

A Tale of the Final Requiem: The Price of Trust

Prologue

Back in the year 2043, something that changed the history of humanity occurred: the rise of the first hero, the Iron Dragon. One day, out of thin air, the hero thought to be a simple work of fiction became real, right before everyone's eyes. He was powerful enough to do whatsoever he wanted, his fist said to be capable of matching the strength and speed of lightning itself, a god among men. And yet, he only stopped small and big crimes, locked up thousands of corrupt officials, drug lords, crime lords and terrorists. He aided the police of New York and the United Nations while hidden behind a golden armor, being human despite his almighty strength. Governments feared him, while the people crawling in the filth saw him as a guiding light with his so-called 'golden dragon sight'; his 'gift'. Eyes capable of manipulating all elements of nature and matter itself, and to the question of many, he still chose to be that which humanity needed most in an era where the concept of equality no longer existed.

After his appearance, many others began to develop what people considered, at first, mutations. They were later called 'gifts'. Similar to his, but always inferior. These gifts granted control over elements of nature, usually being one or two; increased speed, physical strength, the ability to cure the ill, even advanced cognitive functions. Most of these people followed the Iron Dragon's ideals without question, calling themselves heroes, fighting against those with or without 'gifts' that posed a threat to the concept of peace that he had revealed to the world, not by his orders, but only due to his example of the endless pursuit of justice. Not once did he speak publicly, not once did the dragon reach for help, and yet he had already changed everything, amassing thousands under his ideal image.

He abided by the rules of men, imprisoning rather than killing, understanding rather than judging, the pinnacle of human values, someone that, in the eyes of the skeptical, could never be human. He was hope itself, a mere instrument of justice dedicated to its people, one who gave and asked nothing in return. Many heroes rose from his light; some even trusted allies of his, such as the Gray Wolf and the Blue Bolt; even to them, he seemed unreachable, a nameless messiah.

After almost 30 years of relentless battle against society itself, purging it from its parasites, he stopped completely, almost disappearing, no longer aiding humanity's cause against its tyrants that had made life on Earth miserable and had enslaved its inhabitants for decades. Few know why, while many speculate as to why his light faded away without notice.

Although many theories exist, the most logical one was that he had grown old, for as strong as he was, he was not going to be able to live forever; he was still just a mortal man.

After years of his disappearance, in the year 2070, the sky became red, and the clouds disappeared while an ominous black hole swallowed the sun; it was an event called The Abnormality. The clouds had turned into ash, while fire began to rain over the Earth, volcanoes erupted, and the oceans evaporated in a matter of hours.

The black hole swallowed the planet entirely, and just 1/20th of humanity from various countries managed to escape in spaceships created by The United Nations with the aid of The Iron Dragon, destined to reach another planet that resembled Earth.

The Iron Dragon was last seen that day, his will clashing against the forces of nature. He died fighting the Void of Extinction itself, keeping it at bay and buying time for at least few to escape their fate. He died a savior whose name now has been forgotten, the only trace of him being the legacy he left on the few survivors of Earth, the spark that he ignited and would never be forgotten.

Humanity was still not free of conflict, as destiny once again sought to rob them of everything. Soon after the arrival of humanity to the unknown planet, The War of the Monarchs took place. A war born of no selfish desires of a single man, but of the primordial instinct of survival.

After fighting during decades for the planets' control against The Monarchs, its original inhabitants, the war finally ended, and the city and nation of Lux was officially born, named after the dim glow of hope given by the Iron Dragon. At last, what some had thought to be a dream became real. Although small in numbers, finally all races and cultures of humanity coexisted under one flag, under the rule of chosen heroes who could prove themselves worthy of carrying the Iron Dragon's legacy, those who would protect humanity's future at any cost.

Now, it is the year 2095. Humanity has reached peace at the cost of blood. Heroes can finally rest, and humanity mourns that which was lost while a busy and unforgiving life awaits them in the pursuit of the restoration of humanity.

Edward Yoshimura, the current king of Lux, and hero of the Monarch War, now rules over a humanity shattered and ruptured; a new humanity consumed by fear.

Sygrid Imperia walked with an unconcerned step through the narrow and cobblestone streets of Lux, making guard rounds around the rustic city alongside her trusty silver spear.

Her long wavy blond hair was tied in a single wide braid that went all the way down to her lower back, following the wind as her emerald eyes shined with an energetic passion that reflected her youthful ambition. She wore a loose white silk blouse with bishop sleeves alongside a brown leather corset and tight black leather pants accompanied by long brown heeled boots.

All those who saw Sygrid fell to her captivating and peculiar presence; she inspired confidence in her straight posture and imposed respect with her tall height. Her natural pink thin lips, pale skin and sharp yet strong features caught everyone's attention. The busy streets of Lux would always bring a smile to her face, this occasion not being the exception. Her blue and silver armor shined brightly as she heard everyone planning eagerly for tomorrow's tiresome work, hearing the carpenters work, other heroes walk with their heavy armors, children playing in the streets; to her, it all seemed a dream.

As she walked, she could not unsee those who stared at her, whatever the reason they had to do so. Her face quickly became flustered as her confidence wavered, not used to her recent rise in popularity after The War of the Monarchs, which ended a year back.

Despite her many thoughts, her attention came to two young brothers who cried silently on the street near her favorite flower store. It was the only store stocked up with her favorite flower, the creamy-green *victoria* flowers.

