

Familiar of the Void

Chapter 1

Everette Von Alamere was a girl that always got what she wanted. Her mother was the Marchioness of Winchester, so she was incredibly rich. Everette was vice-president to the student council by status alone. She had two dedicated servants on school grounds, who helped her with difficult homework assignments. There was just one. Tiny. Problem.

Magic. Or rather, her extreme lack thereof. She kept insisting that she was a late bloomer, but at this point, even commoners had more magical prowess than she did. It was the summer before her second year at Guilford Academy, and something HAD to be done. Thankfully, as was said before, her parents were very wealthy. There are few problems in this universe that money cannot solve.

Now, let us speak of dark magic. Publicly, the nobility all shun the use of dark magic, and state that it is virtuous not to use it. This is, of course, so that nobles can buy the services of dark magics, while discouraging the commoners from doing so. Dark magic contains the only spells which involve human sacrifice, and there was so, so much you could do, as long as you were willing to bloody your hands. There was even more you could do, if you could pay someone else to bloody theirs.

And so, over the course of the summer, her father toiled. Her mother, the Marchioness, funded the endeavor. No cost was too great. He researched, hired others to do more research, paid to have people hunted down, and even arranged a kidnapping. It culminated in this, an event just two weeks before school resumed. In the deepest part of an ancient dungeon, a ritual was taking place. A wide room, three floors tall, was being used to perform a forbidden ritual. They were summoning a familiar, but they weren't exactly doing it the normal way.

A familiar was a creature with whom you shared magic power. It could be responsive to your thoughts, responsive to your commands, or have a mind of its own. In a few cases, people who had no visible magical powers could summon a familiar, and it was assumed that the user simply was only capable of manifesting their power through their familiar. This wasn't the case for Everette; they had been trying this for years. But, as we said, with dark magic, there was so, so much you could do, if you just bloodied a pair of hands. The plan was as such: Five adept users of black magic were gathered, along with one human sacrifice. Everette and a bodyguard were also present. A ritual would be performed, using the kidnapped girl as a means of summoning a familiar. During the process, the girl would be killed, such that the familiar would belong to Everette. The victim's soul would be used as sacrifice to power the magic of the familiar. This meant that Everette, while still having no inherent magic, would have a familiar at her command, with its own magic. This would be indistinguishable from a case where Everette did have magic, and the familiar was the sole conduit for this magic. Nobody would be able to tell the difference, and Everette's final problem in life would be settled. Well, she still had to get a boyfriend, but it should be easier if people thought she had magic.

The five mages were all gathered, and the ritual commenced. Along with a human sacrifice, the spell contained the usual lizard eyes, mammal feet, and an excess of pigs blood. And lots of chanting. As the ritual reached its climax, Everette's bodyguard reminded her.

“Remember, milady. You must concentrate on the shape you wish for a familiar.”

“Yes, yes! I know! Who do you think you’re talking to!”

Everette had just gotten it down to just twelve to choose from. She had all summer, but to be fair the list started with five hundred. This was no time to be indecisive, she thought to herself. She just had to pick one. Right now. Right, right now. And then...

A blank.

Everette’s mind went completely blank.

The sacrifice was slain, and then... nothing happened. A few moments just went by, and everyone felt the spell was a failure. Just as Everette’s disappointment was setting in, something happened. All at once, the space of the gigantic room was filled. Curled up, in a ball, was a gigantic woman. Her feet and butt were on the ground, but her back, arched forward, nearly touched the ceiling. It was as though this body was chosen to be the exactly right size to fill the space available. The woman was naked, but there was a palpable dark aura emanating from her body, creating an eerie contrast with her pale skin. Her long, pitch-black hair reached the floor. Everyone was terrified by her visage and her sudden appearance. Everyone except for Everette. Her eyes lit up. “This is my magic” she thought to herself, completely un-phased by the reactions of the others.

The giant opened her mouth to talk, and the entire building quaked as she did so. The voice came from nowhere and everywhere all at once, and was low, and ominous.

“Who has summoned us.”

“Me! I did! Everette Von Alamere! Daughter to the Marchioness of Winchester!”

The creature speaking was scary enough to the mages, but Everette’s lack of caution made them even more surprised.

“We are Mu. Nothing.”

“What? What does that mean?”

“We are the void. The nothingness. The black expanse that is the fate of all that has been, all that is, and all that will be. For what reason have you awoken us from our eternal slumber?”

