

Chapter Zero: The Causation

A blast as loud as 130 decibels wouldn't normally wake up Moazzam, but that peculiar day it did. It was 27th of August, 5211, he was at the headquarters, and it was a state of war. He rumbled out of his quarters, situated in the basement, to inquire about the ongoing situation, i.e., the blast.

To his relief, it was just a failed experiment. About 2 and a half miles from the HQ, Professor Zubeida, the legend and hero of the empire of mages, and a great witch, was working on a magical mixture to improve her battalion's productivity, and consequently, lead the mages to victory.

The mages were short on time, and she was aware of that, like any other high ranking officer of the empire. The Axillaries had already pushed the mages on the brink: exhausted their resources, wiped out a quarter of their army, and took over most of their fertile land. Hence, the mages was forced to over-work themselves, and go all out.

"Lord Moazzam, your father has summoned you at his office, it's urgent!" came a voice from behind, it was the Chief Wizard's secretary.

"I'll be there in a bit." he responded. "What would that old man want from me at a time like this?" he pondered.

The chief wizard's, or rather, the emperor's office wasn't like what one would expect it to be. Considering the era they were in, it was uniquely old fashioned. The room had concrete brick walls and each of the edges were illuminated by lanterns. On the left corner of the room there was a huge shelf, stuffed with books written by the chief wizard himself, in a period of about 739 years. There was a small fireplace at the right corner, with a boiling pot over it. His wife was usually boiling and making random mixtures of mana, coming up with unique recipes, in order to pass her retirement days. The withering couple also owned a cat, a black one, that is.

"You've arrived, my son!" the king proclaimed, "Better late than never."

"Shut it old man! I really have to be somewhere at this very moment. Whatever you want with me, you better be done with it quick."

"Seems like you still won't respect your father, even in his last moments..."

"What do you mean?"

"You have but one place to go. I've asked Aimen to take over in your place. At the meantime, I have a task for you, something you, and only you can accomplish." he said pleadingly, while handing over a sealed envelope to Moazzam. "Herein you'll find all the details of the task. Get to the task immediately, and report back to me once you're done."

Moazzam seemed in anguish after going through the contents of the file. He screamed back at the emperor, "What's the big idea? Why did you go so far as to generate paths? Just to kidnap a measly little kid?"

"This war is ours, by hook or by crook. You'll enter the enemy's palace, and you will get the kid."

The emperor's son took a deep sigh, to calm himself down. Then he continued, softly, "Given the number of paths you've generated for me, this task is pretty doable. However, such

a thing must have cost you a lot of mana. What are you planning to do? Why put the lives of yourself, and the people on the front lines at risk. Just what do you wish to achieve?”

“Our forces will be retreating soon, but first, you’ll have to bring the child to me. The Axillaries have defeated us, beat us up badly. We may have lost the battle, but I’m not going to lose this war, even if it costs me my life. The moral principles we live by, shall stand, and the dreams that keep pushing us, shall live on. Now go my son, lead us to our victory.” concluded the emperor, with an optimistic tone.

Although not the most proficient in magic manipulation, Moazzam was regarded as a mage whose skills were second to none. He was the only one alive amongst the only three people that could ever travel through time, using magic. Unlike his father, who was a scientist, he was more of a combat type, who since early days focused on using his magic to enhance his abilities in hand-to-hand combat. Much of his youth was spent spying on the Axillaries and rouge mage groups, which made him an expert infiltrator too. Hence, he was chosen for this job. Emperor Omar (Moazzam’s father) had formed intelligence groups to infiltrate into the Axillarian territory, to kidnap young children from there, and bring them to the headquarters.

The mages saw this as their last resort, their only hope for victory. A great mage of the past, rather, the founder of all magic, left behind a power at his deathbed, in order to protect his kind in time of crisis. However, there was a catch: for some uncertain reasons, that power couldn’t be used by the mage bloodline. Hence, that power had to be broken down and implanted into humans other than the mages. The emperor’s pick, was the children of Axillaries.

The exact children to be kidnapped had been pre-decided by the emperor and his advisory unit. These weren’t ordinary children. They were children that held immense wisdom, fortitude, strength, and sense of passion. Take for instance, two isolated orphans at the bay managed to down 12 mages who came to kidnap them. Those kids were in their pre-teens, with no powers whatsoever. Let aside kids, no ordinary adult amongst the Axillaries or anywhere could’ve achieved that feat. The child appointed to Moazzam was just as unique, if not more. However, he was an infant, and considering the fact that he was the son of the Emperor of the Axillarian Empire, kidnapping him should’ve been as much harder.