In a rush, she bought two *victorias* that she held delicately despite her muscular and tall physique. Startled, the children stared at her as she approached. Without a single word needed, she smiled and kneeled to look at them with a tender and compassionate gaze.

Her eyes shined in a green light as she stared with fascination at the fear within the children; it was as if it were tiny droplets of gray ink on their pure white bodies, that which she called the soul.

She remembered her own self, who once stood alone in the cold streets of the growing utopia of Lux, unable to remember the colors of her own soul; unable to understand her 'gift'. The sunset became nostalgic, and she waved at them.

"How can I help you, little ones? Where are your parents?" Sygrid asked gently and with a wide smile, looking into their eyes with confidence.

"We...we got lost..." the older brother said, trying to put up a tough expression for her sister's sake and making Sygrid laugh as she gave them one of the flowers.

"Here, this is a token of bravery from the Vanguard of Victory Light. No need to cry," Sygrid said, perplexed at the light of the children, their souls colored in the rare pure white of innocence. She saw and felt it as they held the flowers, making the droplets of black ink disappear, revealing hope within them; hope she understood and felt herself as if she were them. "*I still cannot get used to it,*" she thought to herself quickly, overwhelmed by the children's emotions.

"Y-you really are her... Sygrid Imperia!" the younger sister exclaimed with eyes filled with admiration and trust. "She helped dad deliver his goods a week ago!"

"I did?" she said embarrassed at her horrible memory.

"He said you were the strongest hero on Lux, even stronger than... what was his name?" the girl questioned.

"Come with me, you two. I will accompany you through all of Lux if needed until we find your mommy and daddy, do not worry," Sygrid affirmed. She quickly picked up and carried both kids on her shoulders as if they did not weight a single gram, offering them quite the view from up top. They laughed with her as they felt the wind on their faces while the three of them walked through the busy streets, making all eyes fall towards them with tenderness and admiration, all of the prying eyes seeing her as a prime example of a true hero. Jokes came and went by as their once sad expression disappeared alongside their adventure throughout the growing city of Lux. The three of them dined together, played on the various fountains, and ran from one side of the city to the other, all while Sygrid still directed her attention towards finding their parents.

After a few hours, they reached the main street of Lux, the busiest and most clustered avenue in the city. It gave a clear view of the white and golden castle of Lux, still under construction. The three of them saw hundreds of workers removing the cobblestone floor and paving the street with asphalt cement, something Sygrid found strange, it being a material only described in books.

As they approached the castle, a man and a woman rushed towards them from the far end of the avenue, leaving behind the unfinished construction of a golden statue resembling a knight holding a long staff with its ends shaped like dragon heads. Sygrid could not take her eyes off it as the kids ran away from her arms, leaving her behind and falling into their parents' care.

It was the statue of the new king, Edward Yoshimura, who became the leader of the prestigious hero clan Yoshimura after the death of his father Katsuo Yoshimura, during the war. It was the statue of a man standing firm without weakness, his face covered by a helmet shaped like a golden dragon that allowed no fear to be shown as he held onto his miraculous dragon staff with an unbreakable will. The man that single handedly changed the tide of The War of the Monarchs in favor of humanity with his unmatched intellect and monstrous strength worthy of the title 'The Sage of Dragons'.

She quickly snapped out of it, leaving the golden shine of the statue aside as she walked towards the worried parents that hugged the two children as if it was the last time they would ever see them. Life in Lux was a dream no one was willing to give up. The pain and suffering were part of a reality that had been left behind not too long ago. It was a nightmare no one wanted to live again, herself included.

Sygrid saw the two kids off with a smile and a quick reminder to their parents to be more careful now that the city had begun to grow exponentially due to the King's efforts. Denying every shape or form of compensation the father offered, she said her goodbyes and received the bows of the children's parents whose light shined in a beautiful pure white light filled with happiness and tranquility.

Under the night sky, she quickly began walking towards her home just as a royal guard appeared on the avenue, making everyone whisper in controversy as the sound of their gold and silver medieval inspired armors echoed in the street.

The guard turned to the statue and vowed for a few seconds before he continued walking towards her at an increasing speed. His subordinates followed his conduct, vowing even lower than their commander, and offering a prayer to the statue, making Sygrid's eyes become tainted by small black droplets of sadness.

"Lady Imperia?" the royal guard asked as the whole convoy arrived in her presence and quickly vowed to her, while the leader and guard himself remained standing merely lowering his head slightly, something Sygrid found awkwardly refreshing.

"No need to vow, gentlemen," Sygrid said quickly and with a smaller smile. "Is this about the report from last week? I... well... the report that I forgot to deliver?" she began to ramble still maintaining a more serious tone of voice. She glanced at the guard's rank granted by the Queen of Lux herself and realized that this was a serious matter.

She figured that he was someone that was certainly here either to arrest her or something more severe, to what she thought was in her best interest to ramble and lighten the mood to wipe out the long faces off them.

“I am afraid that I am here due to a more important and dire notice, My Lady. The King himself has requested your presence at the castle, at once. He emphasized that it was urgent,” the royal guard said without stuttering, not falling for her game and turning rapidly towards the castle, having now finished his duty. “I will escort you there,” he added without looking at her or willing to listen to her, beginning to march as the rest of his followers surrounded her, guarding her with their shields shaped like a dragon scale and European-style swords and spears.

“Thank you...” Sygrid said, slightly troubled and confused as she began to walk while looking down into the shattered stone floor, remembering their first official meeting eight months ago, a few days after his coronation and official marriage to Elizabeth I. The coronation of a 24-year-old king.

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