

They say Gods always have a plan.

“What is...” Pleiades said, her words carrying none of the strength a hero of her status would have otherwise projected.

She looked around the endless expanse of blank nothingness as it splayed around her. An infinite field of black fluid stretched from the position she found herself hanging in, leaving an ocean of ebon tides flowing towards the endless horizon. They rose and fall like the surf in the world she knew and yet fell with the grace of something too heavy to be water. A spray of the inky darkness floated towards her feet and clung to the fur, wrapping about the silken costume she still so desperately wore. Every second that passed took more of her striped form from her, sprinkling it like rain from above.

“This is your new home.” She heard, echoed from all around.

The voice seemed to come from the sky and ground all at once. It boomed like the thunderclap and shook into the core of the heroic tiger’s confidence. Her entire body shuddered with the force of a scant few words, twisting in the air as if she were a puppet on strings long pulled by hands unseen. Whatever force held her suspended above this sea of goo left her unable to fight back. Any effort levied in an effort to resist may as well have fought against the world itself. The ocean below, the sky above, the air itself. They all followed the unseen words.

“Wasn’t I... fighting?” Pleiades tried to think back to only a moment before as the cool feeling of something brushed against her bare toes.

The sky slowly sunk into a pink twilight as she struggled against her own memory, fighting to recover the truth of what was happening. Vague images of something happening only an hour or two before, a concept of what may have been a battle, flickered before her unfocused eyes as the world swirled more wildly. Flickers of pink and black filled her eyes as she felt her toes sink beneath the surface below, falling as if she was a treat being dipped in a shell. She could feel it creep up her ankles and calves, wrapping about her in tiny filaments of matte. What was happening, why it was, she had no idea.

Just that it was.

“Fighting doesn’t matter,” the voice spoke, firm and domineering. “your battle has ended.”

A hero of her caliber should have found the words insulting. Hateful. Angering. Who would dare suggest a defender of the righteous, a warrior of true Justice, would be done? She knew that there was a war to fight, a battle that never ended, against the tyranny of the masses. The villains who would stomp out the freedoms of others, crushing them beneath their heels and harming the innocent. She had stood up, a thousand times, to show the world that evil would never win. That those who were oppressed and harmed were under her protection. She was one of the strongest, the righteous, chosen by a divine being herself.

“It’s... over...?” she whispered as the strands of liquid rubber wrapped around her wrists, her arms, and started to pull her down.

But something in her mind, her inner self, wouldn’t let her argue the facts. How could she fight against the eyes gazing down at her, the twin ruby suns that pierced all around? What use would there be in struggling as more of this featureless world constricted her mind and soul, binding her with threads of shadow and shine? Some part of her, some tired little voice at the very core of her mind, accepted the

statements. Fell into the world that was being provided for her. The world itself rippled with the power of those words, the facts behind them. They were statements that etched their truth upon reality itself.

And she just felt so tired.

“That’s right, hero,” her once enemy spoke again, voice so soothing yet powerful. More of the goo strung her up more firmly, tightening over her chest. “you’ll fight for a new cause, now.”

More and more, the stuff consumed her colors. Her coat and costume. The branding that once stood so proudly upon a heroic bust, a symbol of the goddess she would serve. The starlight explosion was covered in the depths of the night, its entire shape obscured beneath the power of someone she had been tasked to defeat. Memories of such were already fading into the void between her ears, suffused with the pink light that threatened to erase all she stood for. That accursed glow found its way into her mind, her body, everything. It was the only color permitted to the residents of this world she found herself in.

“New... cause...” she once more muttered, the goop coming up to her neck now. It would reach higher, flooding for her ears. Black and pink, all at once, wrapping over her mouth and head. A hood, a mask, a guard. Something to hide who she had once been, a thing to cover and obscure. Nothing left of that which she looked to be, no one to be shown above.

“Your new Goddess.” Zaide spoke firmly as the illusion faded.

There she watched her newest slave drop to her knees, uniform already firmly in place and conforming to her powerful body. A flood of mental commands overtook the one formerly known as Pleiades and replaced all that justice and freedom with a few simple commands and roles. It was a personality crafted to rewrite the hero from where she had once been, spelling devotion in a way that she only sometimes created in her servants. Most were merely twisted to her whim, some were erased beneath her paws.