“You have been summoned to serve me! You will be my familiar.”

“We serve no-one.”

“... what? What the fuck! Hey, hey cultists! What the fuck is this?”

The bodyguard was brought to his senses.

“Milady, please, please, don’t anger her... them... This could be dangerous...”

The dark mages, for their part, decided to respond to the severity of their situation. The central one began summoning a magic rope out of ether, to attempt to bind the giant, and the others followed suit. A giant hand batted the central mage away, sending him to the ground. This made the others take pause. The giant spoke again.

“You do not grasp the magnitude of what you have awoken.”

The walls of the dungeon seemed to melt away, until all that was left was the giant, the seven humans, and... and nothing.

“Look around, for this is our true form. Nothing. Endless, empty nothing. When we go bump in the night, your gods quiver with fear.”

On the subject of fear, the bodyguard and mages were freaking out. Whenever they looked around, other than the giant and the others, which seemed to be generating their own light, there was only infinite, inky blackness. There was no gravity, but no sense of lack of grav-

ity. They breathed, by Mu's good graces, but there was no air. Other than the clothes on their body, they felt nothing. They slowly began to scream, but there was no medium, save for their own bodies, to carry the sound. Thus, their screams were theirs and theirs alone.

Everette, though, was back to being excited. She was so focused on the visage of the giant, and the magnitude of the accomplishment, that she was able to pay no mind to the infinite vastness of nothing. "So cool!" she thought to herself.

"You amuse us, child. Your name... was Everette Von Alamere?"

She wanted to say 'yes', but her voice did not, could not carry in this environment. Not bothered, she nodded vigorously.

"You wanted us to serve you, yes?"

Everette nodded again.

"We will propose a contract. We are meant to sleep forever, but the lifespan of a human is but an instant for us. You may provide us with an interesting diversion, now that we are awake. We will obey you... for as long as you amuse us. If you succeed in this, we will gladly follow you around until the natural end of your life. We... reserve the right to make some independent decisions, but we will, as long as we are interested, act in your best interests."

Again, Everette nodded vigorously.

"Shake my our hand, and the contract will be complete."

The giant reached out a hand.

The bodyguard managed to fight off insanity for long enough to yell "No, Stop!" but his words could not and would not reach his master.

Everette grabbed the giant hand, and shook.

So begins the last 73 years of the planet.

In a bright flash, all persons involved returned to that dungeon room, as if reality hadn't just given up just then. The familiar, once a giant, was now just 6 feet tall, and shaking Everette's hand. The cultists and the bodyguards all took a deep breath, and started screaming again. The familiar raised their other arm, and then made a fist. Just as before, the screams were not transmitted beyond the bodies of the victims. They then pointed at the dead girl's body by the altar.

"Everette Von Alamere. We will dispose of that body, unless you have need for it."

"Yes, please do."

The girl vanished. Even the blood on the floor, and the blood on the dagger, was gone.

"By the way, you can call me Everette. Or Everey."

Everette smiled at having a new friend. She only let her friends call her Everey.

"We will remember that. Shall we dispose of these as well?" she said, motioning to the cultists, and the bodyguard.

"No, no... Certainly not Keith. I promised my father that I would return him."

"Then the others are not a problem?"

"Mmmm... You should only dispose of a couple. They did try to hurt you, after all."

The familiar failed to see why that was relevant.

"Very well."

"Wait, wait wait."

In the time it took for her to say that, one cultist was missing an arm.

“What is wrong, Everey?”

“We may need their services in the future. Buuuttt... they know how powerful you are. And it seems like they might never stop screaming... What exactly can you do, other than turn all big and send us to your private lair?”

“All things someday turn to nothingness. All knowledge is lost consumed by the void. All that moves will eventually stop. Such is the nature of Mu.”

“Oh! I love the way you talk! It’s so coool! Hmm... knowledge is lost. Can you... consume knowledge?”

“Mu consumes all.”

“I’m taking that to mean ‘yes’. ... Can you ‘eat’ the memory of today’s events from them?”

“Mortal brains are strange, poorly made. We can remove the events from today, but those six have seen and felt the void that is Our true form. Until they cease to be, there will never be a true recovery.”

“Sooo, what, it’s gonna give ‘em nightmares? Stay with the unconscious mind?”

“You are astute, Everey.”

