A sharp jab of his hilt reminded Ares of what a stupid move he made.

"Oww! . . ." Ares turned to glare the teenager down. The hit to his rib cage was painful, and would certainly leave a bruise.

"Rushing someone might work on the inexperienced, but not on me," Benevo reminded his opponent before resuming his two-handed stance. Ares took up his position, with buckler in front of him and his sword in the air, waiting to tickle out any potential strikes. He took three fake swipes forward, then at the fourth made for a real hit. Benevo was not going to humor the strike, and instead took a step back, letting the blade whistle through the air.

Relying on what he learned from the even more experienced Justin, Benevo offered his advice. "You have good weapons. Most of the time your opponents won't. You don't have to swing too hard to hurt them."

"I hate this. A man's sport is wrestling, not this bladed belly dancing," grumbled Ares, repositioning himself. "If it weren't for your 'boyfriend', you would be bad at this too. Why aren't we wrestling?" he complained. Wrestling was an old combat sport as well as a fighting style. It was also something the muscular Ares had an advantage in. There were many cities within the archipelago which trained their soldiers in direct, physical combat. As it went, most weapons were flimsy and broke easily, and not everyone could always have the beautiful blades that only the most wealthy could afford. Using a bronze instrument for fighting was not something Ares cared to be great at.

There were two people Benevo did not enjoy wrestling with, one was Ares, who could easily throw down anyone if he managed to catch them, then there was Justin, who ended his fights in seconds by often kicking or flipping his opponents across the field. Justin never let someone touch himself for longer than a split second before sending them in the opposite direction. *If he was interested in me you would think it would be for at least a little longer than with anyone else.* Benevo quickly shook his head to rid himself of the thought. *Not going there. Focus!* He let what Ares said slide.

"If these were Sophocles' men, they would not fight you with their hands. They would use their wits and their advanced arms for fighting. I want to help you be good at this." The boy took what Benevo said begrudgingly, resuming a proper stance. Benevo prepared himself to move in and attack, hoping to show Ares what control looked like.

Iustitia was looking over, listening intently as Benevo and his sparring partner trained together. Being able to teach someone else was a way for both of them to learn. In doing so, Benevo was mentally refining his skills even though the remarks were a bit damaging to his psyche. She could guess a few of her philosophical compatriots were giving her strange looks after the boyfriend comment. Instead of dwelling on it, her attention was caught as she felt a new presence at the gates of the yard.

She had no idea who they were from a distance and asked, "Who are they?" to her closest neighbor, adding a tone of annoyance to make it seem that even if they were important, that she did not quite care. Her neighbor was fast to respond.

"Few senators, and looks to be . . ." the teen paused while he thought over the name, "General Memphis, with a couple guards."

"Memphis?" Iustitia raised her eyebrow, expressing concern. *They must be recruiting.* "That wasn't announced!" She had not been expecting a surprise visit, and nor was anyone else.

Benevo had his back turned to his audience, already in the process of disarming Ares. With one move he caused Ares to drop his protective buckler, and with the next he crashed his hilt into the boy's hand, forcing him to drop his sword to the ground. "I still have my blade, and you have nothing. In this scenario, wrestler or not, you would be severely troubled."

"I concede," Ares said with a raise of his hands, his disappointment more obvious as he just caught sight of the watchers.

"Young man, that was fantastic!" complimented one of the senators. Startled, Benevo hid it as he turned to face the collective of men. "Uh, thank you." There were a little under a dozen new arrivals, along with the combat instructor who quickly took over the speaking.

"That there is one of our finest pupils, Benevo," the tutor, Thomas, introduced him to the men. "Smart, great on a sword. Are you recruiting, General?"

"Yes. As the threat of Sophocles grows, so too should our forces. Are these most of your boys?" General Memphis looked over Benevo, his eyes also roving across the other pairs in the yard and those milling about.

"That they are," the tutor smiled proudly.

"Are they anywhere as good as this one?" the general pointed to Benevo.

"There is one other," Thomas looked around, but could not find who he was speaking of. Iustitia knew it was her, but had snuck off into the shaded spots and was currently out of sight. "Unfortunately, I do not see him at the moment." Benevo was standing still, trying his best to mask his horror. If he had been warned ahead of time he would have behaved clumsily, thus undesirable to any recruiter.

"We need people like you," said one of the other senators, oblivious to the guards who were somewhat jealous of both Benevo's equipment and his skills. "What you can do with that sword would make you a thing of legend." It was a fine compliment, though not one Benevo wanted to hear.

"Thank you, sir," he replied back quietly.

"You, we are enlisting," added another senator.

"That is quite alright. I'm sure you don't need another one of me around." Not all Athenians displayed an interest in war, Benevo being one of them. He was a free-thinker,

an artisan of words, not a depraved killing machine. Fighting others was not his passion, though to refuse the offer would most surely brand him as a heretic.

"Let me make this clear," General Memphis stepped forward. "We do not have one of you, and we need one of you. Athens could be burnt to the ground any day now. You can help save her from such a fate."

"I really do not think I would be a good choice. I'm not the type," was the further hesitant reply from the teenager.

"It's not an option." Forced enlistment, Iustitia would have none of it. The Athens she believed in was one of freewill. It was better to be expelled from the society that did not share your values than to be forced to live within it.

"May I step in here?" Iustitia slid in-between the man and her friend. A stupid move as it may have seemed, her scales actually encouraged such an action. "You are going to waste a fine, scholastic individual just so you can throw him at the Seasons and watch him die? That is a pointless act." Thomas was aghast that his pupil, Justin had just showed himself, and with all the attitude he was known for. Iustitia could not see this, but Benevo's look of horror was very expressive on his face, hoping his friend would clue in that anything said now was going to get them into trouble, probably exiled.

"And this one?" the first senator asked to the tutor, wondering what boy had the nerve to stand against such men.

"That is Justin, the great merchant Zeus' boy," Thomas answered, his voice heated. The detest was audible to Iustitia's ears, and she did not care.

"You see here, boy," Memphis began, inching closer with his fist raised to smack Iustitia across the face.

"No, *you* see here!" Iustitia barked back, stomping her foot forward glaring down at the man. Greek men were mostly shorter than she was, and General Memphis was no exception. "Men who fight Sophocles and his Seasons die! You are mortal men. Benevo is a mortal man. If you had as much brains as you had men, you would know to use them to defend the city while the rest evacuate her citizens."

Anger overrode the general, freezing him into place with his hand hovering in the air. The nerve the whelp had to call him dumb, to question his bravado. "You . . . you . . . bastard. You are Athenian! Your duties are to this city! To refuse me, to refuse the Senate . . . The likes of you are exiled!"

"Quit it!" Benevo snapped at his friend, hysterical and in a state of panic.

"Stupid ass," Iustitia spoke down to Memphis. "Exile is by force, and I would do so by choice. Idiots like you will never get that." Iustitia turned to the flabbergasted Benevo, grabbing his wrist. "Come on," she spoke hurriedly, half dragging him along. One of the guards jumped in front of her.

"You insulted General Memphis." The general's pride was that of the guards, anyone who made such remarks deserved retribution. Their tutor had made a mistake by not revealing the best fighter amongst the students, since if the guard knew, maybe he would not have been so foolish to challenge the blond boy.

Iustitia could hear the small creak of leather, the guard aiming to prod her with his spear. Even unarmed, he was no match to her as she swooped the spear from the man's grasp, doing a spin before slamming the staff hard into the man's side.

"Get them!" yelled a recruiter, sending the guards into alarm and ready to fly after the pair of teenagers.

“Come on,” Iustitia grinned as she repeated herself, grabbing Benevo again and dragging him along.

“Justin! What are you doing?!” Benevo yelled as his friend, realizing that this likely insane individual had him by the claw and wanted to take Benevo with him. Iustitia’s laugh was not comforting as he followed.

“Are you insane?!” Benevo hollered, still at the mercy of Iustitia’s iron grip.

“Would it make you feel better if I was?” Iustitia called back.

“No!” Benevo continued to yell as he was being forced to follow behind the apparent boy.

Down the corridors and alleyways they went, with a sizeable force trailing behind. It was dizzying to believe what had just happened. Justin had just ruined his life, committing them both to exile, and for the moment, possible death. The winding passages of white and brightly painted apartments lined their path, scattered about with bewildered residents wondering what these two vagabonds had done to deserve General Memphis’ wrath. He could not describe exactly how he felt, scared, angry, and almost excited as the pretty boy ahead of him took him off on a wild adventure. To watch that enthusiastic expression, the flowing hair as it led him along, Benevo was not sure what was getting to him, but was starting to believe maybe he was insane.

“This way,” Iustitia instructed, turning a corner into a narrow alley that would end up leading them into a crowded market place. At this point, Benevo was convinced he really was crazy.

He had still been in constant contact with his friend. No one switched with him as far as he could feel, but as his eyes adjusted to the change in lighting, he could not believe what he was seeing. In the same short tunic as Justin was a girl, or at least with the hourglass physique of one.

“I’ll explain later,” the women said back to him, still holding on tightly to her friend.

Back into the sun they went and into a market crowded with people. A bit of pushing and shoving at full speed, as Iustitia barreled through the square with Benevo close behind.

“Watch it!” exclaimed a female that was caught by Iustitia’s elbow. She was going for a corner of the market where the four-legged beasts were corralled, specifically the bellowing Taurus. A few more pushes and shoves, and she could smell her fellow monsters.

“Mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew,” (Let me pass. There are men following us and we need an escape,) Iustitia called out to the bulls. They recognized the Mew language immediately, not bothering to question why this human was using it, only that a fellow needed their help. The creatures parted for the pair, and then closed in behind them.

“You, get back here!” yelled a guard, now blocked from following them by the so called stubborn beasts. These animals were large and with bad temperaments. There would be no way to jostle through them easily.

Frantic sprinting had turned into a jog as the pair made their way into the remote hillsides overlooking the sea. Late afternoon was upon them, and realizing they were safe, they collapsed onto the grass to rest.

Iustitia was quick to recover, her usual imitation breathing easing into nothing as she lay in quiet stillness. Benevo was still panting heavily from stress of what he had just gone through. In the presence of a woman, the man always spoke first, which she would respect that cultural norm in his presence. In reality, she was not really sure how he would respond to her.

Benevo was catching glances at the woman, looking her up and down as she was lying amongst the coastal grasses. Her eyes were closed, lending to his lack of shyness as he stared at her hair, her lips, breasts, down her body and to the pretty cream legs. If this was really Justin, then no wonder he had been so confused. To him, Justin looked very much like a woman.

“You’re a girl.” Obvious thing for Benevo to point out. Iustitia did not have to fake looking over to him, though old habits die hard and she did so anyway. She was wondering what other astute observations he would make, hearing him sit up to give her body even more of a disrespectful gaze. The span of silence was the same her mother received when introduced to a new male acquaintance. She waited for him to finish doing whatever it was that he was doing before he opened his mouth again.

“You have this long, silky hair. These, exotic eyes,” a small pause, then Iustitia could hear him break off into a cocky chuckle, “Great breasts.” This received a roll of the eyes from her. What more could she expect from a sixteen year old. She could only imagine how such a comment would go over if in front of Letum Falcifer’s Chosen. Apparently she looked like a popular figure of female ideals, and the slobbering nature of Greek men would likely lead to such a male with a hurt groin. Iustitia had to hide a laugh, but could not help it with Benevo’s next remark.

“You don’t have a penis, do you?” Of any answer he could hope for, this was the most important.

“Hahaha, no!” Iustitia rolled over to give him a serious expression. She could not witness the look of relief that washed over Benevo’s face. “Why do you think I never joined you guys in the baths? Or ever wore a skirt or less when it was hot?”

“Because you were a prude?” The answer that most of the boys had come up with. With what Benevo was seeing, it was no wonder Justin was always fully clothed. There may have been a lot of things she was not forthcoming about, but her personality was no different nor were her feelings for her friend.

“I can do things, between how I dress and illusions to make myself look like a boy. An illusionary penis is a bit hard, and I refuse to where a phallus.”

“Then I guess your name isn’t Justin then, is it?” Benevo asked quizzically.

“It’s Justice, or Iustitia. Either or,” Iustitia responded, finally introducing her real self for the first time. “It’s English.”

“English?” Benevo repeated back, not familiar with either that word, or her English title.

“A language that will not exist for a few thousand more years, at least not in the format I know of.” There was some quiet, Iustitia mostly believing because she had made him either uncomfortable or had confused him. In actuality, Benevo figured something was strange here, confirming it as he looked at Iustitia’s unblinking, blind stare. Though

the thing that really perturbed him was the strange sparkle he could see across their surface.

“What are you?” It was a question Iustitia had asked herself and never could find a proper answer for. As logical as her mind was, some of what she knew never sounded right. Still, he had asked and there was at least some answers that she could provide.

“Not . . . human. Well, not completely,” she said, hesitating to let the words out. Outside of Flaming June, Benevo was her only true friend. She hoped that with what she was that she did not disgust him.

“Not completely? Then what?” Benevo was quiet, interested and paying attention. She thought she was terrifying him, when in fact the notion intrigued him greatly. This girl, who had masqueraded as a boy looked to be almost otherworldly and seemed magical in a way he could not quite describe. His curiosity was burning. Iustitia on the other hand had become tight-lipped, ashamed of her origins, her weaknesses and how both human and Legendary society saw her as. The fear was that if she opened up to him, that he would reject her. For a moment she took solace in her scales, weighing in her mind her doubts, letting them guide her in her moment of vulnerability. They told her it would be okay, and with a deep sigh, Iustitia let it out.