“I live to serve, Goddess.” Agent Justice lowered her head and placed one hand to the ground, her mind filled with the light of Zaide. True worship, wrested from a divinity that didn’t deserve it, now focused around one thing.

The broad footpaws of a lynx, pressed to the top of her head.

“Of course you do, agent.” Zaide spoke calmly before rubbing her shoulder. The impressively powerful minion had done some damage in a hit before being dragged into the Mind’s Eye, but it had been worth it. The feeling of someone staring into her feet with all the love a Goddess deserved was, as always, quite a gratifying feeling.

She walked to a chair across the room before taking a seat, once more raising a paw. Speaking wasn’t necessary but there was something particularly rewarding about giving a verbal command to a new puppet. Speaking was so much more visceral and physical than commanding them with her psionic powers. Anything less than that would be boring; moving puppets mentally was for later. Giving an edict to someone so far beneath her as to literally worship was just what she desired.

“Back to your duties, slave. My paws need a tongue.”

“No, I do not think they do.”

Zaide blinked as the world around her turned into a kaleidoscope of color and movement.

It wasn't the same as when she used her gloves or powers, she figured, since this came with much more physical stimulus. Every atom of the world she'd just inhabited felt as if it was ripped away from her, rushing past in a wind faster than she could comprehend. The sheer spectacle of the moment turned into streaks of phantasmic colors, streaks of light and dots of distant starlight that rushed past. She didn't know if this involved her moving away from the world itself or was more metaphorical to reality simply *being* different as she was rather dazed at the sheer magnitude of the change. What was a cat like her to do when something was so...

Sudden?

"I do believe you've been making yourself a problem."

The world lurched to a halt as Zaide found herself in a place most unexpected.

A temple?

All around her were the typical scenes of heaven as told by ancient people. Dozens of fountains were arrayed into the distance before vanishing into fluffy soft clouds. Faceless guardians stood in standard formations all the way down as well, each one looking as if a mirror image of the next. Wings of light and swords of fire carried the connotations of an ancient world brought into modernity, casting light upon a reality so far from the one she had just left. A small trick of music carried itself through the empty air, blending the sound of a thousand drops of water with the unseen rhythm of harps and songs. It was every bit the gold and marble studded paradise so many would imagine as a perfected afterlife.

"Where... am I?" Zaide spoke with honest confusion. Even her own plans rarely accounted for something so sudden and particularly impressive.

"Where?" the question was repeated before the lynx could drag her eyes away from the endless splendor and turn towards the speaker. "I would have expected this to be obvious but, alas, mortals are sometimes rather slow."

What she saw was the living symbol of justice; an ebony black dragon with a shock of spiked silver hair. Golden bands held a silky white outfit tight over her body in ways that looked like she was a walking classical statue. Her wings were clasped over her shoulders as a cape and had their hooked claws tipped with the same gold as everything else. Her every breath, such as they were, caused her entire body to ripple with a power far beyond those found upon the world Zaide sought to dominate. Small flickers of change crackled through this reality as she simply existed.

"Lyxia..." the lynx folded her arms as the initial shock faded. There was still a sense of trepidation when dealing with something so powerful; she would doubtlessly make Pleiades look like a sparkler against a bomb. "Goddess of Justice?"

"I am glad that my name is not yet forgotten by you people. Unlike my brother." the dragoness chuckled a little bit, tilting one claw towards the waiting cat. They stood still several yards apart and yet the sound never faded. "Come, we have some matters to discuss."

And, just like that, the distance between the lynx and the deity simply didn't exist. They were just there, within arm's reach of one another. It seemed that this domain was strictly under the control of the draconic ruler. Zaide realized quickly how far this must extend if space itself would collapse at her whim. Was the entire world she now inhabited merely a byproduct of a God's existence?

"I am assuming this is about the tiger." Zaide folded her arms as her mind raced over possibilities.

Someone of this stature was far beyond what she would normally have expected to fight. Some of the heroes she had captured may have once held their allegiance to someone like this but they were still bound to something at least akin to terrestrial law. Flight, super strength, magic, throwing lightning. All of those were mere facets of a world she could work within, something she could trick into serving her whim before dominating it utterly. A few of her agents had even professed belief in the dragon sitting before her though, at least before now, Zaide had staunchly disbelieved something this powerful was real. Most of them were merely harnessing magic, something that existed, not...

