

THE QUARRY

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Co'viri & Sera

The gates to Trinawine Cemetery stand before me. It's surrounded by the townhouses of my home city, Lundinium. The gate squeaks as a gust of wind barrels through the cemetery. The flames flicker on my staff, made of oak with a crystal at the summit. Some of the leaves that litter our path sail through the air as the wind sends a chill down my spine. Sera, who decided to accompany me, snuggles underneath my cloak. She gives me such a warm feeling in my heart. It's hard to believe that we were just friends for most of our relationship. Now, she is in love with me and I am in love with her.

We were only eleven years old when Sera and I first met. She was sitting right in front of me in our first class of Elemental Magic at the Academia Magus. Our professor, an elderly man in red robes, asked us what we thought of using the elements as a magical weapon. Sera was the first with her hand up. My hand shot up as well, but was hidden behind her hand, also raised. When she spoke, my ears felt

like they went to heaven. Her voice was soft yet sharp and clear. Her knowledge was apparent when she answered the question with even more than I knew. When that class was over, I walked up to her.

‘That was a good answer,’ I said. That was when I saw her beautiful smile for the first time.

‘Thanks, um...’ she said.

‘Co’viri.’

‘Sera.’

Ever since that day, the two of us kept each other company. We were considered inseparable by some of our friends, a notion that rang true when we realised our feelings for each other when we were sixteen. Since then, I have never had a thought that wasn’t about Sera.

‘We need to split up, Co’viri,’ Sera says as she breaks my trip to the past. She is right; it would be faster to locate Helmut Grinvolt’s tomb if the two of us cover smaller sections of the cemetery separately.

‘Take the east side, I’ll take the west side,’ I say. She releases her hold on my arm and runs to the right. I walk to the left.

A lot of these gravestones corrode as fungi take over them. Some of them are in such poor shape they are impossible to read. I brush off each one I encounter. Does it read Helmut Grinvolt? No. How about this one? Nope. Is this even the right Trinawine Cemetery? It has to be.

I gaze upon Sera, who is scanning each gravestone on the other side. She isn’t having much luck either. Helmut Grinvolt must have wanted to keep these staves well hidden. Then again, they are considered the most powerful staves in the world. According to the story, he created the staves for his wife as well as for himself. He spent years in his workshop, carving wood from an elder tree and searching for the perfect pair of crystals. This is where the power comes from, as it is said that the love between two people draws out its power.

She is staring at another gravestone when I squat down next to her.

‘Why are you helping me?’ I ask her.

‘That’s an odd question to ask, Co’viri,’ she said.

‘I know, but you could have said no.’

‘True.’ She averts her gaze upon me. ‘I have two reasons. The first is my love for you. Ever since I fell for you, I can’t let go of you. It hurts my heart when we are apart.’

‘I can say the same thing,’ I add.

“Then there is my family. My baby brother has gotten ill, a rare disease that will eventually kill him, Co’viri. He is so young.”

I grab Sera and wrap her around my arms. Tears flow down her cheeks as she rests her head on my chest. She continues, although her voice is muffled a little.

‘Possessing one of these staves could give me the power to cure him, as everything else has failed. My family and you are the most important people in my life. This staff could protect all of you.’

I smile as Sera finishes talking. This is out of selflessness, better than one of my reasons for the staff.

‘We better keep looking,’ I tell her. We scan the gravestones together. Again, we come up short as we pass most of the gravestones. Where is the gravestone? Why isn’t it here? This is frustrating me.

‘Co’viri, here,’ Sera says. She stares at a rather clean gravestone. I read the name: Helmut Grinvolt. This is it. Sera found it. I smile and kiss Sera on the cheek.

‘Thank you, Sera,’ I say. ‘Now... something on this gravestone must be the key to the location of the staves.’