“I’m half human and half Mew.” Benevo had no idea what that was at all, rarely leaving the city and seeing any monsters. “It’s a beast, in the future they are called Pokémon or Pocket Monsters because of their capacity to be physically altered and stored in tight spaces. Far better to call them that than what everyone does now,” she hissed bitterly. Her friend was listening, wondering what all of this was. He was a patient listener, practically a sponge for information. “My mother, Timandra, she’s human. My father, Zeus . . . he was a monster, one as powerful as a single Season . . .” Iustitia’s eyes became downcast. The Legendary Birds were destroying city after city in the name of Sophocles and Helike, and she had just admitted that she was fathered by a creature that was as powerful, and in the mind of anyone she ever knew, just as evil.

“Is he . . . does he do what they do?” pressed the boy in a hushed voice.

“No, not at all. He’s was a Mew, which nurtures life. He would never hurt anybody.” The happy demeanor had changed into a sulk, making Iustitia’s eyes more gloomy in color. “They truly love life, animals, the Pokémon and people. My father appeared to my mother regularly, eventually they fell in love and they had me,” she said, feigning a slight smile.

“And he’s no longer a Mew, why?”

“The guardian Pokémon of this world, Ho-oh saw to it that mortality and a human body would be his punishment. He’s not as powerful as he once was, but still enough. It’s why he’s such a successful merchant. He can talk to the Pokémon like how I did earlier, and they aid him across the sea.”

“And that is why . . . It makes so much sense now,” Benevo exclaimed, realizing that his suspicions about Zeus’ success were valid. There was something to it. He also realized that if what she said about Zeus was true then maybe Iustitia was as exotic in her skills as she looked. “And you can talk to these Pocket Monsters? Anything else?”

“This,” she said, producing her sword from thin air.

“Woah!”

“Yours, I had the help of a fledging Season with. There are many of them, and most are good. Mine, I can just do this and it appears,” and as she said it, the sword

vanished, “and disappears at my command. There are many things I can do, it comes with being the child of these Season-like beasts, known as Legendaries,” Iustitia explained with an easygoing confidence. Benevo was being completely receptive of her.

“You are a goddess,” he spoke in awe, Iustitia skeptically weighing that statement to judge its authenticity.

“I am not a goddess. A goddess would be perfect.” Iustitia turned away, despising her lameness, her odd physical quirks. She gave a little allegory, inspired by Benevo’s creative rants. “She would live on a cloud, eating ambrosia and drinking sunshine, and when she breathes she causes flowers to bloom. Her dreams would be so beautiful that bird song would be inspired by them . . .” Iustitia trailed off, her body curling up as she looked off into the distance without actually looking. “She would be able to see the smiles of those she cares about.” While her eyes were odd, Benevo had not quite considered her to be incapable of sight. And guessing on what he said, and things he actually had not observed, it seemed like most of Iustitia had said was fact. Despite hours of training in the summer sun, he had never once seen Justin parch any thirst, or eat when everyone else did. The excuses were many, the reality sinking in that the Greek life of food, drink and watching beautiful women dance was not something his friend could experience.

“Just . . . ice, Justice,” Benevo corrected himself, “I was not trying to insult you.” For a moment Iustitia let her emotions get the best of her, face reddening slightly as she grieved the most bitterly simple of things.

“I don’t even know what you look like,” she murmured, hair covering her face.

“Hey, that is not a problem. You see by feeling and hearing, right?” Benevo offered, using the most his insight had to spare. “Would you know what I look like if you touched me?” he ventured, clasping her hands. Iustitia said nothing as she let him try out his idea, bring their hands to his face. A gasp of amazement turned into curious tracing of her finger tips. Benevo kept absolutely still with the exception of his eyes as he watched Iustitia’s blindly dart about as they mapped a composite of his face in her mind.

“I see you. I finally see you,” she repeated, tears that were meant for self-pity turned into those of joy. All these years, Benevo had been nothing more than a voice on a strong pair of shoulders, and now he was a whole. Iustitia gasped in delight as she felt his neck, his hair, drawing her fingers across his lips without any hesitation for how odd it must be to let an apparent stranger do such a thing. She was not sure if he was handsome, or what color his skin was, but he was real.

Benevo was relieved, and excited for a few reasons. He knew Justin was odd, though all explainable now: The distant gazes, the dyslexic reading behavior along with the blatant refusal to engage boys in physical activity. The relief came from what his classmates had already known. He had feelings for Justin, and was not sure why, or how to even express them. He did not want to be interested in guys. They were ugly, hairy, smelled funny. Justin was effeminate, graceful, and for a boy, very beautiful and somehow captivating. The moment he found out Justin was a girl in disguise he was so incredibly relieved. This gratitude turned into other things, as he grabbed Iustitia around the shoulders and hugged her.

“You have no idea how glad I am that you’re a girl!” he blurted out loudly, almost elated sounding. It took a few seconds for Iustitia to clue into what he meant, having always seen their friendship as being platonic. She had not realized that his feelings on

his end must have confused him greatly. By him saying that she knew that despite her actions earlier, not only had he forgiven her for them, that he also cared about her. The hug he gave her, she gladly returned before taking a small jab at him.

“Even if this blind girl kicked your butt at sword play?” she smirked, playfully teasing him. She allowed herself to mess his hair a little. It was much shorter than hers, and fun to toss about.

“A blind girl who looks like an immortal in disguise. My lady can beat me any day,” Benevo laughed, adding a seated bow. He was not going to treat Iustitia like a woman because she simply was not, thus humoring her ploys. “You are a wealth of ideas for my pantheon. Imagine, Zeus, a great god, father of all the gods. He cheats on his wife and steps down from the heavens and messes with mortals while in animal form.”

“My father is not an adulterer!” Iustitia crossed her arms, contesting his musings.

“Is it bestiality if it goes the other way?” Benevo asked, jostling Iustitia further.

“Not if they both consent,” Iustitia snapped back at him.

“What about with you?” Benevo was not completely implying anything, though both set about blushing.

“I’m not sure about that one,” Iustitia was feigning the act of avoiding eye contact.

“There is only one of you. You tell me.” Benevo sidled up next to the girl, thighs touching. His flinching instinct was tested, since longer than a second and he figured Iustitia’s personal space would lead to his own personal injury. The throw never came, she wanted him there.

“Then no,” she smiled slyly, letting him run his fingers through her silky strands. Kissing in Grecian culture was a formal commitment. Even with their six year age difference, and Iustitia’s questionable paternity, very few rituals of unity were as taboo as two unwed lovers kissing. And in Legendary society, that same rule applied.

There was only one aura that could be perceived as a bright flash to both the eyes and the mind. Iustitia and Benevo stopped on the verge their lips touching at the sensation of a purified glow entering the space beside them. With that glow came forth the one individual that spent its time, as Iustitia was convinced, ruining the lives of all those she ever cared for, and now it was her turn for that same individual to ruin hers.

“Ho-oh,” she growled, identifying the visitor. She was there when it mocked Vita Sanguine’s struggles and deceived Letum Falcifer. She witnessed its inactivity, manipulations, its control. It destroyed her father’s life, and for years had refused to even address the problem of the current three Legendary Birds. Why it was there was for her, and she knew exactly what it wanted.

Taking guidance from Iustitia’s actions, Benevo tried to get a bit close to Iustitia and slightly behind her. She knew what this Ho-oh was, where he simply did not. The bird was large and colorful, almost cheerful looking if it were not for the black that masked its eyes and the disappointed look it was giving. Unsure of much, he tried to remain inconspicuous.

<“You are a descendant of Mew, unique and in essence the only one of your kind. You are from a proud, noble lineage of Legendaries and this is how you show your place? Fraternizing with a human, caught up in your maternal species’ desires? Stand up,”> Ho-oh ordered. Iustitia delivered it a glare, not wanting to humor the bird at all. Sometimes it portrayed a serious nature, though it almost always saved face in front of

others, acting kind and warm. She was not getting any of that from it today. She stood before it, lips drawn tightly.

<“You are to be left to your own devices no longer. Destiny calls to you, it is your time. Whiles of the heart are not to be part of it.”> Iustitia listened, and was quick to object. She knew a lot more about Ho-oh than anyone else ever would, her statement riling the bird further.

“And what destiny is that, Ho-oh? The same, pathetic one as Vita Sanguinence’s, where you forced a baby Legendary do to all the work for you?” Iustitia snarled up at the bird. She could not see its expression. It was almost a given that what she knew had upset it.

Ho-oh was stunned. It was billions of years in age with the capacity to see and know all, it fully aware that the only other individual in living existence that knew of Vita Sanguinence was the million year old Legendary Lugia. These individuals were special, and like Vita Sanguinence with her immaculate gifts of life, this next in line had to also be able to portray skills unique to herself. These skills were not ones Ho-oh was happy to hear about, the gift of being able to look into the past and know its secrets being one of them. It was hoping that eventually she would transition to her duties, and if not, comply readily; neither of which Iustitia was doing.

<“You will remember your make and acknowledge your duties, not calling into question of your predecessor’s,”> it said with a slight hiss at the back of its throat. <“I believe you do not need to be told what it is you are suppose to be doing, Decider of Fate.”> That was not the title Iustitia was hoping to be addressed by. A few hours before she had made a grand show of defying man’s authority, and now the authority of Pokémon had presented itself and came down on her hard. Up until then, her life had been up to her, and now it was chained to a duty she was very familiar with, and absolutely did not want. If she refused, she would be ostracized by everything, possibly risking her life by doing so. Humans might have exiled her, but a non-compliant Legendary was either ruthlessly punished, or killed through the acts of a Legendary seen fit for the job. The reality was, was that she did not really have a choice.

“I, Justice, will accept whatever burden I am to bare . . .” Iustitia whispered reluctantly, head turned to the side. The line she imitated was from Letum Falcifer when she had been poised with a question regarding her commitment to being a Legendary with a great purpose. She knew absolutely everything Ho-oh had done to and would do to the Deciders of Fate, and now she was officially the unfortunate third. She asked for one, and destiny had picked her. If Ho-oh only knew how dangerous a Fate was, would it never have appeared to her in the first place. That thought she kept to herself, anger threatening to boil over as Ho-oh, satisfied with the Decider of Fate’s submission readied its departure.

<“You are doing a great thing for this world, Justice. Thank you for acknowledging and being loyal to the Legendary cause,”> Ho-oh smiled, returning to its normally gracious state before leaving in a flash. The moment Iustitia felt it leave she lost all control.

“Argh!” she yelled, then started storming around in a rage-fueled circle. Benevo watched as she stomped about, raving and cursing over a multitude of things relating to Ho-oh’s appearance. “Of course it just *had* to be obvious that if I dreamt about the Deciders of Fate that I was one. That my stupid powers won’t work for telling *me* that.

That I had to be told by that awful, fucking buzzard what I really was . . .” At this point her spiel had changed to English, and Benevo was no longer able to understand her complaints. He became quiet and unmoving, essentially forgotten by Iustitia as she continued to storm about, aura ignited in a flickering gold glow.

“The Chaos, the dying. I know this, I can change it. I am not going to let this happen to me, to be replaced by her. It has to stop here, it has to stop with me. She can go on, live happily with Coline, and I don’t have to die. This will all work out,” Iustitia reiterated to herself, trying to soothe her nerves. Benevo might not have understood her for the last few minutes, but he recognized distress when he saw it.

“It will be okay,” he whispered, taking a hold of the girl, shushing into her ear. As much as she needed to confide in June, she also needed Benevo as they were. “What was that all about?” asked the boy, holding the young Legendary in his arms. Obviously, it was something serious.

“Ho-oh appears to those who are important, when their destined path is set to begin, like ours,” Iustitia murmured, her mood calming down. She took one of his hands, gently tracing them as she absently went on. “Legendaries in active duty are not suppose to do anything else but what is set before them. I suppose Ho-oh is afraid I would go the way of my father and give up everything for my Chosen, a special someone who is suppose to aid their Legendary in crisis.”

“Because I tried to kiss you?” Benevo quipped, trying to be a bit funny by pointing out how absurd it must be.

“Maybe,” Iustitia gave a dry chuckle. “Kissing leads to other things that are a lot better than being a Decider of Fate.” She was trying to be as good humored as she could be, it being tough as she was unable to get the disturbing concepts out of her mind. Decider of Fate was a terrible title to have.

“It sounds important,” murmured the male.

“It is. We,” she was not use to the idea of thinking of herself of the same fold as the others, “are selected for a particular crisis that is a bit too challenging for a normal Legendary to handle. The Seasons are a crisis that apparently the other Legendaries cannot handle, so that is why I am here. I should have known. Mutated Mews are often Fates.” Iustitia was reprimanding herself for her own stupidity. Something as such should have been as clear as day, yet she had chose to ignore it. Between Flaming June and her parents, all three of them had seen the signs of her being a Legendary. She had grown up incredibly fast, devoid of mortal needs. In all likelihood she had been a Legendary Pokémon her entire life, with no other Legendary to replace. Reality sunk in that Ho-oh had always known what she was, knowing full well that she would comply out of a desperate need to protect Athens, aid Letum and ultimately save her own skin.