She puffed her chest proudly. “My maid may do my math homework, but my psychology and metaphysiology work is all done by me! And, you’re right. Human brains are strange. Anyway, yes, if you could erase their memory of every moment before your huge body appeared.”

A moment passed.

“It is done”, the familiar said.

“Oh, speaking of that huge body, can you not be quite so tall?”

“No.”

“Can you at least put some clothes on?”

“If we must...”

It took two retries, but the familiar and Everette recreated the scene from after the sacrifice was made, so that the familiar appeared where the dead girl had once been. During this time, they decided that the incarnation of nothingness was to go by the name “Muir” in this plane of reality. Also, after some amount of coercion, Everette made Muira agree to using the pronoun “I”, and to accept being called by “she” and “her”. In exchange, Everette took Muira shopping for clothes on the way back. She was really more showing appreciation than trying to bribe this extra-divine entity with fine cloth.

Chapter 2

(Skip ahead)

The three returned to the manor. They traveled via carriage, and the three shared a compartment. Muira sat opposite to Everette, so the two could talk better. Keith sat stoic, next to Everette.

“Sooo... just so we’re clear, explain your deal again? I think I have some questions.”

“My... deal?”

“Just, I don’t know. Everything about you. You’re so freaking cool! Gods, I can’t believe my luck!”

“Ah, I thought you did not want others knowing the extent of my power”

“What? There’s nobody else here.”

Keith coughed. He was used to being ignored, but that was a little much.

“Ah, right. Yeah, not even he should know. Not even my parents should know. Just you and me.”

“Hm. I will...”

She flicked put out a pointer finger and flicked her wrist. The movement was completely unnecessary, but Everette seemed to like it when she had silenced the men by closing her fist.

“... deprive him of his senses. Time will not pass for him until you desire it to, again. He will not hear a word we say”

Everette bridged her hands with excitement.

“Amazing! You’re so cool. I thank the gods this happened.”

“The gods had nothing to do with it. As I said before, when I go ‘bump’ in the night, your gods quake with fear”

“Right, right, because you’re nothing. The end of things.”

“Correct”

“That means you’re going to eat everything, eventually.”

“Eventually”

“When is eventually, if I might ask?”

“Your language lacks sufficient words to describe the length, even in eons, it will take the last star in the multiverse to die.”

“Mmm, as I said before. Math’s not my strong suit. I’ll just remember ‘A very long time’”

“That will do, for now.”

“And you’re here now because I woke you up. Or, well, the spell that my father paid for to be cast at my request woke you up.”

“No, both are correct. I felt your call, in particular.”

“But... But I wasn’t thinking of anything.”

“You were thinking of nothing.”

“Ohhhh! Wow. That’s... that’s amazing! I’m running out of words to describe you.”

“The words you choose are more positive than ancient cultures have described me. I am pleased.”

“Heh... neat. Okay, so, you said you slumber eternally? How does that work?”

“Even now, most of my form is asleep. And it will be, until the end of days. But, what you see before you is a tiny part, connected to the whole, that is awake.”

“And you don’t want to go back to sleep?”

“The length of a human life, or even of a human civilization, is insignificantly small to one such as myself. As I have been awakened, I can bear to stay awake for this fraction of a time unit. You amuse me. I will be in your service until you die of natural causes, or until you bore me. And then, I shall return to slumber.”

“Heh... I’ll try my best not to bore you, I guess! So, what will you going back to sleep be like?”

“I will summon the rest of me, in order to claim me. Your world will not survive.”

Everette did not expect to hear that. She blinked repeatedly, trying to process it.

“What...?”

“Once you have died, I will have more use for this world. When I return to the void, so too will this world around me.”

“Wait. Wait. Waitwaitwaitwaitwait. You’re saying... after I die... so does everything?”

“That would be a correct viewpoint.”

“But... what about my little brother? What if I have kids? What if my big brother has kids? What about... what about everyone? There’ll just... be nothing?”

“Correct”

“But nobody will be around to know how great I was! My lasting legacy! Is there nothing that can be done about that?”

“The smallest gate that I can make, in order to return this form to the rest of my self, would still be a cataclysmic event. It is more expedient, then, to pull it all in at once.”

“Gods! I’ve doomed the world by making a contract with you?”

“No. It was because I was summoned.”

“So if I hadn’t been interesting... You would have consumed everything? Including me?”