‘Be careful, Co’viri,’ Sera says as I run my fingers over the gravestone. As I run my fingers over his name, a green light emits from the letters. I take a step back as the whole gravestone is covered by green light. It flashes, forcing Sera and I to cover our eyes. The ground begins to shake. The dirt of the grave starts to sink. Stone stairs begin to appear. Once the dirt disappears, a small corridor reveals itself. This must be the entrance to Grinvolt’s tomb. I quickly glance at Sera. She nods. We must investigate this, so I lead the two of us right into the corridor.

The corridor is tight, small and dark. I lead the both of us further into the abyss of darkness. I sincerely hope I did not lead Sera to any danger. I periodically look back at her. She is always smiling. Is this her way to show there is hope in this situation? At times, I would wonder why I decided to undertake this journey. At first, the power the staves give to their bearers can never be described with mere words. But power isn't everything to me anymore. It was when I saw Sera's smile that I found a new reason.

The staves float in the middle of the chamber as we enter it. The circular room is all stone. Our footsteps echo throughout the room. The emptiness feels wrong. Something should be protecting the chamber and its contents. But we encounter no resistance. Was this too easy?

Sera approaches the two staves. She examines the neatly carved wood. A small white crystal sits atop of the staffs, glowing quite brightly. I approach the staffs, holding onto Sera's shoulders. Sera turns to me.

'We found them,' she tells me. 'We have found them.'

'Should we grab them?' I ask her. She simply turns around and hugs me. I felt her lips locking with mine. Her tongue moves around in my mouth. A euphoric sensation.

'This is what we have been looking for.'

'I don't think we should just simply grab them.'

I continue to stare at the glow from the crystal. It's pulsating a bright white light. My eyes don't want to turn away at all. I want to reach out for it, but something is stopping me. My gaze returns to Sera.

"Hmmm... I agree. Grinvolt has hidden them, yet getting them was quite a breeze."

Sera is pacing all over the chamber. We are so close, yet so far. I must touch it. I want its power. No, I need its power. I reach out for one of the staves and grab it. The wood is smooth and light. I can feel a stream of energy channelling through my body. I feel more energetic. I just want to cast spells. Doesn't matter what they are, I just want spells.

‘Co’viri, no!’ I hear Sera shouting. Her footsteps echo as I see her rushing to my side. I raise my hand.

‘Sera, I feel fine. In fact, I feel better than fine.’

‘Really? Should I... reach for the other one?’

I give Sera the go ahead. While one mage holding one of these staves is powerful, two who are close must be unstoppable. Sera slowly approaches the staff. She reaches out with caution. Does she fear some sort of consequence? When I did it, nothing happened. She should be fine. She clenches the staff and pulls it towards her. I could see the astonishment on her face as the energy of the staff flows through her body.

‘Grinvolt should have protected these better,’ she tells me with a smile across her face. She comes to my side once more and embraces me. My world is complete. The love of my life is by my side with the most powerful staff in the world of Gaia. I grab her waist and pull her even closer. I can feel her tender breasts upon my chest. Her soft lips occupy my own. I knew she wanted a powerful me. With this staff, we shall be unstoppable.

A gust of wind interrupts our passionate embrace. The torches surrounding the chamber extinguish. Sera and I hold the staves tightly. The crystals glow a white light, illuminating our line of sight. I turn my head all over the chamber. It is still empty, except for Sera. She also scans the chamber. This is quite perplexing. Who or what is doing this?

A sinister laugh echoes through the chamber. I take a step back, taking Sera with me. We hold our hands as we search for the source. It rings throughout the chamber again. Where is it coming from? Is it the staves? They say searching for lost treasures can turn you into a psychotic mage. All of the students and professors thought I was crazy when I told them I was going to conduct this journey. I can’t wait to say that they were wrong.

I raise my newly acquired staff. A bright flame emits, further lighting up the chamber. I notice that the door is still open. Relief spreads throughout my body.

‘Sera, through the door,’ I tell Sera. She nods and we make a run for it. As soon as we are about to reach the door, it slams shut on us. This must be the defensive

charms placed upon the chamber. As my mind brings in thoughts of defeat, a deep, cold voice echoes through the chamber.

‘So, who has come to take away the great Staves of Grinvolt?’