“I am such an idiot!” Iustitia shouted.

“No, you’re not.” Benevo spun her around, drawing her in close. Iustitia’s face went right into his shoulder. “How were you suppose to know if no one told you?”

“Denial? I don’t want to be a Decider of Fate. It’s the worst thing that can happen to a Legendary.”

“And isn’t that what I am here for, to help you?” Benevo poised his question, still comforting his Legendary as best as possible. He was this goddess’ mythological helper, her handpicked hero. He had stepped into a world of the gods with the aid of what was

once his best buddy. Benevo was up to the challenge. Iustitia gave herself a moment, taking a step away to regain her composure.

“You’re right. That is what Chosen are for. I’ve witnessed the past, and the future, and seen what the stories of the other two foretell. I have a chance to make things better. It is an opportunity I should be happy for.” Every chance given was a chance to improve. Fate had given her the capacity to do for Letum Falcifer of which she wished she could do for Vita, and that was to give her a proper future. Spirits improved, it was on to the next part of the problem, dealing with the Legendary Birds.

“I know I don’t need really any of this. What else do you think a person would need?”

Iustitia asked her mother, turning her head up so she could hear her better.

“Legendary or not, you will probably need these,” Timandra handed over a bundle of shorn linen and a small flask. Not knowing what it was, Iustitia removed the cork and took a whiff.

“Whew. Goat urine?” Iustitia added it to her satchel. It was a rudimentary disinfectant. She was not willing to admit that her use of Recovers was lacking. At an early age she had figured she could reverse an injury, or rapidly speed the healing, which was a very unconventional method of Recovering. If left alone for too long, it was harder for Iustitia to tell her body to take itself back before it was hurt, or push it forward enough before it healed. The more serious the injury was, the more she favored pulling back, though it was draining to try. There were concepts that were easy to wrap her mind around, unfortunately, when it came to the wishing nature of healing, which had no factual basis, she just could not grasp it.

It was the following day after the incident and Iustitia and Benevo were eager to get going. They had sheltered overnight in the hills while Zeus and Timandra handled the people who had come to look for the pair and only returned to the property once they were gone. Both of Iustitia’s parents figured such a day would come. Either she would be exposed, or her Legendary potential would be fully realized. The thought of her being married off had not even crossed their minds. No man could ever see the value in her. Despite Benevo’s longstanding interest, it was his father who decided the bride, and someone like Iustitia was worthless without seeing eyes.

Benevo was standing back at the edge of the courtyard, still struggling to get use to the idea that the thing next to him, an imitation fiery Season, was safe. She sure did not act like she was safe.

“Eeerreee reeee kree kkk kkk!” (I am not going to be his mount!) Flaming June squawked in protest. Iustitia’s back was turned as she was feeling through the supplies for Benevo.

“No complaints, June,” Iustitia scolded, sounding a bit distracted as she shuffled about the food staples and other items. Between being treated like a horse, and having to be bossed around by her newly minted Legendary friend, June had an unpleasant attitude. Despite her telepathy allowing her to communicate with Benevo, she was being purposely hostile to the Chosen, refusing to speak to him. Benevo had his own concerns.

“Are you sure she won’t light me on fire? Fire burns, and she is covered in it.” Benevo made some vain gestures, pointing to the unwelcoming sight of white fire

flickering across the Moltres' wings. For fun, she made an intimidating flap, letting her flames jump out at the boy.

"Ack! Bad bird!" Benevo yelled, bolting backwards.

"Grow up," Zeus called over, seeing the display. "You should know better than to threaten a Legendary's Chosen. If you two cannot get along I will tell Ho-oh," he further warned.

"She has just as much of a personality as you do. It is your fault for screaming at her and trying to douse her in the first place," Iustitia said, reminding Benevo of what happened upon seeing Flaming June.

Benevo had mistaken June as the actual Legendary Moltres and made the brazen attempt at throwing a water bucket at her. In her defense, she flash steamed the water, and vaporized the bucket. While Benevo's valor was noteworthy, his actions against June had made for a sour first impression, which was why she refused to talk to him.

"You know he was just trying to protect her," Timandra cooed, giving off a relaxed tone. It was adorable in a way to see how hapless and in love Benevo was with her daughter.

"Kreee." (Fine.) June swiftly whapped the boy with her wings, more of a reminder that she was the boss of him, not the other way around. <"Let's make this clear. I saw her before you did. The lead Chosen here is me. Don't forget that.">

Talking beasts equaled for a surreal experience. Benevo did take what Flaming June said seriously; after all, she was a foot taller than he was, covered in fire and had a playful, though potentially dangerous temperament.

"Dully reminded," Benevo muttered with a rub of his arm. Iustitia ignored their behaviors, knowing that the bird would warm up to Benevo quickly.

"Did I forget anything else?" inquired the Decider of Fate.

"Hopefully you don't forget coming back to see us," Timandra answered, grabbing a hold of her only offspring. "You are my most precious gift," she said, kissing her daughter's cheeks. Timandra looked at Benevo and called out to him. "Take care of her. I know she doesn't need it but just in case."

Benevo gave a nod of his head, "Certainly."

Zeus embraced his daughter, resonating with her over the burden of being a Legendary. He had seen the signs in her, praying that they were not true. Ho-oh just confirmed the doubts. "I would have never have wished this for you," he apologized, it being his fault that Iustitia was the way she was.

"I don't blame you," she murmured and hugged her father in return.

"I blame myself here." Zeus patted Iustitia's back then stepped aside to address the trio. "I have actually dealt with those three Legendary Birds. They take a bit too much pride in being what they are, and despite Legendary history, they get along better than most." Iustitia, Flaming June and Benevo bobbed their heads, acknowledging that they were listening. "Please, be safe."

"Yes, Zeus," Benevo and June replied in tandem.

"I will, father," spoke Iustitia, then adding a, "Thank you." She was lucky to have two Chosen by her side, a sub-Legendary no less, and loving parents. Poor Vita had no one for years. A family and loyal comrades was more than Iustitia could ask for. Goodbyes out of the way, it was time to head out.

“June, could you bend over?” The bird groaned. She was a Moltres, if any of the other birds saw her being used as a common mule she would be sorely humiliated. She obliged still and bent over for her rider. “Okay, Benevo, I will help you up.” Benevo paused in front of the bird, wondering if this was some sort of joke.

“There is no saddle,” he pointed out.

<“Makes throwing you all the easier,”> June twittered sinisterly. Despite the fact that Iustitia could not see this, Benevo made his most frightened look yet.

“She’s joking,” said the girl flatly, arms crossed, waiting impatiently for her Chosen to get this over with. Benevo hesitantly mounted the giant bird with the aid of a boost from Iustitia, him resting slightly behind the wings. He was actually impressed that despite appearances, the fire only burned when June wanted it to. His only hope was that he would not do something else to tick her off.

With a few flaps, Flaming June took off with her load, Iustitia following closely behind with the bags. If everything worked out well, then she would be back within a few days, so she thought.

It was the start of twilight and the trio of the aspiring hero and heroines were overlooking the fearful sight of the Seasons in action. From their cliff respite they were capable of seeing the city of Methone, one of the cities that specialized in trade with the coastal outposts of Africa and the Nile. In their refusal to stop trade and share its wealth with Helike, Sophocles had recently ordered its capture. The distance was a bit much for Iustitia to identify what was happening. Benevo himself was struggling in the waning light. Flaming June, being a bird, had stellar vision, giving her the responsibility of relaying the sights to the pair.

<“Moltres is swooping around the hillsides, burning the grasses to prevent escape. I can see people gathering there, but it looks like he’s making it hard for them to get out.”> Iustitia could not smell the smoke which was drifting further inland. For Benevo, it was obvious where the fires were. The occasional bursts from the flying glow made it known where and when Moltres was making his attacks. <“Articuno has taken post on the bay. He has been freezing the water around any ships that try to leave port.”>

“I think I can spot some of Sophocles’ vessels now,” Benevo pointed out, seeing the dark shapes with large sails bobbing through the safer passages amongst the ice.

“I am going to guess they are going to raid Methone,” mused Iustitia, putting forth her theory.

“Or kill them,” Benevo added gravely.

<“If they were trying to kill people that would be what Zapdos would be doing, but based on the gusting winds, she’s probably just aiding their sails.”> June was a Moltres, making her a reliable meteorologist. Her skills would have been a bit more accurate at guessing what the wind was being used for if it were not for Iustitia forcefully suppressing their presence. Currently, she had a Barrier in place that doused their auras and made them undetectable. Because June was a sub-Legendary Moltres in close proximity to her Legendary, Moltres could easily sense her spying otherwise. They needed to be cautious while they made their observations.

<“Definitely aiding their sails. They are navigating the waters without a problem. A few of the ships are docking, and I can see the men already pouring out.”>

“Willing surrender? They refused initially but are not resisting?” the male put forth his question, looking between the two females.

“Which, if this were the warrior state of Sparta, or the much more populated and defiant Athens, they would kill every last man, woman, and child.” It was not hypothetical if that would happen, there would be mass murder through those cities if things carried on as they had been. The Moltres knew how sound Iustitia’s judgement was at times, where Benevo was questioning how Iustitia could say something so heinous with absolute certainty.

“How could you make such horrible assumptions?” he asked, accusing her of being pessimistic and cold. Without a verbal answer, Iustitia lifted her left arm, hand raised in a rather opened fist position. From nothing a pair of gold scales appeared, dripping daintily from her hand.

“This is how I know,” the Legendary stated flatly. The scales dipped about, seemingly under their own influence, unaffected by any physical form that would normally rest atop of them. There was nothing there, yet the scales were constantly weighing something. What they were measuring, Benevo had no idea. The instrument was exceptionally refined except for the possible flaw of random measurement taking.

“I . . . I think it’s broken.” Benevo cast a wary gaze at the scales, unnerved that, like Iustitia’s sword, came from nowhere. “Why do they do that?” he questioned, pointing out the interchangeable dips between them. Iustitia enjoyed being asked about them, how essentially depraved their measurements were. If she was a true Decider of Fate, a Fatalis Dator, then the pair of scales were absolutely frighteningly awful things, asking and answering even more awful concerns. Admittedly, while June had seen them, and knew what they did, she did not like the things either. Iustitia gave her explanation.

“These scales weigh whatever I ask of them. Do I know if you lie to me? If a trade is fair? What the weather will be like tomorrow, a hundred years and a day from now?” She put the instrument in front of Benevo’s face, causing him to shuffle away from them as he realized how incredibly nasty they could be. “The chances of Sophocles attacking Athens. The chance that they will win.” The scales were beautiful in their depravity. “If you are a good person?” she whispered, the scales taking a massive dip in one direction. With no way to identify what each side did, Benevo was frightened by the very strong difference between the left and the right one.

“Can you please put those away. I don’t want to see that.” The giddy behavior mixed with the terrible messages of the device scared him, along with worrying Flaming June. Neither wanted to know this side of Iustitia, the one where she had all the answers and could abuse them to her heart’s content. She would never admit what the scales could not answer, though they were successful at speaking for everything else. As long as she asked the right questions she could never be wrong. And while there were things that the scales refused to weigh, they were her cheater’s guide to success.

“They are not going to go on a mass murdering spree. These people are mostly complacent, so you will get the pockets of resistance but mostly cooperation.”

“And what will happen to them?” Benevo inquired.

“Slavery, working the fields. Doing trades on behalf of Helike,” Iustitia replied, not seeming to be all that concerned for their well-being. The way she had things planned was that in the next few days she would be making her confrontation with the birds. Given the nature of Helike, potential slaves would be inventoried then selected to be put

on slave ships for other ports. Such a venture took at least a few days, more likely a few weeks. They would be fine.

<“Looks like the birds are landing.”> Flaming June pointed out a change in the activity, the light dim enough that it was becoming hard to see what exactly was going on. <“They are being commanded by a human in funny gear.”> Benevo crossed his arms contemplatively, going over what military clothing he was aware of.

“How long is the cape?” he asked, figuring that the man the three were obeying must be wearing one. The amount of finery or length of the robes were a signal to how high in the military hierarchy was an individual.

<“At the knee,”> replied the bird without question. Iustitia was aware of this formality only slightly. She had been able to gauge finery by the heaviness of the robes as they dragged, which almost no one in the military did. The length of the cape on the particular individual signified a high officer for certain, and definitely not Sophocles.

“It’s not Sophocles,” Iustitia confirmed, doing her usual mental weighing.

<“So they will take orders from anyone who Sophocles approves? That is pathetic,”> hissed June with disgust.

“Which means if we took off the head, someone else would replace him, and the birds still might obey as long as the policy remains the same.” Iustitia listened to Benevo and agreed.

“It would be easier to take out Sophocles first to demoralize them, but it looks like it won’t matter here. We’ll have to go after the birds first.” The term ‘we’ made the mortals nervous and silent. Guessing she said something wrong, Iustitia corrected herself. “I will be the one attacking the birds. You are at most, my moral support.” There was a sigh of relief.

“I’m sorry, it’s just that you can fly, and I can’t,” the boy explained, not wanting to make it sound like as much of an excuse as he felt it was.