One of the paths led him directly to the interior of the castle. However, that was the easiest step. He now had to locate the child, and kidnap him, without getting detected, and return with the baby unharmed. Moreover, the previous spy unit failed to come back with the intel on the blueprints of the castle (they most probably were killed by the guards), leaving Moazzam to figure out his way around the palace on his own. His initial plan was to impersonate himself as a pet or a security guard, but he had to first confirm, even if they were allowed in the palace. He commenced the operation with a unique pattern of hand signs to apply his magic. With this first magic he created a barricade, which would prevent any sound he makes directly or indirectly within one meter radius to escape for 20 minutes. In other words, no one could hear his footsteps, his speech, or even his breathing. Keeping in mind that he couldn’t use temporary invisibility with sound deflection, and that everyone was in their rooms leaving the corridors empty, he thought of blocking sound as the most plausible option. Though things may get bad for him if someone were to come out of the room and see him. He had a plan for that too: undoing the sound deflection magic and applying the invisibility one, while staying still, to curtail his presence completely. He kept scavenging the rooms one by one, in search of the child. Unfortunately, as smart as he was, he was a little careless.

It slipped his mind that as sounds could not escape the barrier, they couldn't enter from the outside either. He kept looking for the baby, while paying no heed to his surroundings and letting his guard down. As soon as his magic wore off, he could hear people rushing towards him. It seemed like someone had spotted him and called for reinforcements, before taking immediate action. Meanwhile, he could also hear the baby crying at a distance, so here was his plan: taking down the guards, retrieving the baby, and making a swift escape using one of the paths his father had generated.

Unlike the mages, the Axillaries were masters of swordsmanship and even used bows and arrows. Furthermore, their weapons had advanced functionality. For instance, the arrows the guards threw at Moazzam illuminated from the front, and would cause a blast at contact. Moazzam was well aware of that, for he made sure to catch the arrows midair, and deactivated them before throwing them away. Such a thing were possible only if a limited number of arrows were hurled at him, and he knew things would get worse if more of these guards surrounded him. Hence, he decided to switch to the offence.

"Indeed, your weapons are scary. But you know of something scarier than that? Years ago, I went to a distant future, an era without mages and Axillaries, an era of just normal humans, humans of science. There I found the deadliest kind of weaponry, the likes of what you may have never seen before. Just one of those were enough to destroy this planet. I'll show you a glimpse of that era." claimed Moazzam, cockily.

He then proceeded with his hand signs and summoned a .45 Colt revolver, fully loaded. There were three guards present at the scene, and he shot all of them. The bullets were too fast for them to dodge.

"What sorcery is this?" inquired their waning captain, "I haven't seen anything like this before!"

"Oh and you never will! It's a secret between us both, that you'll soon take along with you to your grave." replied Moazzam, as the revolver disintegrated back to formlessness.

He had to take swift action, before further reinforcements arrive. He activated his invisibility magic, and walked silently, towards the sound. This magic would last only 5 minutes, so he had to be as fast as possible, without making a sound. The baby's room was left unguarded, with 2 nursing maids looking after the infant. No one would've expected a mage in the palace, first and foremost. And above all, no one expected the baby to be the target. Moazzam knocked both of the women unconscious, and approached the kid. As soon as he picked him, the baby's screams got all the more violent, threatening a furor in the palace. He managed to put up a sound barrier on the door, but unfortunately for him, he wasn't faster than the speed of sound. Moazzam had no other choice but to escape out of the window, for he could sense a large number of people approaching the room to ambush him.

The emperor of Axillaries, Taiyo, was aware of what was about to happen. Thus he waited in the courtyard, for Moazzam to arrive. He was a tall man with dark and silky long hair. He stood there shirtless, exposing his well-cut body, with a flaring sword on his left hand. His son was the most precious thing to him, and he would go to any lengths to protect his child.

"We meet again, Moazzam. Seems like you still haven't learnt your lesson yet." bragged Taiyo, furiously. His glare, and his stance could be compared to a lion full of grandeur, ready to tear off his prey. Moazzam was wary of this man, and feared him to the depths of his heart. Emperor even faced his .45 Colt revolver at their last fight, and countered each of the bullets with his sword, effortlessly.

Moazzam stood there, trembling with fear, hoping that the portal would drag him back to his home on time. He blurted out, “This war is ours, you arrogant prick, and so is this child.”

“As if I will allow that!” roared Taiyo, as he rushed towards Moazzam, swinging his sword. He attempted to snatch back his child, while blowing Moazzam away with his attack. “Tch! He got away.” he snapped. The building he swung his sword towards was put asunder, but Moazzam had escaped, along with the emperor’s son. He managed to summon the path back home just on time.

With the successful completion of this mission the mages began to retreat. This was one of the times where the Axillaries were left clueless, for only the mages had access to the paths, and were successfully escaping them using the paths the chief wizard had built. On the other hand, on his way back Moazzam had to make another stop at the bay to retrieve the 2 children who managed to take down an entire battalion of mages who came to kidnap them. As deadly as the children were, Moazzam was deadlier. He successfully took them down, and then, he made his return to the headquarters.