I turn to Sera. Her head is staring at the ceiling, but a frown paints across her face.

‘I am Sera Vintamosa, daughter of Gregor,’ she shouts. I smile and nod, knowing what I need to do.

‘I am Co’viri Bolzano, son of Ygridi.

A fog fills the chamber. A human figure approaches. It is a man, taller than the both of us and long, bushy facial hair. He wears a green robe with a hood covering his hair. He raises his arm. A staff materialises into his extended right hand. The fog stops as he removes his hood, revealing an elderly man with grey hair.

‘I am Helmut Grinvolt, keeper of this chamber and all that is contained in it,’ he speaks in that cold tone. As the chamber re-lights itself, I point my staff in his direction. Sera raises her staff and points it to Grinvolt.

‘Grinvolt? Are you not... dead?’ Sera says.

‘I do not possess my original body, rather, my soul lives on through an unwilling volunteer,’ Grinvolt says. ‘You have, in your possession, unworthy ones, the greatest staves Gaia has ever seen. You cannot bear the power it produces.’

‘We shall see,’ Sera adds. Sera lights up her staff with fire and launches a fireball towards Grinvolt. Grinvolt summons a dome of blue light. The fireball strikes the dome, disintegrating. Grinvolt is untouched.

‘A mere fireball? Try to use it properly.’

‘You mean like this?’ Sera launches another fireball. This time, Grinvolt is struck on his chest. He is pushed back quite far. He lands with a thunderous thud. He gets up slowly, clutching his chest.

‘Not bad. Not enough to do anything, but you are catching on,’ Grinvolt teases Sera. ‘Now it is my turn.’

Grinvolt summons lightning from the tip of his staff. It ejects and heads towards Sera. She erects a blue dome of her own. I enter it as the bolt of lightning strikes it.

‘Co’viri, our spells can pass through the dome. Cast something on him,’ Sera informs me while holding the dome. I nod and slam my newly acquired staff into the ground and hold it there. The ground beneath us begins to shake. Grinvolt still casts the bolt of lightning and just stands there. One bolt pierces through Sera’s shield and hits her on her arm. Sera dispels her shield, panting. In an instant, however, two coned spikes of rock, one beneath him and one above him, impale him as I raise my staff in the air. Blood drips down the lower coned spike of rock.

Cracks begin to show from above and below, starting from my earth spell. The chamber begins to shake. Rocks tumble down from the ceiling.

‘We need to go,’ I say, grabbing Sera’s hand. We both sprint for the entrance. A big chunk of rock narrowly misses us, forcing a sudden stop of momentum. We make our way around the rock and continue for the door. The stone door is stuck. I try to open it to no avail. Rock continues to fill the chamber.

‘Ready?’ I ask Sera as I point my staff to the door. She nods and does the same thing with her staff. Raw energy exerts from the staves, exploding the stone door. We rush through the opening as the corridor begins to fill with dirt and rock. A light pierces through ahead of us. My legs pump as hard as I can.

I make that final leap with Sera still holding my hand. The corridor that led to the chamber is no more, collapsing in upon itself. In fact, the chamber is now a pile of rubble. I lie on the ground as the shaking stops. I turn to Sera and hold her. My face snuggles up to hers.

‘Are you alright?’ I whisper in her ear. She gives me a smile. I rise to my feet and extend my arm to Sera. She grabs it. I pull her up. As she brushes herself, I take one glance upon the staff in my hand. Our mission is a success. The crystal still flashes white. I turn to Sera once more. I raise my staff in triumph. She does the same thing.

‘We have what we searched for,’ I say to her. ‘What now?’

‘I must return home, Co’viri,’ she tells me. ‘I have a brother to cure. Come with me, will you?’

I nod my head. I hold her hand and we walk out of the cemetery. As we walk, a strange, tingling sensation travels throughout my body. All of a sudden, I feel like I

have more energy, similar to the feeling in the chamber. All I want to do is exert the energy, use powerful spells. No, I must not. What is... this sensation?