“Correct”

“Whaaaaaaaat! No! No no no! Fuck! This is bad! This is bad! This is very, very, very, VERY bad. What am I going to do, what can I do...”

As Everette was having a complete breakdown, Muira calmly thought. The contract did, after all, specify ‘Independent action’ and ‘acting in (Everette’s) best interests.’ There was only one solution to preserve the amusement she got out of Everette.

With a gulp, she consumed the information from Everette’s mind. She scrubbed clean the last minute of conversation. There was a chance the girl would remember this, subconsciously, of course. If the subject came up again, Muira would just have to lie.

With the loss of information, Everette’s expression was blank. Muira decided repeat the last thing that Everette should be remembering.

“I will be in your service until you die of natural causes, or until you bore me. And then, I shall return to slumber.”

“Heh... I’ll try my best not to bore you, I guess! So, what will you going back to sleep be like?”

“I will vanish into nothing. In time, everyone that met me will slowly forget about me, as though I were never here.”

“Sooo... You’re not going to consume the world or anything?”

“Some day, this world will end. In a few millennia, the sun will have died, and the grass will stop growing. All will return to nothing in time. I can wait.”

That was a lie, of course.

“Wowwww....”

Everette was happy. Deception successful.

“Okay, let’s go on to what powers you have! I need to know what’s in your arsenal so I can use you to impress my peers at school! Preferably in a way that doesn’t end in them screaming forever.”

“A human can be stripped of their senses without going insane. Your bodyguard suffers no additional damage from what he now suffers.”

“To him, it’s like time has stopped, right?”

“Time has stopped for his mind. His body continues to age. Were he to be injured, the damage would not be perceived until I loosen my grip.”

“And memories, right? You can erase memories. Can those, like senses, be restored?”

“The human mind is fragile and delicate. Removing a memory creates a permanent gap. I can return physical mass from the void, but information is lost forever”

“I see, I see. Good to know. Can you gain knowledge you’ve consumed in this way?”

“No.”

“Aw...”

(Skip ahead)

After introducing her new familiar to her family, next, of course, were her personal butler and maid. Before going to her room, Everette stopped at their shared quarters. The two were shocked that their mistress came directly to them instead of summoning them to her room. She was just too excited to wait for them.

“Michaelus! Henrietta!” She said as she threw open the door.

They both took a knee in deference.

“The ritual was a success! Allow me to introduce you to my new familiar, Muira!”

Everette posed to draw attention to Muira. She added jazz hands for emphasis. Muira, for her part, stayed perfectly still. Michaelus and Henrietta breathed a sigh of relief; they hadn’t known what to expect.

“I thought you said you’d curtsy” Everette whispered

“I said ‘I may’” Muira flatly responded.

Henrietta stifled a giggle. She already liked Muira.

Everette returned to normal composure, and then cleared her throat.

“Yes, well, as she is my familiar, she should be treated as an extension of myself. That is what the books say. As such, please cater to her desires as though she were myself. I hope the three of you can get along. And oh, you may stand now.”

The two complied.

Everette was always a little blind to social cues. But, both Henrietta and Muira could tell that Michaelus wasn’t happy with this arrangement.

“Do not be concerned. I doubt there is much you will be able to assist me with.”

Muira's intent was reassurance that she would not be a bother. It came across more as 'You are of little use to me'. Both sentiments were true, however.

"Oh! Hm! We should... give them a small display of your power!" Everette said, excitedly. Muira cocked her head.

"Oh, it should be something very minor..." the young mistress said, thinking.

This was taking some time.

"Oh, right, you can erase things without changing their structure, correct?"

"Muira does not erase. Muira consumes."

"Muira, you must use 'I' when talking about yourself. It is to be used in place of your name, when you speak. It doesn't just replace 'We'."

"I do not erase. I consume."

"Yes, better! Thank you, Muira!"

Both servants were surprised to hear this. It normally took them quite a lot of work to warrant a 'Thank you' from the young mistress. It certainly took more than correcting their speech.

"Mmm, what if you... took a useless object and ate... just a tiny bit of it. Liiiiikee.... Ah, this chair!"

Everette ran over to a wooden chair and picked it up, then brought it back to Muira. She motioned to the upper part of one of the chair's legs.

"If this is anything like that cultist's arm, this should work. Here, era--- eat just this part of the leg, but not this lower part."