This.

"Pleiades, yes. But not only her." the dragon's golden eyes narrowed faintly as she spoke. "I hear you also took the unicorn and the deer. It is rather unbecoming of a mortal such as you to take archons of Justice."

"Sorry but," Zaide finally gave a smirk, feeling a little confidence come back. After all, there were a few thoughts in her head now. Useful ones. "that tiger goes by Agent Justice now. The others have new names as well."

The deity stared at Zaide for a long second, her eyes mere slits. It seemed as if she was debating what myriad of methods of torture she could inflict upon the feline for her sheer insolence. An unfathomable mind fought against the impulses so common among the lesser existences, wanting nothing more than to lash out and act irrationally. All the signs the cat knew to look for were there, godly or otherwise. She supposed there wasn't as much difference in attitude between the earthly and eternal, at least in emotions, as some expected. Maybe she could truly understand who she was engaged with?

"I do not think I shall call my servants by your little titles, *Zaide*." Lyxia spoke coldly as her posture shifted, moving to stand. Her height was as impressive as expected, being a dragon, and the move was clearly to assert some authority over the situation that was clearly not working diplomatically.

"The great Lyxia knows my name? I must say, I didn't expect to be known so far." Zaide took a couple of steps back to get out of arms reach as a pure reflex. She consciously knew that it wouldn't matter if the dragon wanted to hit her, but it was difficult to remove the reactions of the flesh. Fighting was something she was used to but feared it would do little here.

"..." the dragon was silent for a brief moment after that response. "You will release my servants now."

This was the moment the lynx dominant had to decide whether or not to keep going on this path. She had already figured out that she was left safe because the Goddess clearly wanted to get her minions back but didn't know how. Perhaps even a deity was limited to the domain they inhabited, leaving mental domination and linking to the cat something she was unable to easily break? That afforded Zaide quite a bit of leeway in how she dealt with the situation. Knowing she was a necessity would leave her safe for the lower level acts of pettiness and defiance, ones which would slowly unravel the calmness of a deity used to getting her way.

"Hm. I suppose I can release the three to you again." Zaide reached up, one glove tapping her chin. She was keenly aware that the holograms wouldn't be very effective against senses she didn't even have names for. "But there is a condition."

The dragoness remained silent but quirked an eyebrow. That little playing of music from the fountains and mindless servitors slowly ceased as she considered what could be said. Would there be a reward she expected for her tyranny of minds? Perhaps the divine woman was plotting to accept the deal but simply destroy her afterwards? There were many things that someone of her power could do. So many options that could be dangerous to Zaide in the short and long run. It was a dangerous game she played, upsetting someone of such immense power.

But it was part of the fun.

"I release them. And you?" Zaide snapped that free finger, sending an image through the air. It may have only been solid light but it still showed the scene she wanted more than anything:

The dragon on her knees, head pressed to the ground. One of the agent uniforms clinging to her body, eyes cast in brilliant pink. Every inch of the female wrapped tight and contained, her mind utterly enslaved to the standing lynx. A juxtaposition of the imitation Goddess kneeling and the nearly erupting reality. The cat even lifted one bare paw into the air and tapped where the head would be, wishing she had access to hard light holograms. It was purely for effect, after all.

"You bow down and worship *me*."

A quake rippled through the ground beneath Zaide's feet as she watched the dragoness get even more angry. The rage was apparent on her face as she struggled to not destroy the entire microverse around them in a display of pure wrath. The soldiers in the distance turned their eyes, gaining awareness for a moment as their deity reached a fever pitch against the dominant female. She roiled like the sea before a tsunami, crackled like the thunderstorm. All the elements that could destroy were slowly brought out and swirled about the Goddess in a torrent of pure power.

"Then I will solve this myself. Without you."