“It is fine,” she said, then gave a soft chuckle. “You can write an epic to my glory.” This made Benevo smile before he was distracted by the sudden departure of the Legendary Birds.

“Looks like they are leaving.”

<“Should we follow?”> inquired June. Iustitia shook her head.

“Not now. We’ll get them later.” It was decided that they would leave and find somewhere to shelter for the night. June and Benevo both needed rest, where Iustitia would stand guard until morning.

The sun rose and dawn came with no particular fanfare, yet another sunrise that Iustitia would never see. It was a long night spent by herself, with the Decider of Fate deep in thought. Her two Chosen were still asleep, though Flaming June was already stirring. A Moltres typically woke with the sun but it would still be a couple of minutes where she would be essentially alone.

The whole night had been spent pondering about the possibilities, weighing options repeatedly. The scales always failed to budge for her issues, and at the moment, they were becoming even more restrictive with what they would answer. Almost comical in nature that what she wanted the most, it refused to give her, especially the perturbing question of, ‘Is all I’m doing just a faster path to my demise?’ She had perceived the

deaths of the others of her title. Like the rule with Legendary ascension, there was only ever one Legendary of its kind at any given time, followed by a cluster of sub-Legendaries. Letum Falcifer was born a Legendary outright as well, which was not a comforting thought. She may have been part Mew, but she was also human, and that mixing was paramount in being what she was. Vita Sanguinence was the Shadow Mew, and Letum Falcifer, a Mewthree, but for Iustitia, she was the chimera, the true point between Pokémon and human, the in-between, Law. Thinking that brought her dread.

Am I really like them? An avatar of rule and possibility between creation and entropy? Iustitia held out her hands to feel the wind flow over them. Logic made sense to her, as much as rules and law. Zeus and Timandra had repeatedly told her that she was special, but *that* special, she was not all too sure. To be like Life, to just call forth such powers at a whim seemed unfathomable, Iustitia unsure of the reaches of her capabilities. She wanted to know more but was without direction. Her thoughts derailed as she heard June rouse, Benevo following not long after.

Iustitia delivered a cheerful, “Good morning,” to the pair. Not being a morning person, Benevo gave a grunt and toddled off to relieve himself. It was not a particular issue she had long since been unfamiliar with, though it perplexed her anyway.

<“Same here,”> June affirmed, taking off to deal with her own matters. They had barely gotten up and Iustitia was alone, again. When one spent a full day and night with mortals, and did not need to follow the same functions, did it ever become apparent to Iustitia of how out-of-place she really was.

“Hurry up, eat, and let’s go,” Iustitia called out loudly, annoyed by being abandoned due to their needs.

The sound carried out over the water, as well as the almost unmasked presence of the Legendary and sub-Legendary’s auras. A figure loomed below the waves. Sensing a large aura, Iustitia brought her sword to bare, ready to defend herself against the aura’s owner.

<“I thought I sensed something familiar,”> spoke the unfamiliar telepathy. Iustitia kept her guard while asking questions to her scales in rapid succession, throwing names and odd questions to try and identify the speaker. Silently and with the utmost of care, Iustitia felt a cool, yet blubbery metallic feeling across her thigh.

Is it the Legendary Lugia? she asked her scales. Their answer was a ‘Yes’.

<“Lugia!”> Flaming June exclaimed as she suddenly shot past Iustitia to fly around the larger Titan of the Sea. <“It is so good to see you!”>

<“And good to see you,”> Lugia replied with a smile in his eyes. <“I was just about to introduce myself to your friend here,”> he motioned his head towards Iustitia, who had visibly relaxed. Benevo had made his appearance, standing off in the distance. <“You must be Zeus’ daughter,”> Lugia went on, recognizing the subtle hints of her father’s signature in Iustitia’s own aura.

“Yes, you’re right. My name is Iustitia,” she said, introducing herself. Apologizing for her blindness was not a thing she was taught to do, as it was part of her. If Lugia so happened to startle her, it was his fault. Being over a million years in age, Lugia recognized her disability and was understanding of it. His manners were refined enough that he knew better than to address it directly.

<“Is that your Chosen cowering behind you?”> Lugia peered over seeing the lone boy standing further back from the cliff. Without paying attention to Benevo, Iustitia replied.

“He is really new to being one,” was the excuse that she offered on behalf of her Chosen. In general, Lugia was relatively friendly, and while she had never personally met this Lugia, in her mind she knew him well. Those near million and a half years ago was the time when Vita Sanguinece, the first Fatalis Dator was alive. Her Chosen became the very Lugia before her. At that time he went by the name of ‘Silver’, acting as a Chosen despite being one of the very few Legendaries remaining. His humble nature leant to his current longevity. He had lived through mass extinction, tremendous loneliness. For many months he had spent wandering the frozen wastelands with his only companion, the loving Vita by his side. Then there was that one day when out of nothing she gave life to everything, losing her own. That one moment when the world warmed and his heart grew cold, when she died and went limp in his wings. The only time he ever held her. Ever since then, the only one who remembered that grief was him, and now there was Iustitia. She was Vita’s replacement, though never able to fill that hole in his heart that belonged to Vita Sanguinece alone.

<“Your aura reminds me of your father,”> Lugia began, <“yet also reminds me of something long lost,”> the giant bird said, his telepathy a little distant. Iustitia’s Chosen were listening intently as the girl nodded her head in understanding. <“Do you know why?”> he asked, already certain that his hypothesis was correct. He was not concerned about Flaming June’s actions, but more of this strange Legendary that was staying close to the Legendary Birds. Lugia had been wanting to be involved in dealing with the three defectors, though was warned explicitly not to intervene. Ho-oh had pointed out that the issue would be taken care of on its own accord, or to more plainly state what Ho-oh had not, by a new Decider of Fate.

When he was a young Legendary there had only ever been one Decider of Fate, his Vita. She was Life, a skilled creator of existence and masterful at healing and resurrections. In all possibility it was believed that one day she could return. Sadly, Iustitia was not Lugia’s Vita.

“Because Fate is cruel. I am not her,” Iustitia gave her answer. Curiosity brought Lugia to her. There was the prospect that if she really was Vita Sanguinece that a fight involving her and the three Legendary Birds would be too much to handle.

<“Decider of Fate,”> Lugia spoke Iustitia’s title, <“are you aware of the dangers of such a battle?”>

“I can see the future, and the past. I am well aware of what happened to your Legendary. We are not the same. My skills are much different and more varied than hers,” assured the Decider of Fate with a great deal of confidence despite not knowing the full extent of her abilities. She was unabashed with what she could do. “Thank you for your concern.” The doubtful expression on his face was telling to all but Iustitia.

<“I wish you well with your crisis. If you are in need of aid, you know you can call on me.”>

“Thank you, Lugia, I will remember that,” Iustitia said, seeming relatively calm. With the mysterious aura investigated there was little else for Lugia to do other than brood. How Ho-oh expected another Decider of Fate to make a potential suicide run, he did not know. The thought that these individuals only showed up in scenarios where it

was so apparently crucial to warrant them made him ill. Iustitia had faith in herself, so Lugia had to hope her battle prowess was good. This all just did not sit well with him as he turned and dove back into the sea.

“And what was this one?” Benevo asked in the immediate seconds Lugia was gone from sight.

<“That was the Titan of the Sea, Lugia. He controls the currents of the world’s oceans,”> Flaming June stated factually.

“Oceans, as in more than just one?” It was a hard concept for him to grasp of multiple oceans, of great seas that stretched on seemingly forever.

“The world is round, Ben!” Iustitia exclaimed, shocked that something that seemed obvious to her was something Benevo did not understand.

“Round? Like a circle . . . It just does not drop off somewhere? But if it is round, where is the sun?” He had not eaten and the hunger pangs were making for a muddled brain.

<“The planet twirls around the sun.”> Flaming June made a circular motion with the fire from her wings. She was absolutely marveled by how oblivious the teenager was, so much so that it practically delighted her. <“Oh, and the moon rotates around the globe. The earth, moon, sun and all its planets rotate around in a giant galaxy, around a universe full of many more,”> she went on laughing. Benevo gave a flabbergasted stare to Iustitia, trying to tell if it was a joke. Her nonsensical face made it obvious that he was not too bright, yet he still pressed on.

“Is she serious?” Iustitia raised an eyebrow, hands on her hips wondering what about June’s statements did not make sense.

“You might think people run the world, when in fact the Legendary Pokémon do. There are a lot of things about the natural and supernatural world that they know more of than people likely ever will.”

“Around . . . the . . . sun. Oh Gods, you ruined my life!” Benevo moaned, hands clutched to his head. “I am going to stick with the version I am making up. That is just too farfetched for any real person to actually believe.”

“In some parts of the world there are these little leek carrying ducks called ‘Farfetched,’” smirked Iustitia, sending both herself and Flaming June into torrents of laughter.

“With that sort of attitude maybe you will piss the Seasons off enough that they will burn, zap and freeze you to death before you get off the ground!”

<“That is a terrible plan,”> June remarked, dropping the jokes.

“It would be if we don’t focus and come up with something for Iustitia to use,” Benevo retorted, overtly concerned about the girls’ demeanor.

“Just find the birds, confront them, and you two stay out of sight. Couple swings and it should be enough. If anything happens, we retreat. It’s pretty simple.” Iustitia took up a confident position, self-assured as was her norm. Use to her leadership, Benevo followed her idea willingly. Iustitia grabbed a satchel, also part of her grand scheme. “Here, eat something, then we will head out. I know where they are.” Best prepare her friends, and in the meantime prepare her mind. Having never fought outside of a couple play fights with June and those through her education, this was going to be more challenging than she let on.

The three Legendary Birds had roosted on an island within sight of the shores of Helike. As the very presence of them scared those who sought audience with Sophocles, they most commonly visited in the evening and did as they pleased during the day; unless they were called upon to assist Sophocles in his matters. After the successful raid of Methone they were dismissed for the day, which made for a good opportunity to strike.

On the outcrop of one of the smaller islands along the great bay, Iustitia and her Chosen stopped to observe. This was the perfect spot for the pair to see to it that their Legendary was fine. Iustitia herself was quite assured in her success, the presence of her Chosen only precautionary.

“Stay back, and out of sight,” Iustitia spoke to her friends.

“I will,” Benevo replied, speaking only for himself.

<“Just be careful,”> Flaming June added, fretful of what was about to take place.

“I should be successful. I know these three no longer exist in the future.” Her foresight leant to Iustitia’s positive demeanor, along with her skills. Her Teleport was an artful manipulation of physics, as the Chosen observed a phenomena of her disappearing in front of them and reappearing on the far shore.

Everything that used Teleport essentially did so by telling their energy to get them from one point to another point, allotting the energy for it, creating a deception of instantaneous travel that was actually motion at high speeds. For Iustitia, she was capable enough to pinch the space between herself and her location, performing short bursts of multidimensional travel. It was not the version of the skill she commonly used, though chose it since it was much more difficult to trace where her aura had come from. All precautions had to be made to protect her Chosen, where on the shoreline the Seasons were not aware of the two Chosen at all, but instead of the sudden appearance of a girl.

<“Look, it’s a human,”> Zapdos made her observation, taking to the air. There was a small beach that Iustitia was standing upon, easily within view of the three birds. The two male Legendaries fluttered closer, each peering over the larger boulders they landed upon. <“Are you lost, little human?”> Zapdos continued on, mocking Iustitia. Without warning, Moltres opened his beak and sent a beam of fire at the girl. Sword available at will, she sliced the attack apart.

<“This is an interesting one,”> Articuno made his comment, looking over to his fellows. All three were purposely using telepathy to mock Iustitia directly.

<“I wasn’t trying,”> Moltres muttered, coming to his own defense. He took off to join Zapdos in her circling.

<“You three are in violation of the Laws, serving to a man, disobeying your calling!”> was the telepathic projection of Iustitia, standing at the ready in anticipation of another attack.

<“And what do you know of *our* laws?”> laughed Moltres, in a purposely disrespectful voice.

<“Little girl thinks she knows everything about us.”> The Titan of Thunder turned to the other two birds to speak, then looked solely upon the Decider of Fate.

<“What little cave have you been living in? Do you even know who we are? We are the Seasons!”> Zapdos cackled as she rained lightning down from above. Iustitia’s Barrier shielded her from the falling electricity. After a moment, the three birds realized she was unharmed.

“I’m going to mention this, again!” yelled the girl, verbally this time. “You are in violation of the Laws, and I am here to deal with you for breaking them! Stand down, or face death!” Vita Sanguinence might have been forever forgiving, and Letum Falcifer unapologetically ruthless, but Iustitia was to make it clear of their wrongs and their end. Their hoots of laughter was enough to convince her that they would not listen. With her scales out and telling the obvious, she had already come to that conclusion, though a verbal contract had to be made when Legendaries were involved. Punishment for a Legendary never came without a reason, and with it delivered, it was time to bring about their deaths.

Iustitia was up in the air before the birds’ barrage ever hit. Armed with her scales and sword, she aimed to anticipate their moves while slashing into her foes. Aerial dogfights were best done in melee form for her. Projectiles could be destroyed with timely aim, thus not worth initial consideration.