There the chief himself broke down the founding mage’s power into smaller portions, on the basis of their nature, and implanted them into each of the children. These powers took the form of eyeballs. The left eye of each child was taken out, and replaced with the eye containing this power. A lot of screams were heard, blood splattered around, but the job was done.

“Come along with me, my son. What I’m about to do now, will decide the fate of our race. And you’ll be the one who shall overlook this.” said the chief wizard, addressing his son.

“Do you even have the strength left to do anything else, old man?”

“You know well that I’m way past my limits, yet I keep myself going, for the sake of this empire, and for your sake, my son.”

They both started to elevate. They soared high, higher than the tallest mountain on the planet; higher than any person may have ever gone, in their era. It was as if, they both had the world at the palm of their hands.

“I’m not ready for this, father. I have a life to live, things to learn, worlds to explore. How can I carry such a burden: the dream and ideology of our ancestors? This empire will crumble under my watch. We still need you. Is this the only way?” complained the benevolent yet rude son, with a heavy heart.

“I have lived for this moment; I have lived for you. I was meant to be a withering leaf that will fertilize your growth. You, my son, must not underestimate yourself, for you will be the root and the stem of this empire. You shall be the one that changes our fate, carries on the dreams of our forefathers, and achieve what a loser like me couldn’t have ever done, even if he were given a million years. Now I’ll perform my final spell, and leave the rest to you.”

The old wizard’s shaky hands had stabilized for the first time in years, and he put up a combination of 17 hand signs, thus, completing his final spell. He opened his eyes and a shockwave passed throughout the planet, felt by every living being of that era, him being the source.

“The kids have been sent to a distant era. There, shall they grow, and there shall they rule. When the time is right, I want you to go there, and face them. I don’t know how, but they shall lead us to victory, with their powers, and with their wisdom.” murmured the wizard, with a feeble voice.

Tears rolled down Moazzam’s cheeks. He knew, this was the end of his father, and the start of a new era, where he will lead his people, while working tirelessly towards fulfilling his

father's will, which now had become his own. He sobbed, "You stupid old man, rest in peace, and leave the rest to me. I won't disappoint our race, our ancestors, and you. I will win this war, and finish what you started. You can count on me!"

"I love you my son; and I leave the rest to you." with these words, the era of this great mage came to an end. However, his end was the start of a new beginning. This magic he casted, would torment the generations following it, for centuries. And this, shall be the cause of a streak of tragedies that will follow. This moment of the human history, can be called "*the great Causation*".

Moazzam descended, slowly, but firmly, to the ground, with his dead father in his arms. His right-hand woman, Aimen, now the chief advisor to the new emperor, stood there, waiting for him. "Welcome back Moazzam! This sure did take a while." she blurted, "others are waiting for you. We've to host the successor's ceremony, and then the crown, and....and then your father's funer--"

"Cut it out woman! I'm doing away with all this bullshit. Get the preparations for my father's funeral done immediately."

"Okay the successor's ceremony is understandable but you can't possibly accede to the throne without the crown. It's part of our tradition."

"These traditions have brought nothing but disdain to our empire since antiquity. What worth is this crown? It's just a piece of gold."

"The importance of the crown comes not from its composition, but what it means to us. It's a symbol. It symbolizes our existence, and the blood and sweat of our ancestors."

"The symbol lies not in a measly crown, but in our people. How must I wear this crown of gold when people in the farthest corner of my kingdom sleep hungry? I shall not wear it! I respect my father, but I disapprove of his ways. This is my kingdom, and things here will go the way I want."

"What should we do with the crown then, and do you think the nobles really will agree to your ideology?"

"They are my business. I will convince them, and they will have to comply. If they don't, I'll wipe each and every single one of them and their families out of existence, so no one would be left to carry their name, and bear vengeance upon me. As for the crown, sell its emeralds, melt the gold, and add the wealth gathered in the treasury. It'll be used for public welfare."

"Just what are you planning to do?" she inquired, disapprovingly.

"The reason beings as pathetic as the Axillaries managed to step on us is this existing system. I'll drag these entitled nobles, including myself, down to the level of a common man, so no difference in privilege or rights exist between all. I too shall come under the law, and with that, I'll ensure our kingdom reaches heights never perceived before. We may not need the power of those children, then." With these words, he laid his father onto the carriage, and walked into his room.

The promising magic, casted by Lord Omar, and the political upheaval led by the new emperor Moazzam, marks the beginning of a new era, an era of bloodshed, tragedy, wars, and mass slaughter. Hereby starts a tale of struggle between the mages, the Axillaries, and the humans of science.