The first attack was a blast of pure force that shot across the ground, tearing up the tiles of purest marble and flinging them towards Zaide. It was the shockwave of a bomb greater than any ever fielded in her world's history, one so powerful that it would leave nothing but dust where the diabolical lynx now stood. The sheer pressure from the air would be enough to crush buildings and collapse mountains. This was carried along the space between them as a shout of pure anger, a yell brought forth by frustration and rage at a mortal who didn't know her place. Anyone would be ended by such an attack.

Anyone, it should be noted, but Zaide.

A glimmering wall came to life before the lynx, one composed of rosy crystal and bathed in the fog she sometimes covered her illusions with. Its glimmering surface appeared stalwart and strong while curved in just such a way as to deflect the attack instead of taking it head on. The illusory fortification was a crafted example of her own strength of will but, as with all things she made, should have crumpled under any attack such as this. How could she block an attack with an imitation of reality, mere parlor tricks and copies in the light?

But still the force exploded around her, cracking the ground and leaving deep fissures where it divided the world. It would have rent entire planets in half, devastated armies without slowing down.

But the lynx stood tall, her smirk more powerful as she dispelled her barrier.

“... How?” the deity frowned, caught unawares for the first time.

“You know what they say. Never tell a Goddess your plans. Or... something like that.” Zaide chuckled as she lifted one hand, gloves alight with a power beyond her own.

Before Lyxia could even fathom what was happening, a wave of pink-tinged fire exploded through the air between them.

It was a conflagration of brilliant light and color that spawned from the ether and unreality itself. In this realm where illusions were made manifest by the sheer power of the Goddess Zaide now fought to overthrow, she could feel her mind working as part of creation. Things twisted around the holograms and tricks she placed into the world, crafted as if a scaffold for a teaspoon of divinity pilfered upon the mortal plane. It rippled with more strength than she had ever considered in the past, burning hotter than the sun and more quickly than light. It was not a skill that required a medium to consume or even an act to be created. One second, there was nothing.

And the next, there was light and fire.

Taking one step to the side, Lyxia found herself in a gap between the eruptions of cosmic fire. It rushed past her in a wave while a few of the clouds of incandescent heat washed over her like nothing. She frowned as she realized some of the blasts were fake, merely an overlay to obscure which attacks were true and targeted. She could already tell that the one real shot had struck her throne and reduced it to smoldering rubble. A few stones landed about her but gravity wouldn't permit them to touch her body without permission. A minuscule thought brought the seat back to existence, as if it had never been damaged in the first place.

“How do you have power enough to stand? Here you are small, insignificant. An infant against the sun.” Her eyes soon blazed with more power than she used in that initial display of force from their start. Was it such an insult to withstand the first blast? To deny a Goddess her judgment? “And it's time you were gone.”

Lightning. That's what this attack was, Zaide knew before she could think. Her mind just told her practically before the almighty burst of power cleared the distance between them. Her mortal brain should have been far too slow to keep up with such actions, utterly insufficient to follow the paths a Goddess had taken in her own domain. This was a strike where there was a less than an instant between the start and finish. She even questioned if there *was* a start or if, by some miracle beyond science, the attack hit and that was it. A removal of cause and effect, skipping that first stage?

It was only by the rules of this strange dimension that she suddenly snapped her hand into location, covering it with all the power she could before contacting where the bolt would be. Electronics popped and snapped as she deflected it as quick as possible, flooding herself with a sense of power and confidence that was bordering on the impossible. Her very ego translated to the durability that left her flesh more intact than her holographic glove and let her survive such an incredible strike. One mistake and she would feel more pain than anything could endure before her body simply ceased to be. It was a fact that someone of this power could erase her from existence in a single touch.

A fountain exploded like a volcano as the blast struck it instead.

“So I see.” Lyxia said calmly as she watched Zaide’s hand withdraw, the pink circuitry glowing before fixing itself. Her damaged fur even reset itself properly. It seemed that the instance of injury had never happened. “I think I understand.”

A diamond lash, cut with bright pink light, swept through the air between lynx and dragon. Its myriad of cutting edges churned and twisted as it approached so quickly, immediately slicing the air and grinding the still falling rubble of the fountain to dust. It was an attack that would be impossible to block by normal means as it would continue to chop and dash whatever it touched into nothingness. It was a grinder instead of a mere whip, though how much of it was truly there was anyone’s guess. The haze of illusion clung to it like a morning’s fog, making even the divine dragon incapable of discerning fact from fiction.