Muira didn't emote much, but it was clear that this trick seemed a little beneath her. However, she was starting to derive vicarious joy out of Everette's times of excitement. She made a slapping motion into the air, aimed towards the chair. As requested, the upper part of one leg vanished. However, the lower part of the leg remained where it was. It was as though a portion of the leg had become invisible, which is of course what the butler and maid thought at first. However, Everette was able to pass her hand through the space where that part of the chair had been. She smiled with glee.

"See? See? Pretty cool, right? Also, if I ask her to in advance, she can return things. I think it's too late for this leg, though." Everette looked at Muira to confirm.

"That is correct. It has been returned to nothingness."

"Right. Sooo... You can now impress the other servants of the house with this magic chair!"

Henrietta giggled. Michaelus rolled his eyes.

"What? No good?"

"It would be even more impressive if the opposite leg was similar!" said Henrietta.

"I don't think it matters either way" said Michaelus.

With another motion of her forearm, Muira erased part of another leg.

"Hey, Henri! I didn't even ask her to do that! I think that means she likes you!"

Muira smirked, confirming.

Everette put the chair back down. It was still as stable as it had been.

"Well, she and I have girl stuff to do! I'll be in my room. Good day."

"Good day, madams" the two said, as they bowed.

Everette left, and Muira followed. Some time after the two were gone, they stopped bowing, and Michaelus closed the door.

"Her father paid all that money... for parlor tricks?"

"I think it's great", Henrietta said "Do you see how happy Muira makes our gal? She's finally got a friend."

"She has friends! What about Fiora?"

"Mike, Fiora is a baron's daughter. They both know there's a power differential present."

"What about the student council?"

"I'm pretty sure they all secretly hate her"

"Sure, but all of them, though?"

"More than likely. Anyway, that's not important. The important thing is that our gal is happy."

"I guess. I do worry this will make more work for us."

"Maybe not. We'll have to see."

On the way back to her room, Everette tried to point out many things. She also made a point of giving restrictions along the way. She had been told that, like with servants, setting clear boundaries for your familiar was important.

"So, that's the library. I don't even know why commoners bother having public libraries, when my father's is much larger. Anyway, you may read anything you like, whenever you like. Just, do not destroy any of those books. Some of them cost my father quite a bit of effort."

"Understood."

"Over there is the kitchen... You can just show up at any hour to get a snack. I usually have Henrietta or Michaelus fetch it for me, however. I'll be sure to tell them not to give you any kitchenware that's irreplaceable."

"Understood"

"Down those stairs is a swimming pool and sauna. It's very good for taking a break after a long day of having Henrietta read to me. Do you like water?"

"I have no particular affinity for it."

"That's a shame. Truth be told, I was hoping you would be a water-based familiar. I suppose I'll have to settle with what I've got."

Muira had no response for that. Everette continued talking.

"Oh, there's an armory halfway down. I don't really know what can or can't be replaced, so try to play it safe with the erasure."

"Understood"

"Out that door, and on the left is the way to the garden. Flowers are pretty, smell nice, and can help you draw the attention of boys."

Muira had no idea why she would need the attention of boys.

"Hmm... down that way is a lounge... kinda boring. That way, another dining room, the 'east dining room', of course. Just another set of steps...."

On the topmost floor was a very long hallway.

"That's Julian's room", she pointed on the left while walking past.

Everette stopped at a large set of doors, to the right. First, she pointed further down the hall.

“On the left there is Marcus’s room. Finally, the doors at the end is mom and dad’s room.”
Muirá nodded. Everette turned towards the doors.

“And this here is my room. Now, before we go in, please be aware! In two weeks time, we will be going to the academy. My room there is a lot smaller than this room, so don’t get your hopes up. Now then...”

Everette opened the doors to her room. It was full of pink and blue pastels, silver lining, and was spacious enough to fit a family of eight without complaint. The number of cushions and stuffed animals were difficult to count. In the middle, of course, was a queen-sized bed, with four posts and a veil.

“Hmmm... I suppose you can use that guest bed over there. It’s a little shabby. I had it added so that Fiora can sleep over. But, if you like, I suppose you could sleep in my bed for the next two weeks.”

“I do not need sleep”

“Ah...” Muirá didn’t pick up on it, but there was a bit of disappointment in Everette’s voice.

The two spent the better part of the evening seeing what jewelry fit Muirá best, and trying configurations of makeup. Muirá was able to “void out” her makeup to allow Everette to start again. Everette repeatedly told her that things would be more interesting in two weeks. She couldn’t have her familiar leaving out of boredom before she could show it off at the academy.