The Legendary Birds swiftly rose into the air, giving one another a wide berth. As practiced individuals they knew to keep ones space. By drawing the mystical human’s attention to a single point, it was easier to defend and to strike. Moltres, with his high defensive capacity drew the attention to himself first. Zapdos was the fastest attacker, and if he found himself in trouble, she would come to his aid and help. Flame fired, Iustitia’s focus drew to the highest energy output, along with the intense heat that supported it.

The observing birds flapped around, marveling at the sharp speed performed by Iustitia as she burst in to swing. Despite being startled, Moltres rebuked her attempt with a Heat Wave. Unaccustomed to the spike in temperature Iustitia stopped, throwing up a guarding Protect, one of the multitudes of defensive abilities that dissipated attacks. Finding that being too close to Moltres was uncomfortable, Iustitia pivoted and headed towards the far slower Articuno.

Rolling his eyes, Articuno snickered to his fellows, <Watch this,> like Moltres before him, Articuno readied himself with a dazzle of Powdered Snow. Feeling the rapid drop in temperature, Iustitia backed away again, not willing to risk it. Instead she took her chances with the Zapdos. <“Scared of a little cold?”> Articuno laughed as he watched Iustitia change her direction.

Reasoning that maybe she was being a bit too slow Iustitia put more energy into her speed, enough that she assumed it would be a problem for someone to follow. Being unable to perceive sight for herself, her experience had been based on her interactions with people. The human eye could be easily tricked in to believing motion existed in a series of alternating still images, where a bird could see the rouse. Though Iustitia was faster than Zapdos by default, she still could catch sight of the girl. With a bit of a crackle, she threw a bolt of electricity, nearly catching Iustitia off-guard this time. Electricity was fast, though her scales kept her ahead, allowing her to prepare a Reflect and shoot the charge off into the sky. Iustitia paused to think.

In the time Iustitia had taken to stop, the other two birds prepared and unleashed their beams of ice and fire. Dismissively, Iustitia blocked them, an absolutely effortless act on her part. Next to certain movements through space, blocking things within said space was easy. To tell her energy to condense into a shield to nullify incoming attacks being mere play to her. Figuring out whether to move in further to attack or not was a challenge. While she knew where the birds were her lack of vision made it inexact.

<“Big speech and it’s over?”> Zapdos called out, noting how Iustitia was failing to live-up to her promises of their deaths. The birds collectively exchanged glances, Iustitia’s scales dropping to warn of the impending danger. Barrier raised, Iustitia forced the end of their attacks. The swirling drop of energy revealed Iustitia to be unharmed.

<Definitely a psychic,> Moltres noted, seeing Iustitia’s vibrant, gold aura drop from detection. Articuno was contemplating something else, having come to that realization the moment the girl took off the ground. Swooping in, he feigned an attack on Iustitia. Sensing the bird’s approach, she made her strike only to miss as Articuno rolled past.

<Almost got me there,> Articuno said, making his report. Zapdos was in the process of making a dive herself when she stopped. Collecting a ball of light in her momentarily empty hands, Iustitia whipped the starry Swift at the passing Articuno, only to miss. Zapdos and Moltres looked on, bewildered. Swift was a move that, as long as one basically placed themselves in the correct direction, almost always hit. Realizing she had missed with her projectiles, Iustitia condensed the similar energy again, this time choosing a more threatening attack. Taking aim in Articuno’s general direction Iustitia let the energy of her Hyper Beam loose. To prove the point he was going to make, Articuno simply stayed still as the beam whistled past overhead.

<She’s blind,> he cooed over to his fellows. Neither of them could really believe it, remaining skeptical.

<Like all good hypothesis, it must stand up to testing,> countered the Zapdos. Iustitia prepared yet another attack, this time a high-density ignitable one destined for Zapdos herself. Unlike Iustitia’s last two attacks, this one struck Zapdos’ Light Screen. Iustitia was quick to try this again, though this time moving alongside the attack. The idea would be that she would zip around the Light Screen and get Zapdos from behind. With Moltres being the closest he intercepted with his beak. Iustitia had sensed him moving, but with his head on such a long neck and so far away from his body’s center, she found herself knocked about by the burning beak.

“Oww!” Iustitia yelped, flying backwards and out of reach. The delicate peach fuzz on her arms was singed along with the skin of her arms. She forced the injury backwards, time being of the essence as she hastily reversed the damage done to her. Thankfully it was only minor, but still, she could not risk anything moderate let alone serious. Once healed she delivered her scowl behind yet another protective Barrier. Articuno’s attempt at barraging her when she was down had failed. She could hear the garbled whispers of the telepathy between the three, knowing full well they were planning something. The start of it came with Articuno’s Mist, fogging the area and making it next to impossible to see.

Iustitia knew what a dense fog felt like. It was a cold and clammy sensation, accompanied by soft dew forming on the skin. *Joke is on Articuno*, Iustitia surmised naively, thinking that the purpose of the Mist was to dampen her senses. With Moltres in her mind’s eye’s detection, Iustitia made a lunge. Now unlike her, Moltres was terrible at navigating in the fog, and sure enough a pained crackle and a poorly aimed Flamethrower welcomed Iustitia’s success. When she asked her scales about how much damage was done, they replied that it was nothing serious. Her victory was a hollow one as she could hear Moltres verbally cawing.

<“Blind as a bat,”> he laughed through the pain. The slice was basically a scratch, something which he could deal with later. He parted the fogbank to proudly display the slice that ran along his chest to Iustitia, knowing that she could not see it. <“How do you even know if a job is well done if you cannot tell?”> Iustitia stared off into the distance, not willing to face him out of distress. The telepathy was them gossiping over her accuracy. If she was on the ground, and so was her enemy she could easily judge the distance through tremors and the sounds of them moving about. In the air, the birds could change the air currents so everything was downwind of her. In the sky she was denied the sense of touch, and if they felt like it, could deny her most that of sound. Feeling heat at her back, Iustitia Teleported to get behind the birds.

<Really fast Teleporter,> Moltres noted. He was slow to turn, where Zapdos was quick, already dealing with Iustitia who was trying to get them from the rear. The Titan of Thunder was taking a great risk, letting Iustitia into her personal space. Sword at ready, it swung to meet the circling electricity that surrounded Zapdos’ long beak. She parried two swings before releasing a discharge of energy intended to force Iustitia away. Reflect up, Iustitia sent it back. The move struck though did next to nothing as Zapdos reabsorbed her electricity. Iustitia retreated from her enemy at that point.

With being discovered clouding her judgement, the scales that Iustitia were carrying were becoming ever more useless. It was not like they could tell her straightforward answers, and her muddled questions were producing inconclusive results. Having them out made them more accurate normally, but as they were becoming more affected by her emotions Iustitia resigned herself to not depending on her crutch. A quick flick and the scales were removed from combat. *At least this frees a hand*, she grimaced, replacing the scales with a heated ball of matter.

Articuno was at her flank, attempting to use a Blizzard at a short distance. With that much cold surging in the air, it was easy for Iustitia to guess the move, the ball turning the ice into a haze of steam that sent Articuno away. Near Iustitia it rained instead, covering her in dripping wet. This had a benefit for her since water increased temperature sensitivity, as well as picking up a greater sensitivity to electrical charges.

<“You’re all wet!”> Moltres cried forth, not being necessarily helpful as his scorching breath turned the air into an inferno. A bubble of protection was what saved Iustitia from the Fire Blast, her still relatively unscathed given the strength of the attack.

<“Me next!”> chirped Zapdos, taking a few preemptive flaps then turning the space around Iustitia into a pulse of energy. Slightly more prepared for this one, Iustitia managed to wrench the electricity with her hand and directed it towards Moltres. Moltres dodged, but barely. All of their attacks sent, Iustitia brought her own energy out into the attack known as Psywave. The birds balked at the gold aura that raced in a wave pattern, striking their own auras and causing a sharp spike in pain. Having a lower energy yield than the rest, Articuno was the first to shake off the effects, him retorting with a spike of ice. The ice shattered upon impact with Iustitia’s Barrier, but made for a close call.

<“You’re both idiots. You don’t have to attack hard, just be smart about it,”> while not as outspoken or daring as the rest, Articuno was undoubtedly more intelligent. <Watch.> Iustitia had moved to make herself less of a target. The first move that Articuno used had a wide spread to it, which Iustitia was quick to block, though from right behind it he did a small spit of an ice ball. While it still hit the Barrier, both Zapdos

and Moltres got the idea. <If you make it too obvious she will notice.> The three peeled away.

Now what are they up to? Iustitia was speculating their motives, her questions not being of the right design. Constantly moving caused the wind to whistle in her ears, but if they were planning something then it was best to not let herself be hit. With that thought she brought herself into a dancing motion, making sure her flight pattern was erratic. From almost nowhere the wind direction changed, her becoming suddenly downwind of Zapdos, which seemed like such an odd strategy until the deafening cry of Zapdos rang out.

Buckled by the sharp sound, Iustitia instinctively brought her hands to her head to protect her most precious of senses. This awarded Moltres and Articuno an opportunity to strike as one bird shot a relatively mild attack where the latter took wing and came in against the breeze. Iustitia brought her focus in to block Moltres, a Reflect being the choice move, where she almost completely ignored Articuno. A very hard, icy slap from the bird was a reminder of her folly. Iustitia retaliated with a jab, but instead of cutting flesh, she merely parted some of the showy tail feathers, leaving Articuno in prime condition. With the tinnitus still ringing in her head along with an intense ache, Iustitia had no perception of where Articuno truly was. Without the sense of sound or smell, she desperately needed touch more than ever now.

A glistening slick of floating matter materialized beneath Iustitia's feet, and she effectively landed on a solid surface. She had manipulated her aura to make a Barrier that was interactive, enough that if something touched it she would feel the vibrations across its surface. The Legendary Birds were capable of seeing the floating floor as it existed in their visible range of the ultraviolet spectrum. Flying was seen as superior, them quick to call on Iustitia's weaknesses to structured flight.

<“You know why we can fly and you cannot? Because we can actually *see* what we're doing.”> was the insult from Zapdos as she dove in from overhead. Iustitia's reasoning was about to be partially validated. At least with there being a proverbial floor it would be hard for the birds to attack her in anything but the positive Z axis.

The Decider of Fate did a little jump, stabbing upwards at the bird. Zapdos chanced it and had resulted in damage to one of her talons. Moltres was on her with a fiery blast, Iustitia skipping up a stairwell of Barriers, starting to turn the sky into a hazard. On a ledge Iustitia managed to Reflect away one attack before jumping down to her starting surface to avoid the looming Articuno.

Articuno was of a clever mind, raining down his Hail in hopes of smashing the pretty head of the fake Pokémon. Iustitia let the balls of ice shatter about haplessly on her ceiling Barrier, unscathed by the assault. Effortlessly she formed a spiral staircase, knowing this trick would work on one of the birds. Moltres became her next victim as he screamed up from below, smashing into a Barrier. The scales managed to get the timing for this right at least, leaving Moltres with angry bruises across his face and neck vertebrae. Iustitia considered herself lucky in this instance, though was not going to count her blessings as of yet. Articuno and Zapdos were encroaching from the same direction, attacks ready.

Barrier up as before, Iustitia prepared to block them. The birds humored her blockade, striking it with an Ice Beam and Thunder Bolt before reaching around and over to claw deep into Iustitia's arms, leaving her with injuries deep enough that her muscles

were too damaged to carry her sword and it clattered to her makeshift floor. She was aghast by the realization, that where she thought her Barriers were invisible to the naked eye, these birds could obviously see them for the most part and work around them. With a fully encompassing field of defense, Iustitia's next priority was to work on the damage. Unlike her counterparts who could use small slivers of energy to work miracles in healing, she was the exact opposite. There was no choice but to reverse the injury, since if she did not, she would no longer be properly able to wield her sword.

Iustitia was counting down the time that it was taking her to heal the deep slash wounds, where the Legendary Birds were collaborating on a plan. Most defensive screens were products of various wavelengths of light. If provided with a similar material, they were prone to dissipating. As Iustitia had quite an affinity to them, then the best next course of action was to find a matching attack to mirror such defensive potential. None of the birds had any moves that they could use that produced pure light, but as a group, they did.

Moltres, Articuno and Zapdos lined up their attacks for the center. <On the count of 3 . . . 2 . . . 1!> issued Articuno as they combined their attacks into the Tri-Attack.

Credit had to be given where credit was due as Iustitia felt her guarding Barrier shatter away from her. Arms still torn, she had no time to focus on attacking anymore. These three knew how to coordinate themselves and worked as a perfect team, unlike any other set of Legendary Birds in years past. Perfect timing, a match of powers, and a deep understanding was how three separate Pokémon could successfully use that move.

Darn it! cursed Iustitia in her mind, realizing why these three were so difficult, barely dodging out of the way as the hyper charged shot of the trio missed her calf muscle, destroying a full seven Barriers behind her. She could not fly and heal at the same time, she needed to stop and do it. And as the seconds pressed on, Iustitia was panicking. Standing atop of her post on yet another set of Barriers Iustitia drew in her arms tighter and made herself focus on what was important, staying alive. *There has to be some trick to doing this.* Aura flared, Iustitia ordered the space she normally would demand of herself to collapse in the spots next to Moltres and Articuno. With a loud screech and a couple startled squawks, both birds went through the dimensional tears and into each other, sending them sprawling before they remembered what flight was. The girl was hardly allowed to pause as the unaffected Zapdos took chase, successfully avoiding Barriers with her nimble wings. Another rift, this time sending Zapdos back out the same side she came in, leaving Iustitia safe for a few moments while she brought her attention back to her shoddy Recover.