Her hand rose and caught the end, instantly reducing it to a sea of stars. Their color, initially the rosy hues of her enemies, were turned brilliant cyan before dispersing around her as a halo. Like the classical atom model, they swirled and twisted with deadly and unstoppable intent. Their surfaces were perfect spheres, ones covered in glowing light and fire. Trails of blue followed behind each of a dozen of her new protectors, forging projectiles to attack at a moment’s notice.

“You understood the only way to survive divine power. Particularly mine.”

One orb shot towards Zaide as the dragoness spoke. It struck with the force of a meteor and should have wiped the lynx from existence. She had all the power in this situation and knew that it would work if she just put enough power behind it. Even something as weak as a newly born star was enough for the scant few mortals she ever allowed to lay eyes upon her.

But all that happened was the lynx slapped the shot before it detonated, forcing her to step back but keeping her otherwise entirely uninjured. A pink glow was briefly around her hand before disappearing once more. It seemed faint from the impact but was not seen long enough for the divinity to truly understand what was happening.

“You need power of your own.” she said slowly, firing two more blasts.

One hit Zaide in the arm as the other was deflected. Its impact scored through her clothing and left just enough injury to see the telltale signs of godly magic rushing across her body. The second it took for the aggressive lynx to recognize and fix her body was all that the dragon needed to comprehend. A plan formed in her mind as understanding became crystal clear. It was a daring maneuver.

“Or, should I say, my power.”

But full of flaws.

“Heh. Finally figured that out?” her opponent chuckled as she brushed off her shoulder. Lyxia could tell there was nervousness in her enemy but that facade and ego kept her going through it all. It probably helped that she was uninjured by divine right.

“My powers are reluctant to be used against me.” Lyxia nodded her head as she folded her arms. “Yet, by that same logic, it is hard for me to injure those using my own magic. I suppose you gained access when you damaged the mind of my vassal.”

“Worship is a powerful force. Didn’t know if it would work, but yeah. I guess it turns out that your archon prays to me now. So your power goes right from her to me.” Zaide ran a finger through the air in a completely pointless display, leaving behind two glowing stars of pink to match those of blue. They fired out and struck

the ones hovering over the dragon's shoulders, detonating in little puffs. They simply wouldn't exist against one another.

The air between them grew tense as the deity thought of how to approach this.

She could simply overwhelm the pilfered amount of her own power with more of it, but that might be a long battle or could even result in more being taken. While she did not view this as a fight she could lose, especially not in open might, there was a chance that it would distract her from duties she would prefer to focus on. Why would she give such an insect the time it would require to pound her into the ground over and over again? Defeating someone lesser than herself should not have been this much of a hassle.

"I guess," Lyxia sighed as she decided on the more petty option. "I can always make a new vessel."

It was in that second that Zaide felt a wave of weakness strike her as the divine powers were swiftly stripped from her body. A wave of pink light came from her fingertips before converting back to the characteristic blue that her draconic target sported. The tiny sparkles of her imagination were soon only the illusions she brought, leaving her with only the mundane technology that she commanded prior. Her heart raced faster as she realized that she would take real injury after this, that she couldn't repair or replace herself when she was struck by an almighty blow. Even her defenses, once power wrapped in illusion, were nothing more than a cloud before a nuclear missile.

*This better work.*

"Taking your power back?" Zaide kept her appearance of confidence but knew that it was obvious she was nervous. What was going to happen next? With her source of defense cut off, she didn't have much choice in the matter. She just had to watch.

"And not merely from you." Lyxia nodded as she spoke, fingers raised upwards. The stream of light now came from below them, more blue fire adding to the overwhelming strength between her fingers. "That archon of mine which you have improperly taken hold of, the mind you have tried to claim, no longer holds value to me."

It was hard to tell without access to divinity, but Zaide could have sworn Lyxia grew stronger by a minute amount in the seconds she drained her power back from Agent Justice. The fire, the lightning, even just the glow of this realm grew brighter. Perhaps it was her senses coming back down to normalcy? Could she be so dazzled from the sheer loss of her power, eeked out from a vessel of such low standing? Or was the brightness changing only in a small degree, showing what difference there had always been between the lynx and the dragon?

