

"Now then," said the purple vixen as she looked around at her materials organized in a semi-round table in front of her "Let's begin."

She walked over to the first table where two small roses in different pots waited for her. She placed a hand over each one, the left was sickly and in need of care while the other was well groomed and flourishing, a few petals had already fallen atop the soil.

"Heal," she said to herself. A fireball formed in Dria's palm before taking the shape of a fire bird. This majestic, warm colored bird emitted no heat and took flight, circling the sickly rose. As the bird flew, it emitted a faint ray of light against the pedals, leaving ashes of its form in its wake. The rose began to gain its colors, the pedals became lush red, the thorns a vibrant green, and it lost its hunch, looking straight up and bloomed in seconds. Dria stopped and looked at the healthy rose.

"Decay," she spoke softly. A purple fireball formed in her palm before taking the shape of a bird. It flew around majestically as her other bird. However, the healthy flower began to shrivel, losing its leaves and a few of the rose pedals that went from red to black. The base of the stem broke and the flower tumbled over, some of the pedals falling off the pot and onto the table. It shriveled up more before all the energy and nutrients were sucked from its body, leaving it no better than a lifeless prune.

"From heal to drain, from flourish to decay, I shall uncover the dark arts of both bloods."

She went over to her bookcase and pulled out a notebook, recording what she'd just witness. The next table had a dragon's arm bone she'd receive on one of her travels with her sister, an alchemy table to test some of the new ingredients she gathered, a tea set for her break, and a book with the latest teachings in physical, psychological, and spiritual torture. The book was hard to acquire but she managed to bribe her way to getting it in the black market.

"Everything I need is set in place," she looked over at the corner of the room. A sizable pool 10 feet into the floor, glowing green and blue with some of the chemical she mixed in, was her final test. She walked over to it and wrote in her journal. "And here, I shall fully master death, and see the other side," she said to herself. "One of the oldest, forbidden powers of a phoenix, the ability to travel to the land of the dead and return. Potentially with a soul." She walked back to the bookshelf and grabbed a second book, opening it to read the knowledge deserted within the deepest dunes of Egypt. As she read its contents she took notes and smiled, most of it being what she already knew, while the rest she knew what she needed to acquire for later.

"With this, I should be able travel to the land of the dead. I could even collect wicked souls from the plains to bring back with ease, perfect. It looks like providing a sacrifice will be required. I'll have to remember that whenever I encounter another pentagon organization member. I'm sure they won't mind a missing person or two." She closed the book and stretched. "There's still more ingredients I require. I suppose it's time I head back to Egypt. I need to go deeper into one of the Pharaoh's crypts. A bone or two of one of their long deceased worshipers should be enough for

what I need.”