Minus the seconds, she thought hastily to the injuries, having to rationalize her own healing instead of brute forcing through it. With her hearing improved, she could detect the maddened flaps of the enemy. Choosing to focus more on her bleeding appendages was not worth the risk of potential further injury. Calling to her sword, Iustitia psychically grabbed the thing and swung it at one of the fiends. She only nicked Articuno, not stopping his contribution to the group's Tri-Attack. The weapon would have to be retrieved later.

Despite her best efforts, the Barrier vanished immediately. Zapdos was back in close range of Iustitia, now more confident than ever due to the absence of her tool. At least Iustitia could feel Zapdos' struts across her floor. Calling her aura to her lower legs Iustitia performed a hard kick that sent Zapdos off the edge of the Barrier. It was forceful

enough to fracture two of Zapdos' ribs, but left Iustitia exposed as Articuno covered most of the Barrier with a sheet of ice, causing Iustitia to lose her balance. She only barely caught herself, glaring over to the cold bird and his choice of attacks. They refused to let her rest for longer than a moment at a time, fully aware that dragging on her Recovery made her practically harmless.

Next was Moltres with his attempt at burning Iustitia. The odd use of a Safeguard and a few Reflects was enough to stop him from being a problem while Iustitia created herself another Barrier floor to engage them in. At this point all three birds were at the same altitude, attacks prepared. With Iustitia in the center, it was not hard to guess what their next move would be. Instead of either blocking the Tri-Attack, or jumping up to avoid it, the Barrier beneath her vanished and she fell to the safety of one further below.

Falling without acceleration allowed a person to reach a terminal velocity of no more than roughly one hundred miles in a single hour. With almost trigger-like reflexes, all three birds made their attempt at their fastest attacks. Barely having landed, Iustitia rolled out of the way of one of them, then another, resulting in being partially paralyzed by a Thunder Wave. The excruciating spasms it forced took out her footing, collapsing Iustitia to her side. She had no idea how to heal such an injury at all, merely hoping she could shrug it off quickly to bring back both her footing and focus.

<“My personal favorite,”> tweeted the thunder bird from afar, watching as Moltres took on the next task.

<“If the fall doesn't kill you, the drowning will.”> Moltres trotted up coldly to Iustitia who had amassed just enough concentration to defend herself with a Psywave. The bird was a bit agonized by the wave, yet swift to retaliate. A Gust of wind knocked Iustitia onto the floor of another Barrier several feet below. Articuno was on this one, already waiting.

Barely conscious, Iustitia could only slightly make out the words as Articuno spoke, <“Goodbye, human,”> then tossed her into the waters of the Aegean Sea. The force of impact from falling multiple stories was enough to do its damage and she was knocked unconscious.

Lugia had been a recent addition to the spectators, joining Benevo and Flaming June in the fear that Iustitia had lost. Benevo could hardly see it, but he recognized Iustitia's limp form sending up a splash as she limply flopped into the waves. The water there was deep, and the birds were still circling overhead. There was no way he could personally rescue his Legendary.

“June!” Benevo whipped his head to look at the sub-Legendary, pleading for her assistance in something that was obviously suicide. He did not know what to do, and was hoping she could help. Unaware of Lugia's capacity to both swim and heal, he did not bother to even look at the silvery titan for assistance. June exchanged worried glances with Lugia instead, not aware of his Recovery skills, though at least he could swim.

<“Can you go in there and get her?”> It took most of June's will to not just jump on the Legendary and order him to go and rescue her friend. She knew the answer just as much as he did. That to get that close to the Legendary Birds was dangerous no matter how good Lugia could mask his presence. The close proximity of less than two hundred

meters was bound to set at least one of the three off. Benevo looked to Lugia in urgent eagerness.

<“Not until they leave. As much of a Legendary as she might be, we do not risk our emotions for one another, not in my case at least.”> The Titan of the Sea was responsible for the ocean currents all over the world, part of a system that controlled climate. It was him that was keeping the weather in check as the Legendary Birds were purposely neglecting their duties. Only in the areas controlled by Helike was the weather nominal, everywhere else had fallen to disarray. If he risked himself, then everyone the world over would suffer, which was not worth the feelings of two Chosen.

“What sort of god are you?!” Benevo countered hotly. “You are suppose to be powerful. Save her!!!” yelled the boy, not aware of his place in front of the giant monster. Lugia held his tongue, since if he was in Benevo’s position and this was his Decider of Fate he would be right there in the water, fighting for her every step of the way. All Lugia could do was shake his head. Where Benevo was hoping Flaming June would agree with him, he too saw that her sympathies were elsewhere. Risking the only Legendary between the current situation and global catastrophe was not a sacrifice she would ask for. There were times when the needs of the many outweighed the few.

<“I’m sorry, Benevo. Let’s just hope that they’ll leave soon. Okay?”>

~A loss is a loss all the same, no matter the way in which one shall perceive it.~ Iustitia recognized the speaker. In the blackness of one’s mind when they could no longer feel the world around them was only when it appeared. She had hoped that her success would ride on her influence alone, and sadly that was not to be the case. It had come to her with a proposal, it needing her, and her needing it. Where she had resented the notion of being the Decider of Fate, a slave to the destiny which Ho-oh seemed to dictate, it was this part she truly loathed. The predictable outcome of all of Deciders of Fate, other than to exist, to be, was apparently to bond to the energy that encompassed existence.

“Chaos,” Iustitia murmured its name, undergoing a sensory overload due to the odd, perplexing noises it made. If she reached out and touched it she risked it taking all of her. It had the potential of driving her into a drunken madness like Letum Falcifer, or enslaving her completely, as with Vita. Iustitia’s universe was defined by logic, reason as well as the formalities of contemporary understanding; Chaos was none of these things. It was a random event of unpredictable characteristics that thrived on the spontaneity of life. Due to their difference she began to wonder if it was possible to reason with something that did not submit to that notion.

“Why are you here?” she hissed at the sentient energy. Despite the fact she was injured, unconscious and slowly floating down to a crushing death at the bottom of Helike’s bay, she was convinced she did not need its help. Chaos drifted about her, gently poking about in a curious manner, itching to get inside her and perform their crucial bond.

~That you already know,~ it chattered softly, the sound a cascading whisper making the proverbial ears of Iustitia itch. Of course, it always went about with the riddles. She knew this and it knew everything.

Getting straight to the point, she barked at it. “Your proposition is to help me. At what cost?” flat with her delivery, it was obvious she was cross with it. Chaos was deeply

tantalized with possessing another Decider of Fate, but this one was not nearly as pleasurable. It and Iustitia had no relatable qualities, making a bond not as cohesive as it wanted. To win her over for even the sake of feeling alive was not something she would let it have so easily.

~A bond, to give you sight.~ There was no need to elaborate. She lost because she could not see her adversaries.

And if I could see . . . Iustitia reminisced about stroking her Chosen's hair, the idea of actually being able to understand what the color blue was. She would not need anything else, she would be a whole, possibly even perfect. Of course, the bonding was never that basic, it was also a source of enlightenment. Information overload caused quick brain death in most things Chaos possessed, except in something as unique as Iustitia. She could be the Decider of Fate she needed to be through this process.

The sensation of silk embraced her open palms, feeling Chaos deposit something in them. "A blindfold?"

~The eyes of the Just one are not meant to see,~ explained Chaos, presenting the method in which it would rectify her sight, if only temporarily. The blindfold was meant to be a proxy.

"Fine, I'll wear it," Iustitia held the blindfold briefly to her face, then stopped, "on a few conditions." Guaranteed that despite Chaos' nature, even it too would find such behavior to be frustrating. Restrictions were not something it wanted at all, but to possess the Fate, almost anything was negotiable. It waited in near silence, intermittently shouting within itself while Iustitia put forth her wager. "I am the one who leads. You are to aid me with my potential, and with navigation, nothing else. All you get is a body to possess. Is that clear?" The reality for Chaos was that to attain the most purest of Chaos bonds would never happen with Iustitia, meaning that some of its indulgences would have to be sacrificed.

~Then we are in agreement. Chaos is to aid as the Decider of Fate has seen fit.~ Iustitia could only hope this was the one time it would not lie, donning the ethereal cloth that signified their bond.

"Show me the world and what sort of Decider of Fate I really am."

The three Legendary Birds circled above the waves, carefully monitoring the situation. None were convinced the girl they had sent to the watery depths was actually a Legendary, and not that it particularly mattered if she was one or not. They were about to call off their hunt when Zapdos made an observation.

<"Did you feel that?"> she asked her fellows, a cold chill running down their collective spines.

Across the bay, the same sensation was registered by even the psychically weak Benevo. Lugia was the only one who knew exactly what that sensation was, him vocally betraying his presence to the birds with a loud screech.

"Kkree, kreee!" (Chaos, stop!) Flaming June looked at Lugia in surprise, able to make the obvious connection with the culprit clearly identified. She had been fully informed of what such bonds entailed. It was the type of loss of control she was convinced Iustitia could not handle.

<“Iustitia!”> shouted the fire bird in widespread telepathy, hoping her Legendary was still out there somewhere.

With Iustitia’s heavy masking still present, all the birds could identify was the projections of what was obviously Lugia to them. Moltres confirmed the other voice, noting it as one of his sub-Legendaries.

<“It’s one of mine, Flaming June, barely out of the fledgling stage,”> he hissed, not liking to be spied on nor what Lugia’s bellow meant. The three of them drew in closer to one another, each scanning a portion of water for the entity they had all been well warned about. Chaos bonds were forbidden and for good reason. Unless of course this really was a Legendary Pokémon of sorts, there was no way a human could handle such a bond and was essentially a very short-lived concern.

<“Keep an eye out for her,”> Zapdos echoed the thoughts of the rest.

The water surface began to churn violently, rupturing forth as Iustitia penetrated its surface and into the sky. With her common cream tunic partially destroyed Chaos Iustitia had opted to cloak herself in a more feminine of attire, one suitable of the female attributes of the Fates. Her crimson dress with high slits and drooping, quad cap sleeves looked like nothing meant for battle. The choice of red lipstick and the lacquer of nail polish were oddly futuristic and out-of-place, also not to the warrior image. In her hand she carried her signature weapon, one unique to her and her alone, along with the scales which were chained in a loop around her hips. In front of her eyes there wavered the final addition to the Chaos look, a semi-opaque blindfold. She was Justice, and the statement would be one that would live on for millennia, engraved into the minds of men as Lady Justice. A small hint of her influence that few would realize in the future referred to the real thing.

Chaos was aware of her humanity, the notion of vanity. For the first time in her life, Iustitia knew exactly what she looked like, so the presentation for the most part was to humor her. The red aura that she flared was not, the effects of Chaos rapidly poisoning the normally golden hue. Articuno looked over the combination thoughtfully, wondering if there was more to this than just appearances. With his sentiments shared, the three creatures tested their opponent with their combination move.

Chaos Iustitia did not even have to raise her sword for this one. Within a few inches of her frame the Tri-Attack simply vanished into nothing. The energy that was converted out of it became a sound wave that split past her. Staying next to motionless, she made a little beckoning motion for them to try something else. Zapdos humored the gesture, sending off an arc of lightning. Chaos Iustitia merely sidestepped the move. Taking this into account, Articuno and Moltres followed with quick, alternating blasts of extreme heat and cold, which like before, she merely swayed about to avoid.

<She got a lot better with that,> Moltres murmured, then joined the others in a wide circle around the female. With the addition of Moltres, the three conspired to use their quickest attacks, going for an alternating spray. Where before, Iustitia chose to block such barrages, it was obvious that her skill level had vastly improved. With a deft swipe of her sword she parted a Flamethrower, gently moving to the side to avoid a Thunderbolt. The Ice Beam that followed was guided along by her right hand, and off into the distance. Several more dodges and deflections left the birds in a state of confusion. Angered by her lack of success, Zapdos shot off a massive Thunder, only to see it fizzle into nothing.

<This is starting to get annoying!>

<For the most part she only plays defense. She is hardly a threat,> Articuno reminded the Titan of Thunder. Chaos Iustitia betrayed a wide smirk. Chaos was actively hinting upon her potential just as she had requested. One of her tricks involved how easily her mind could unmask private telepathy.

<You really should feel threatened,> she whispered to them, her telepathic voice wholly her own. What she had done was intercept private telepathy, usually very difficult to translate while in transit. Either her mind reading capacity was omniscient, or she was capable of warping certain energies. They had no real idea.

How far can I go with this? Iustitia briefly asked Chaos.

~As far as the imagination stretches and the belief in the possibilities that can carry them.~ Grinning, Iustitia absolutely loved the sound of it.

Dropping her mind in the deeps of the plausible Iustitia let it stray, putting most of what she found to be an expandable consciousness into a trance-like state. She had already been doing some of it, but she wanted to make it clear how exactly powerful a Decider of Fate was. With her thoughts emerged in the obtuse notions of universal logic she reached out to them and fiddled with them, only a touch to accomplish what she wanted.