"And with her memories, I gain her strength. As with all my vessels, their power adds to my own. And you shall see..."

The dragon paused as she took a step forward, her eyes going wide as the last little bit of cosmic energy flowed into her body. Her words trailed into the still air about them as she seemed to mull over something, fighting against a new threat that she had never expected. Her wings fluttered uncomfortably as she stared right at the grinning feline, blinking once and then again. It was seconds before she managed to speak again.



“What do you see, then?” Zaide spoke calmly as she watched the last dredges of recovered power flow into the dragon. Her heart raced faster than it ever had but no longer with fear. Her predatory blood had brought itself back to the fore as her last plan came to fruition. Was it going to work? Was she safe?

“I... I see... what she saw.” Lyxia spoke quietly. “I never guessed...”

Her eyes flickered pink, for a brief moment.

Zaide’s relief spurred her into faster action as she knew such an attack would work only once. A burst of submitted memories, of urges that came down to worshiping the lynx and her paws, was enough to stun even the awareness of a Goddess on high. Her mind could, possibly, process it just fast enough to get over the feeling in a few seconds or a minute. That pink corruption would not be enough to crash the dragon or to keep her from striking down the lynx for very long.

So she ran forward, her hands suddenly clasping the drake’s head in place. A powerful burst of light came from the lynx as she did everything she could to dive into that weakness, finding a single chink in the armor before it could be fixed. Every piece of her mind was focused into a single, needle sharp point. One attack, the same thing she did to her puppet back in the material world.

“Welcome to the Mind’s Eye.” Zaide spoke as she looked down at the dragoness before her.

Lyxia was startled as she found herself on the ground, knees buckled and hands clasped together. Her head was bowed enough that she could see the glistening black ground beneath her, mind instantly aware that it stretched to a true infinity.

This mental landscape no longer resembled the peaceful heaven she had crafted, instead being the world of inky seas and pink clouds seen from her former servant’s mind. The rumbling waters of Zaide’s almighty ego bubbled about her as a furious tide as they lapped at her thighs with little waves. Her mind was only just barely aware of what was happening about her as the shift in perspective left even her superior senses adrift. Was she truly here? Could this be an alteration of the world she had so painstakingly crafted, corrupted in an instant by the lynx before her?

Her eyes looked up for a moment, glancing at the paws.

“Ah...” she whispered, imagination suddenly struck by the same images from the world below.

A sensation of desire she had never felt suddenly struck her once more. How much the slave agent wanted to press her face against these plush feet, to take in the warmth and sensation of being stepped upon by a lynx overlord. The fragile mortal mind had tainted her with the concept of submission in a way she would have been incapable of comprehending minutes before. The mere idea of licking the paws of a female who had enslaved so many and sought to subvert every mind she could would have been repugnant, antithetical to her very nature! Justice was not a force that would submit itself to a higher calling, mortal or not. It was powerful and unerring.

“Yes, my servant? I believe you are praying to me.”

But the thought was her weakness. Like a virus to an unknown host, her mind had no immunity to the feeling of submission. It had only ever encountered those who would bow their heads to her, kneeling in supplication to a deity that would never fail them. She had eons of practice controlling others, guiding them in a way as

to ensure peace and safety. The only things above her were the natural order of things; it was not submission to listen to Gods of their own domains. It simply was.

"I... was?" the Goddess with a fragmented mind questioned, her eyes narrowed on those toes. Nothing in her mind worked as the images continued to rush over her as the tide of goo did. Each time it crested over her body, striking a thigh or an arm or even her face, she felt more of these imagined memories come to the surface. They fought for command, struggled to be her new truth.

She could fight, better than most, but the dragoness was so off balance that she could not bring the full of her mind to bare.

"Of course you were. Is that not how a servant treats her Goddess?" the lynx twisted the toe around a little bit, tilting it this way and that to watch the kneeling dragoness follow it. A Goddess enthralled by her toes was such a thrilling feeling but she knew she had little time to play around.

If she waited long enough, it was doubtless Lyxia would gain her footing. There would be no second attempt.

"Continue."