Once Everette fell asleep,

Chapter 3

Everette and company went to her school via carriage.

The carriage came to a halt. Everette had a feeling she knew what was going on, and was getting giddy. Mike and Henri look concerned, while Muira had a blank expression. A voice yelled from outside the carriage. They sounded like a real roughneck.

“Get out of the wagon! This is a robbery! Just give us all your valuables, and nobody’s gonna get hurt!”

Everette pulled down the window, and shouted back.

“I’ll make you a deal! How many of you are there?”

“Three! More than enough for the five of you!”

“Right: Here’s my deal! You three must, together, fight my champion. Should you best her, fine, take our stuff! But if you lose... we go away freely.”

There was some pause as the bandits discussed this situation among each other. They felt pretty confident they could win, and could just not keep up their end of the bargain if they lost.

“We accept! Bring out your ‘Champion’”

“Milady, what are yo--”

“Don’t worry so much Michaelus! You’ll turn your hair grey! Now then, Muira. This is the bandit scenario we discussed.”

“There were only two in your scenario”

“Are you saying that you can’t handle three?”

“That is not what I said.”

“Okay, so... You just need to... improvise! Hmm, actually, can you do the barrier thing as well? Just so one doesn’t get away?”

“It shall be done.”

“Okay! Take it away, Muira!” she declared as she threw open the door. Muira stepped out of the carriage and the men began to laugh.

Everette closed the carriage door behind Muira. Henrietta moved to where Muira had been sitting, in order to look out the other window. There were four bandits.

Muira slowly walked forward as the bandits mocked her. She snapped her fingers, and the driver was frozen in time. This was easier than blanking his memory later.

“Look at this feeble woman!” “She wears no armor at all!” “Her skin is so pale, does she go outside?” “So she’s a little tall, so what?” “That just means there’s more of her for us to grab.” “This is going to be the best goddamn haul of our careers.”

As she continued walking, a flash of light came from behind her. Behind her foot, a barrier rose up out of the ground. It was paper thin, clear, and only let on its existence if you caught it from a certain angle. As this wall flew infinitely up, a flock of crows flew overhead. One crow managed to avoid the barrier entirely. The next, behind it, was bisected by it. Both halves of the crow dropped to the ground. The third crow hit this wall headfirst, sending it tumbling to the ground. The bandits took little notice of this. Henrietta, watching, became a little queasy at the sight of the dead bird. Everette merely moved her lips, as if to say “So cool...”

Muira took a few more steps forward before coming to a halt. She put out a hand, in order to stop them from attacking right away. She recited a speech which Everey had given her.

“Before we begin, I am giving each of you a free hit. You may each strike me one time, without repercussion. After that, you may prostrate yourself, and you will not be harmed. However, anyone who strikes me a second time will be shown no mercy. Now, let us begin.”

Muira widened her stance and had her hands down in a ready position. The thugs burst out laughing at the sight. The calmest entity to ever be, Muira did not react.

“Alright, fine! If we each get a free hit, lemme go first!” said a man with a voice so nasally, one might call it rat-like.

He approached Muira, a spiked club over his shoulder.

“If you’re just going to sit still...”

He brought back the club and took a wide stance, then gave a fierce horizontal swing.

Nothing happened.

The man felt no pain in his arms, or reverberations from hitting a dense object. But... his club had been stopped completely upon contact with Muira’s arm. A spike from the club did not even manage to scratch her sleeve. He looked down at her feet, and saw they hadn’t moved at all. The hit was so negated, that her long dress would not flap in the wind. Finally, she turned to look at him.

“That was once. You may try again, or your friends may try. I care not.”

Frightened by the look of absolute detachment in her eyes, the first man took a few steps back.

“She... She’s gotta be using some kinda magic!” he shouted.

“Then let’s all get her!!!” shouted the leader of the remaining three.

All three rushed in, with a polearm, a sword, and a pair of daggers as their main means of attack. Coordinated, all three hit her at the same time. Just as before, all motion of weapons ceased the moment they hit Muira’s skin or cloth. The man with the daggers made the mistake of letting his second dagger follow through immediately after. He had circled around behind her and to the left, so Muira took a step back. Landing her heel on his foot, a “crunch” was even heard by the humans in the wagon as several of his bones broke. As he screamed, she followed up with an elbow to the gut, which lead into crushing his nose with the back of her hand. The fact that she did all this without moving her head or eyes just made the acts even more frightening for the other three combatants. The man with the daggers stepped backwards. Everyone stood still, and the only sounds were injured man’s crying. The bandit leader gripped his sword as he considered his options.