Zapdos was supposedly the fastest of the Legendary Pokémon, unchallenged at the time when it came to pure speed. A small break in a fundamental rule of physics, and Iustitia had no competitor. In a second Zapdos went from fine to flustered, as her body in that following moment opened all over, weeping blood from injuries she had not even experienced receiving. She gawked at Iustitia, who seemed to not have moved from her place. In the next second, then another pause, the repeat of this happened, but this time with aggravated bashing damage all across her torso. It was as if the wounds materialized from nowhere, and in stunned silence Moltres and Articuno looked on as Zapdos seemed to deteriorate before their eyes.

<“Help!”> Zapdos squawked feeling herself being destroyed by an invisible force. Stuck to watching in stunned horror, the birds watched as Zapdos was carved to bits by virtually nothing, hardly making it a few yards in her escape attempt before dying. Her dead body glided through the air then fell into the sea. Chaos Iustitia glanced over to the two remaining birds, betraying a small smirk of satisfaction.

Look at all the things I can do. This is great!

~The in-between,~ Chaos remarked, noting that her skills had a much broader scope than either the selected skills of creation or entropy.

Neither bird was sure about what was going on, putting Articuno and his partner on the defensive end. They were not going to be sliced to bits, having their body parts falling away while still alive. Given that, Moltres encased Iustitia in the raging cyclone of a Fire Spin, where Articuno doused the remainder of the sky with an impenetrable Mist. Both were hoping these would cease the bond’s disturbing activities.

All cyclones above the equator spin in a counter-clockwise direction, a product of the coriolis effect. This was often true for Fire Spins as they demonstrated the rotational behavior of their much larger cousins. With little effort Chaos Iustitia inverted the direction of it, sending the hyperactive particles into the cloud bank. Normally, such an action would cause evaporation, but seeing as she wanted to perverse the familiar her own energy made for an intensely volatile interaction; exploding the water molecules

apart into their core atomic components. The explosion was enough to reduce all lift in the air, sending Articuno and Moltres plummeting.

Some several hundred feet below, Articuno was able to regain flight. Moltres had fared far worse in the encounter. The effect of runaway oxygen had temporarily extinguished his flames, a fatal event if not dealt with quickly. Only a small distance away from the water's surface was he able to reignite himself in the oxygen-rich lower atmosphere. While not displeased with the outcome, Chaos Iustitia was certain to guarantee his death through a similar action.

With a couple Barriers in place, a few to pen in Articuno, Iustitia drew her attention to Moltres. She slammed her victim into yet another set of barricades, essentially grounding Moltres while still high in the sky. Weakened as he was, he made the attempt to stand and face her, a warding hiss the most discouraging he could be. His precious flames could no longer be wasted in attacks.

Chaos remained to the rear of Iustitia's mind as she began to delve further into her potential. It was not responsible for killing, usually only offering the energy necessary to assist in the act, nothing more. Strangely enough, it found itself in an instance where other than sight and encouraging her abilities, Chaos was doing nothing to contribute. It was more than capable of helping yet the only tools Iustitia wanted to use were her own. And now that she figured out how workable they were, nothing else was going to replace them.

"I have the perfect place in mind for you, where you will never make a sound ever again," Chaos Iustitia sneered down at the fire bird, and with a triumphant kick, she punted the bird. Moltres fell back, then found himself falling into something, a something without air. Smiling away, the Decider of Fate watched as the Legendary struggled in a pocket of space, clearly visible for all to see and with no way for Moltres to escape. The intense pressure and the lack of vital fuel choked the life out of him.

Even from a distance Flaming June and Lugia could make out the part in the sky which showcased the bird struggling in a dimensional warp. It was visibly clear that Chaos Iustitia was either enjoying its suffering or the pure power of the task. Articuno was too stunned to do much at all, watching in fear as Moltres did a few writhing twitches before dying. Pleased with its passing, Chaos Iustitia turned about, closing the portal behind her. No one would ever find Moltres' body. It was in a dimension that was not perceivable. All Articuno could think of was getting himself out of there. He did not want to play into the Chaos bond's torture experiments.

Chaos Iustitia made the observation that the last of the Seasons was trying to escape. *One . . . two . . .* she started counting, turning this into a game as she gave Articuno a head start. *Ten.* With a massive shove, her energy slapped the air in front of her, creating a loud sonic boom that Articuno could not evade. The shockwave left the titan in a daze, its loudness disruptive to his delicate hearing. In the critical moment, he paused, giving Chaos Iustitia ample time to catch him and exact her form of justice.

With the sword gone, she used one hand to grab the flowing tail. Her other hand was shoved into a wormhole, the end reappearing at Articuno's throat. A further Psychic hold was for maintaining the bird's posture. To Articuno's startling revelation, Chaos Iustitia's hands were rapidly increasing the temperature of things around them, that being Articuno himself. It was not long before his brain slipped away as the icy components of

his body dripped off of him, leaving nothing more than a bunch of organs, bones and fibrous tissue strung together in the Decider of Fate's unloving grasp.

Done with the birds, she dismissively let the body fall. Part one of her problem was over, and she returned to the post to inform her Chosen of part two. She would save her gloating for later.

Benevo had no time to cower behind either June or Lugia as Chaos Iustitia appeared in front of them. This horrifying thing was directly ahead of him, eyes washed in a menacing red glow that the blindfold failed to hide. June was speechless as well, already inching herself closer to Lugia in a vain attempt to protect herself. Lugia was older and able to disguise his worry, addressing Chaos Iustitia directly.

<“In telepathy, is this Chaos or Justice?”> he asked. A Chaos controlled bond would sound nothing like the thing it possessed.

<“Justice,”> Iustitia replied back, the telepathic voice flawless. This relieved Lugia, his sigh easing the nerves of June; however, it did not address the other concern. Chaos Iustitia obviously enjoyed punishing the Legendary Birds severely, and given how delayed the finishing moves were, it was likely Iustitia's doing, not Chaos'. There was no way for him to test her mental faculties.

“I have other things to deal with,” spoke the bond, not able to recognize the tension amongst her troupe. “Gather the other Legendaries and get the weather under control. Ho-oh should be getting a Cleansing Ceremony underway,” Iustitia told the Lugia, knowing she outranked him. Decider of Fate was a title that was owned by the most stellar of beings. Lugia was nowhere near stupid enough not to obey.

<“I will go and do that now,”> he said, dismissing himself as fast as possible. That left the two Chosen.

“I want you two to follow behind me. You can land anywhere on the citadel, just stay out of sight,” ordered Chaos Iustitia. They nodded dumbly at the instructions, not wanting to defy her. In an instant Chaos Iustitia was gone to deal with the final law breaker, Sophocles.

The palace of Sophocles was the pinnacle of grandeur in all of Helike. It was a temple to his greatness, holding the highest post amongst the island nation. Overlooking the city, he could gaze upon it, admiring his own masterful direction built on the backs of those he conquered. Chaos Iustitia arrived on the threshold, noting only that the weather was souring due to the lack of the Legendary Birds. The city surrounding the citadel she had little immediate care for.

With no one around, Iustitia gave a verbal command. “You can leave now,” sounding annoyed because she had to depend on Chaos in the first place.

Chaos was not exactly delighted by the experience either, almost spiteful in its next action. *~Thus ends your fun,~* it then ripped the blindfold away and was gone, along with the remainder of Iustitia's sight, a sudden absence present in her mind. This left her with a sobering revelation.

With her mind not adapted for visual memory, she could no longer remember colors, or the sight of the sky. What it had given her, Chaos had also taken away. It denied her the memories, though could not steal away with her abilities. While sight was

a delicious experience, she rationalized the only other benefit of the bond was worth replacing it. “No matter,” she said aloud, talking to herself. “There is always Sophocles,” offering herself some comfort with the joys of continuing to explore the extent of her powers.

Regressing back to her standard tunic, Iustitia strode down the long, marble corridors. Exiled as she may be, she would face Sophocles under the guise of a proud Athenian.

Sophocles turned away from the window, glancing at the three gems he kept on a mantle. The treasures of the Titan of Fire, Ice and Thunder had faded to an opaque, swirling blackness. The ultimate keys to his success, the Seasons, were dead. The man had little time to regard this disheartening news, hearing soft footfalls approaching. While the doors were open to his throne room, he expected no visitors today and was surprised to see a plainly dressed female, an Athenian no less based on her attire.

On edge, Sophocles moved to his nearest stash of arms which so happened to be the sword resting across the armrest of his chair. Never once letting his gaze shift he asked two specific questions. “Who are you, and what do you want?” He had no idea how the female, armed with a clean, well-honed blade even got up there undetected. There were guard posts all the way up the stairs, and the hillside was steep. The Emperor of Helike was in his right to be worried, and was a smart man for it.

“Your reign of tyranny is over, Sophocles,” the girl said in stern delivery. “You broke my laws and for that you must pay. My name is Justice, *the* Law, and you are a breaker of many things.” Taking the concept of Decider of Fate to a whole other extreme, Sophocles could only deem her as crazy enough to be there at all.

“This is not a court. You enter my house and I am obliged to defend it and myself,” the man stated coldly, his honed bronze well portrayed. One crazy female did not require any intervention of anyone other than himself. Frankly, he could use for a little entertainment.

The pair met in the middle of the room, swords drawn tightly against one another. Sophocles was fighting with experience, as evident in his smooth, even swings. He was nothing like Iustitia’s sparring partners, he was skilled and his blade had ended more than one man. She would have to wear him down first before delivering a decisive blow, thus allowing him take her in a circle around the room.

“How does a bitch like you learn to use a sword?” Sophocles blasted Iustitia with his insult, keeping an even pace as she deflected a slice. She knew this tactic, which was suppose to be fuel for rage-fueled judgments.

“By kicking the asses of stupid men,” Iustitia retorted calmly, putting her back to the corridor and placing herself on the receiving end.

“You fight like a woman,” was another jeer directed towards Iustitia’s gender. Being female was an insult in their culture, or so he thought as he could not tell in the waning light that her eyes betrayed her Legendary status.

“And proud of it!” she countered, though starting to struggle slightly.

“They send a woman to assassinate an Emperor? Were the Athenians really this weak? Could not put up a fight so they sent you?” His swings were strong. Iustitia just did not have the muscle tone to push through every swing as he did. It was partially why she came and something in which she agreed with. She had no faith in the Athenian

people that they could ever protect themselves. Of course they were weak, though never in the mind.

“An Athenian is of character, intellect and discipline,” Iustitia replied, “be they a man, a woman or a slave”. She may have been physically inferior, but was by far more smart and capable. Leaving the protective awning of the palace, Iustitia let Sophocles back her onto the open veranda.

With more space that all led to deadly falls, Iustitia returned her swings with more vigor, done with being guided about by the man. She hoped to hear him panting, yet he managed to keep pace, breathing evenly while still chatting away without consequence. Sophocles was many things most men were not; strong, cunning and successful at everything he aspired to.

“And do you know why, Athenian-born, that Helike is so prosperous?” Sophocles waited to see what possibly intelligent answer she could give but the female did not respond. “Because I was the one who could talk to the Seasons, who could inspire them and the people of Helike to take what they wanted. I am the one,” he went on speaking, seeing Iustitia’s glare, “who gave them everything. Fuel their greed, make them happy, and they will follow you forever.”

“You, the Seasons and your people are sick!” Iustitia countered, having heard enough from him. The only reason she had brought him out there as slowly as she did was to execute a divine punishment. She just needed to be convinced that it was fully deserved.

“Just give up, woman.”

“Ahh . . . !” Iustitia gasped, feigning a sound of pain as Sophocles delivered a particularly nerve rattling strike. The one thing he forgot about her gender, was that women were the masters of lies. In the moment Sophocles prepared to remove her head, Iustitia brought her light speed into her stab, sword penetrating deep into the man’s abdomen. Only once she heard his weapon clatter to the floor did she withdraw with a squelch. The shock left him crippled, and Helike’s leader went down. It was a fatal blow, but it would take some time before it killed the man. His real punishment was not only to die, but something more.

With sword deposited into the nether, Iustitia stood over him, touting her superiority. At this point her Chosen were in ear shot of Iustitia, but she hardly cared, she was going to enjoy this part. To emphasize how serious she was to be taken, she let the extent of her aura flare around her, the gold burning deep in her eyes. The Athenian woman he thought he was fighting was of the same likeness to the Seasons, the realization chilling.

“By participating in your raids, the enslavement of many, the prosperity at others expense, it is not only you who will be punished. Look out at the glories of Helike before you. For the faults of you and your citizens, she will drown in the very sins that built her. And you get the honor of watching it.”

All Sophocles could do was look up in stunned horror. His whole city, the jewel of the Aegean Sea, was to be washed away into ancient history. The Chosen, while not in view of the pair were mortified. Despite his selfishness, Sophocles pleaded to the small part of humanity he thought was in Iustitia. “There are children down there . . .” gasped the man, already chocking on his own blood.

A pathetic plea to induce sympathy in Iustitia. She was not buying it. With her scales out to the entire view of Helike, they murderously dipped at a steep angle. Her judgement had been passed, and it would be of the strictest kind.