Partially formed memories flooded Lyxia's mind as she thought about what worship would mean. How it was to treat a Goddess above her was a question she'd never had to answer and yet the words sprang to her lips like rain on a spring morning. They were insistent, instinctual, commands given from a source that wasn't her own and yet felt so natural.

"I pray my power to Zaide, for it is hers to command." she spoke in strange rapture.

And as she spoke, she felt her strength begin to ebb.

Zaide looked down upon her falling Goddess as the power shifted towards herself in a tide that far dwarfed what she'd felt before. It was a burning stream of plasma, bolts of lightning from the ancient Zeus, that struck the very core of Zaide's being. It gave her strength that was degrees higher than even when she battled the Goddess moments ago, granting her command of the world and sensory changes that she could never have dreamed of. She could feel the very air itself moving, the tides of power a galaxy away. The waves that crested on her homeland were tied to her mind as faint glimpses of feeling. She was like the archon before, but more. Stronger.

And yet, it was still merely granted power. Borrowed.

"I pray my realm to Zaide, a domain fit for her alone."

Once more the words came with a shift in the cosmic axis. What had once been a near parity with her and the kneeling Goddess came to a full match. Would she even be capable of taking the powers now, to reclaim what had once been hers? The rules of divinity were a thing that the lynx should have found confusing and yet, as her awareness expanded beyond the confines of what she knew, it became fully apparent that it would be a battle. Two creatures of divine nature would fight for the right to usurp the throne of Justice, to become the one who commanded this domain. They were too even to exert command over one another.

"My will to Zaide, so that I may... may serve her in.... all ways."

The stammering began as the mind came to realize what it was doing, though by then it was far too late. The divinely enhanced Mind's Eye rippled around the dragoness as she was consumed more and more. The projection and reality both

matched their changing status as the rubber wrapped her firmly. Strands of silken divinity warped to become the same thought-stuff that commanded her very will. Black and pink latex connected against her legs, her arms. Everything from the neck down found itself utterly consumed by the void of Zaide's endless hunger, the will she carried to move herself to power. What could the dragon do in the face of the unparalleled lynx?

"I... no..." the dragoness whispered, eyes locked on the toes as she struggled to regain herself. But now she rested so far down, her power a mere fraction of what she'd lost. How could she regain it?

Meanwhile, Zaide basked in her expanded perfection while her mind filled itself with understanding. So many things that she had never thought of now found themselves submitted to her jurisdiction. Many concepts of reality that felt so minor became more expansive in her mind, drawing her into a spiral of discovery that took centuries and yet less than a second. She could understand the domains of Gods, their functions, their powers. Oh, the power that she now commanded was so far beyond who and what she could have dreamed to be. The lynx was growing past her fleshbound nature, truly expanding into a consciousness that would have brought others to follow the universal functions.

But Zaide, as her body started to adjust into a form she had not expected, was not most people. Not even as her tail expanded down and gained scales did she even begin to submit to the feeling of cosmic duty. The flowing, fire like fur along her draconic appendage was a symbol of her own authority, not one that she would allow to command her. The little extra length in her fangs, the scales running down her body, even the swirling pink rings emanating from her pupils, all of it was the sign of her new office. It was a place that would be ruled by her, not the other way around. She was a Goddess.

And all Gods were dragons, at least when they wanted to be. Which left the kneeling dragoness before her...

"Complete it." Zaide grinned as she watched her command of reality wash over Lyxia, slowly shifting her as the words were said.

"I pray my mind..." Lyxia whispered as her eyes went wide in fear at the words she spoke yet she was helpless to argue them. The tendrils of power were wedged too deeply into her mind, the deep sea of Zaide's newly almighty will having subverted her too far to fight against the hybrid dragon above her. There was no chance to resist, to fight. "And my soul..."

Her body glimmered as reality rewrote her. The hood wrapped itself around her head and pushed down on suddenly feline ears. The smooth scaled tail was replaced with a short little bob instead, one covered in soft brown fur. Her scales were soon reconfigured into the same coloring Zaide wore when she was the lynx, matching the Goddess above her with only a few differences to tell who was who. Everything that defined who she had been a moment before was quickly erased beneath the incoming tide of lynx. All finished with a pair of glowing, pink eyes.

"... to Goddess Zaide." and Agent Star lowered her head to the floor as the illusion vanished.