“She can’t do that to all of us! All we need to do is dogpile her! LET’S GO!”

The three uninjured bandits attacked again. The one with daggers stumbled backwards.

Muira allowed their weapons to land, only to stop their motion once again. The man with the club expected this, and immediately pulled his weapon backwards, and attempted a second hit. As the weapon swung back, Muira leaned forward, and grabbed the leader by the shirt. She headbutted him as she pulled him in, and then rotated her torso to use him to block the club. She then shoved the leader into the clubber, with enough time to move out of the way of the halberd’s second stab. This time, the holder followed through, so she grabbed the weapon just behind the metal headpiece, and broke the wood effortlessly with her right hand. A few

moments later, as the rest of the user's body passed her, she let out a quick left jab to his torso, breaking through the center of the pole as she did so. He fell backwards with the impact.

The leader and the clubber were on the ground, but the leader slowly got up.

"Okay, we surrender. You can go."

Muira's response was spoken with the coldness of the abyss.

"Who said you could surrender?"

She took a step towards the leader, and with the other foot gave a swift kick to his hunched-forward chest. He rose a few feet into the air, then dropped back down.

The first man had tossed aside his club, and was kneeling, with his head on the ground.

"Please stop..."

"You were already given a chance."

With cold eyes, Muira began moving her foot over his head, seemingly ready to crush it. As this was happening, the man who had fallen to her right side, now behind her, had picked up the head of his halberd, and holding it with both hands, took a jump to bring it into her skull. Muira sensed this, and shifted her weight so that she fell sideways, which then turned into a roll, which she got up from. The halberd head went completely through the kneeling man's head.

Back in the carriage, Henrietta vomited.

The man with the broken nose had been inching his way towards the carriage, and now came against the invisible wall. He pounded at it in frustration.

Muira now was looking at the leader and his relatively uninjured friend, ignoring the one by the wall.

"Y-you killed him!" said the leader

"I did no such thing" she said, with detachment. This, too, was rehearsed.

The leader and his cohort looked at each other, and then nodded. They ran away in opposite directions. Muira opted not to follow, and instead walked calmly back toward the carriage. She came across the man with the broken nose, clawing desperately at the barrier. Without a motion, she disengaged it, and he fell forward. He was in her way, so she kicked him enough to flip him over, then continued to the carriage.

Everette opened the door for her, face full of joy and admiration. Henrietta was still a little unwell from the gore, but was otherwise incredibly impressed. She very quickly tried to mop up the vomit before crossing back to her seat. With a pointed finger and flick of the wrist, Muira erased all traces of the sickness from both the interior and Henrietta's rag. She sat down, and snapped her fingers to return the driver to normal time.

"It's over! We can go now!" shouted the young mistress.

The driver was completely confused, but then whipped the horses back into action. Muira spoke once they were in motion.

"Well. I was mistaken."

"See! Trust your master, Muira! I know best!" She folded her arms and nodded. Her lips were still curled well up into a smile, however.

"About what were you mistaken, ma'am?" Henri asked

"I had previously claimed that I would not find such an exercise entertaining. She insisted I would."

A little bit of terror filled the hearts of Mike and Henri.

Once the carriage had gotten sufficiently far away, a ghastly hand of nothingness rose around the bloody-nosed man, and pulled him down into the void. He could not resist. The other two living bandits were still running, but at the same time, hands of the void pulled them into oblivion as well. In order to protect her source of entertainment, Muira could not allow witnesses. She briefly considered the notion of toying with her food, but then decided that the usual horror of infinite nothing would be a sufficient fate.

An hour later, Everette had a thought.

“Oh, Muira, you DID wipe their memories, right?”

Within their own personal voids, the three bandits forgot what they had done, why they were injured, or how they got there. The only thing in reality that one can compare this to is being dropped into a lake of acid to slowly disintegrate, and then someone using powerful healing magic on you without removing you from the lake of acid. Except this was happening to their minds.

“Of course.”

Finally, Everette Von Alamere arrived at Asplund Academy. The carriage was directed to a pre-determined