Channeling the extent of most of her energy, her and her scales asked for genocide, and delivered upon it. The water of the bay moved to her order, racing up to the shoreline. Waves slammed onto the curving streets and pretty apartments, crushing everything in its wake with tremendous force. At the same time the ground shook violently, sending the bewildered citizens in all directions, but nowhere was safe. In places the ground mostly fell away, letting the water seep overtop of it, covering the fires, and the screams of multitudes of people. The devastation moved with great speed, barely a person able to fathom what was happening before they were swept away or crushed in the crumbling ruins. Was it right to do this, Iustitia hardly cared. She could do whatever she wanted because that was what she was designed for. This was her most Absolute Justice.

Safe on the plateau, Iustitia stood back, enjoying the sound of the loud splashes and gurgling churn as Helike slipped under the sea, never to be seen again. There would be no revenge to be had, as no one was around to exact it. Iustitia was indulging in the moment when her world shattered, feeling the searing intensity of metal enter and exit her body.

With the last of his strength, Sophocles had stabbed Iustitia through. The only vengeance he could offer his people was hopefully the death of this witch. His body slumped unconscious to the floor, Iustitia about to follow him. In that moment Benevo was there, sweeping her into his arms, cradling her fall.

“Benevo . . .!” she whimpered, looking up blindly at her Chosen, a hand clasped to his cheek for comfort. The other one was clutched to her middle, wet with her blood. Iustitia was suddenly very hurt and afraid.

In her act of performing Absolute Justice on all of Helike she had drained a large portion of her energy. To move time around was complicated and required at least a moderate reserve, of which she did not have. She could not reverse the injury of such a severity, and forwarding it meant her death. Her eyes went pleadingly to her Chosen. Chosen were suppose to help their Legendaries, they were suppose to save them. Benevo understood where his responsibilities lay and looked to Flaming June, hoping she felt the same.

“We need to go to where Lugia went, to see the rest of the gods. One of them must be able to heal this!” his voice was frightened, emphasizing his urgency. After what June had seen she began to question the value of keeping Iustitia alive. Benevo witnessed the Moltres hesitate. It had not quite sunk in his mind of what horrible thing Iustitia had done. Part of his brain was almost happy that the threat of Sophocles was gone. Flaming June was not invested in Athenian life, unsure of how truly loyal she could be to someone who acted in the way Iustitia had. “June, she is your friend!” the boy pleaded.

<“I don’t know if I can make it with you and her,”> June’s excuse was not enough for Benevo.

“Get down on the ground now, and take us there!” he snapped, no patience for her reasoning. Flaming June warily bent over, doubting herself while Benevo deposited his lover on the flaming bird’s back before mounting. “As fast as you can,” he demanded further. Calling on her control over thermals, June managed to acquire lift. Her use of the

prevailing winds gave her some speed. She knew where to go and tried for Iustitia, the person she thought she knew. Her friend's life depended on it.

A temporary camp had been set-up within the archipelago where all the Legendaries of Johto and Kanto had gathered for a rushed Cleansing Ceremony. June could see the pillar of light that signaled the Legendary Dogs' work, using that for a visual guide. She had no idea what to exactly expect as she swooped into the enclosed valley. Below was a cast of Legendaries she recognized, with the exception of a sub-Legendary Zapdos and an Articuno that she could not name.

Flaming June made an awkward landing on her belly in choice of favoring the safety of her human cargo over herself. Her flames were lower, a sign of exhaustion from flapping so hard. Proper greetings were customary, but she was too tired to remember to perform them let alone worry about the stigma of a sub-Legendary being used as a carrier. Benevo skipped all formalities, quick to depart with Iustitia clutched tightly in his arms. He knelt ahead of June, the trio looking miserable amongst those that were gathered.

"Iustitia is gravely injured." Benevo looked to Ho-oh, recognizing it as the leader. "Please, I need you to heal her." Ho-oh was absolutely silent, expression stern. Lugia glanced over to the elder Legendary certain of what the answer was. Amongst the group, himself, Ho-oh and the Legendary male Mew were all capable of splitting their Recovers. As for actually performing them for Iustitia, it was not something any of the three were willing to offer.

<"No,"> the response from Ho-oh shocked Benevo.

"Why not?!" he protested. She had done her job as the Decider of Fate, her being of the same fold as the Legendaries, or so he thought. "If you don't, she dies!" Lugia was silent, letting Ho-oh elaborate.

<"Such abuse of power is a human trait. The likes of such perish for they do not belong in our society,"> was its callous explanation.

"After all she did for you!?" Iustitia had heard, though had been quiet as the pain and blood loss was exhausting her will to speak. Benevo was doing the talking for her, but she had something to say, and in her state of delirium, she addressed Ho-oh.

"Where were you when the Legendary Birds were out-of-control? Where were any of you?" she reflexively glowered at her audience. "I understand for what happened with Life of Blood, that there was no one around . . . Ho-oh. Lugia did all he could and you, you did nothing." At this point the collective was giving wary glances to the bird, with Lugia nodding his head in solemn agreement. "You stood back and watched when Vita, I and eventually Letum Falcifer needed your support. My people were suffering!" Iustitia's shriek cutting short with a hoarse chocking sound. "So what of the humans, they are not your kind. Is that the consensus? Do none of you even care!?"

<"Yet you took thousands upon thousands to their deaths,"> Ho-oh countered, pointing out the obvious that not even she really felt any particular sympathy for humans as a species. <"You attacked the Legendary Birds for sport. You called upon Chaos, lost control."> Like how Iustitia had pointed the wrongdoings of the birds and killed them, Ho-oh exercised the same right of an explanation of why she was to die. It did not have to do anything to see Iustitia meet her end, Sophocles had done that for it.

Distress, rage, terror about the unknown, a multitude of emotions to describe how Iustitia was feeling. She unleashed those emotions on the buzzard, words no longer being constructed by careful forethought. Whatever came to mind was out her mouth in the same moment as she shot back.

"I was training my potential! All of that was me and Chaos had no part in it! I am not Vita or Letum who are so stupid to let themselves be controlled by that thing!" she snapped. There was an eerie quiet, a few strings of private telepathy going back and forth through the air. It was the wrong thing to say in that moment, admitting fully that the sadistic murders she performed were of her guiding judgement and capacity alone. Her Chosen could see the looks of those around turn sickened. Even Lugia, who had sympathy for these Deciders of Fate felt the disconnect when it came to Iustitia.

<"Mistakes. The universe was wrong in selecting you,"> was the summarization of what Ho-oh thought of her kind. It had been willing to acknowledge her earlier but after her display it questioned whether it should have been more involved, or not at all.

The universe was not aware, so when the concepts of Fate sent this second avatar it had to figure she fell under the strain of her own potential. Like how Life's was a catastrophic mess, the universe then decided to follow with Law's ironically lawless choice. With the name of Letum, the next was likely to belong to universal decay, also known as Death. After the show of Iustitia's doing, the prospect of a flawed, yet even more dangerous repeat concerned it greatly. Others were beginning to imitate Ho-oh's impression of the so called 'Deciders of Fate'.

<"Pathetic,"> muttered Mew.

<"And there are others? More like this?"> Suicune was quick to point out nervously. With the exception of the Mew present, every last one of these Legendaries would be alive when Letum Falcifer arrived. In Iustitia's stupidity, she had condemned the one thing in her life she swore to protect. Flaming June recognized what was transpiring, where Iustitia's interests lay, but with the blood soaking into Iustitia's tunic the girl was not quite able to formulate what was being implied. Instead of denying the statement, she responded back with sarcasm.

"You have ears. Of course there are others. Pass your prejudice all you want, you spineless worms." It was Lugia who downplayed the statement, trying to correct what he saw as wrong.

<"Vita Sanguinence, Life of Blood was a Decider of Fate I was Chosen to some time ago. She was a healer, a giver of life. I am not criticizing any of you for being less of something.">

<"I am not a coward,"> said Entei in his own defense.

"Mew mew mew mew?" (And Death Carrying a Scythe?) questioned the Mew, apt to translating the name of one of the other Deciders of Fate into a language not dictated by people.

<"And where would this one be?"> came the cynical yet shaking voice of Raikou.

<"We had the Life one. This one with the righteous attitude problem and then one that apparently kills everything!"> was the cruel point Celebi made, having come to her own conclusion. <"This one commits genocide on her own kind. Use your imaginations and think of what the other one is like.">

<"She's not like that!"> Flaming June countered, falling into the habit of protecting her friend.

<“Where is she!?”> Celebi exclaimed, demanding her answer. <“Is she born? Some bastard child like this freak?”> Celebi continued on, not refraining from the insults. <“We have to find her and kill her!”> announced the little Legendary.

<“Ask the Moltres,”> barked one of the dogs.

<“What does she look like?”> came the particularly dumb question from the sub-Legendary Articuno. Everyone else knew Iustitia was visually impaired so there was no way for June to relay information that had no describable context.

<“I . . . don’t know. She doesn’t exist yet,”> murmured June, that making the reality obvious. No one had any idea of what described a reaper Pokémon.

<“Obviously whatever enjoys creating mass destruction and bonding with Chaos,”> surmised Suicune.

“No! . . . You’re wrong. She loves, has a human Chosen, abides by the laws . . .” Iustitia’s mind was a haze, her emotions a compounding level of devastated over what she had just unwittingly done. She had sold Letum Falcifer out as she listened to conversations outlining how to detect such spawn as herself. In a moment of clarity she realized what she had to do. “Benevo, June, get me out of here.” As Chosen loyal to their Legendary, they did as they were told. None of the other Legendaries were going to get in the way of their devotion, letting them leave.

“There, that should wipe their memories,” Iustitia announced, scales held in her outstretched hands. Benevo’s were clasped to her wrists, trying to keep his lover’s hands steady so she could perform her task. Flaming June simply watched while Benevo kept Iustitia upright, the girl ashen and without the physical strength to sit up on her own. She tried her best to stay close, to keep Iustitia warm, even if it meant Benevo was sweltering.

“And that . . .” Flaming June felt an odd sensation as Iustitia went on, “should make it so the rules are dictated by the Deciders of Fate alone.” She had to believe Letum would not Chaos bond. That rule stayed. Most of what she did was to give the future Decider of Fate a chance at normalcy. She had to commend the other Fates; they managed pain a lot better than she did, hoping that their efforts could keep her inspired enough before it was over.

“June, lean down,” Iustitia ordered, having no time to be polite. “Hands on foreheads,” was the instruction she gave to the other Chosen. Benevo held Iustitia’s palm to his forehead while pressing the other to June’s. Several heaving quivers of her diaphragm temporarily immobilized Iustitia, draining her stamina. “Don’t resist it. I need you to remember what I’m telling you.” Eyes closed, Iustitia engaged them in a dense form of telepathy, transferring what she knew of the past and future Deciders of Fate, a vain hope that she explained further. “Her Chosen will be in the ruins. Enlist a Regi to protect them. Write everything and anything you think she can use, and make sure to emphasize preparedness and no bonds.” Spent, Iustitia let herself slump into Benevo’s arms. All she could hope for was that the Chosen would be able to deliver the message.

Flaming June looked on helplessly, wanting to do something. <“Anything else?”> she pressed, seeing her friend slipping.

“Moltres, be her friend. Protect her. She needs you . . .”

<“Okay,”> June answered bitterly, crying because of the emotional turmoil of the day she was undergoing. The reality of being called ‘Moltres’ by Iustitia just added to it.

The reason why there was no other sub-Legendary Moltres at the impromptu preparations for the Cleansing Ceremony was because the replacement of choice was her. Some four and a half thousand years on, she would be the same Moltres. Such a long time to spend thinking about how she could be to Letum Falcifer what she was to Iustitia, a promise she hoped she would never forget, and never break. <“I promise.”>

Benevo laid Iustitia down with her head on one of his thighs. He leaned in so she could hear him clearly. “I promise that I will keep my words true,” he murmured, lips tracing across her brow.

“I messed up,” Iustitia confessed her expression considerably pained. She did not go into details of what she thought she did wrong, if she was even remorseful at all for her actions. Benevo was not going to judge her, that being the last thing a dying person would ever need. What she needed was absolution from the individuals whose opinions meant the most to her.

“Even goddesses make mistakes.” Unable to see his feigned smile, Iustitia could only feel his sadness as tears rained on her. “I also promise my loyalty . . .” his voice breaking, “. . . To honor your memory the rest of my days.” Ho-oh was not there, and probably would no longer care, giving Benevo all the reasons fulfill a desire that Ho-oh had earlier denied. One kiss which Iustitia gladly reciprocated, the perfect excuse to let her mind wander before being interrupted by a convulsing lurch, the first death throw. Benevo grabbed her close, stilling his love as best as possible.

“One last time . . .?” The world around Iustitia was growing quiet. If she had to leave it at least could it be with someone she loved. Wordlessly, Benevo kissed her, holding on tightly refusing to let her go. Only when a full minute passed, after her heartbeat failed to follow with another, did he part.

A Legendary was always capable of feeling when another passed on. The soul energy escaped, flitting off to someplace beyond that no one could really explain. Someday, Flaming June could ask what happened and receive a true answer, but for the moment all she could do was live in the reality set before her.

<“She’s gone.”> Flaming June knelt down beside the boy. Some small solace was the only thing on offer as she took the Chosen up in her wings. <“We have duties to perform; and as my Chosen, I request your aid in helping me with my Legendary’s final wish. You and I have some promises to keep.”> Brushing his eyes, Benevo looked upon his beloved thoughtfully.

“To tell a truly masterful epic for the world to live by.”