"That's right, slave." Goddess Zaide, truly in command of the powers of Justice, walked through her new domain. The colors had already shifted to black and pink, her branding all over. Faceless agents replaced the angels from the rule of a now

forgotten deity. That name was scoured from anything she could touch. "I said it earlier. Bow down and worship *me*."

And as exactly that started, Zaide walked towards her new throne. A thought struck her as she remembered what had happened earlier, what had been so rudely interrupted by her newest supplicant. She sat with the knowledge that it was time to fix the sin committed against her, for that was a term she could now define. A word that suited only those that went against the will of a Goddess.

"Slave, my paws need attention." the Goddess spoke as she raised her foot, watching the mindless lynx come close. Her eyes would rise as she felt the submitted tongue press to her paw pads, staring through the domain of Zaide and towards the stars in the sky. She noticed but one thing as she thought of what to change in her new universe.

Her eyes watched across reality as her newly remade tail lashed behind her. A shock of power rippled through her infinite domain, leaving in its wake yet more of the pink and black power. Streaks of light came from the ground in brilliant ley lines, each one flickering faintly before vanishing. They would come back later, when she wanted them, but for now were little more than expressions of her power. They were nothing worth attending to, nothing more than a flex of her expansive might.

"What is Justice?" she mused as she reached up, grasping the brightest star in the constellation she now ruled. Its blue light, spurred on by the intense heat and power that it put out, did nothing to harm the incarnation of ultimate power. Rather, it simply flickered and shifted beneath her glowing claw tip, tendrils of endless power seeping into the reality she could now call her own. The stars above would be a reflection of her command, written for all to see.

The Pleiades, the brilliant winter stars, now shone pink.

"Again?" Stormwave sighed as she watched yet another villain robbing Horizon's bank. It was the same place she'd defended a dozen, no, a hundred times and yet they kept coming! "They literally have me on call! I get lunch every time you guys break in!"

"Look, Stormy. They're dumb." Diamond Tail sighed as the villains prepared to fight. It was lucky that she was in town to help break up some criminal enterprise or else the snow leopard would have had to field this one alone. The number of low level supers that ran roughshod in Horizon seemed to be a problem for quite a lot of the heroes. Sure, she knew Stormwave could have handled it but that would have been boring. Two heroes is better than one.

"Been wanting to take a whack at you, shocky." the front runner, Flint, smacked a stone covered hand against a knife in a shower of sparks.

"Okay, I'm gonna give you two seconds to try that line ag-"

*Servant of Justice, you now serve me.*

"Ugh..." Jenny reached up and grabbed at her forehead as her entire soul suddenly shifted around. Enough pain lanced through her mind that she slammed her eyes shut and struggled against the sensations, wanting to blot out the excess thoughts and keep her own mind. Every bit of her heroic willpower was brought forward in an effort to push away the intrusive thoughts, to keep herself as who she wanted to be. Who she always had been. She was a hero and...

The same failing battle struck Stormwave as she fought to even remember what a 'hero' was. The concept seemed so alien now, like what she'd been thinking of seconds ago made no sense. Why was she thinking that a superhero was someone working on their own, fighting just to help people? Words and ideas were being tugged away as if by some cosmic pair of tweezers, repeated a billion times over with a million minds a second. So many ideas were there but just felt unnatural, wrong.

And then the world suddenly shifted and the girls opened their brilliant pink eyes.

"Alright, idiots. Time to submit in the name of Goddess Zaide." Agent Volt rolled her shoulder as the fitted black uniform materialized over her body. One hand grabbed the mask and tugged it over her stubby muzzle along with the hood. It was her way of showing that it was battle time. The snep was known for being rather aggressive.

"Especially you." Agent Adamant pointed at Flint. "Goddess Zaide demands all with powers serve her perfect justice."

The two rushed into battle as every other hero joined them in perfect unison. Uniforms appeared the world over, minds instantly becoming in tune with who and what ruled their new goals in life. Heroes were no longer people who battled against villains because they wanted to. The pink stars in the sky above were symbols for every seeker of justice, a universal reminder that there was only one way to become a hero in this world. Super or otherwise, Justice was defined by one thing.

Your mind belongs to Zaide.