

A Trio Of Mercenaries

A Tale of Mana & Humans

Throughout the ages, *mana* has been the source of life. Mana comes from all sorts of things. From the sky to the earth, from the earth to the land and, well, life, from that life to humans and animals. The humans have a way to manipulate that mana for their survival. The technique of manipulating mana is called *magic*. Such a feat they have created. To save themselves and bring others to ruin is quite impressive and entertaining. However, what's surprising is how that technique works. When manipulating mana they don't take it and keep it, no no no, they actually return it for they know if they were to keep it they deprive themselves the beautiful life they have settled upon and created from it. Everything is a cycle. Alas, not all humans are like that. Some choose to take mana and never return it. However, that doesn't last, it will return to the world eventually. So, they devise a technique of their own where they take the mana and stuff it into stones, amulets, tomes, relics, and all sorts of items. Fortunately, they were found out but that didn't stop them for they did it in more secrecy. In response, a group of humans made it their job to put an end to these schemes for a brighter future. From that day on that group has grown and grown into the *Macvid Mercenaries*.

An Already Done Mission

“Our sources tell us that they're taking the *artificial mana* deposit to a warehouse in the neighboring town.” Charder said. Charder Macvid is the leader of the Macvid Mercenaries. Skilled with an axe, user of very powerful wind mana, a natural survivor, ruthless and has a bit of a fatherly aspect.

“Equinox, I want you and your team to go out there and secure the deposit. This is also a stealth mission so no reckless acts”

“When have I ever been reckless?” Equinox said. Equinox Hale is Charder's right-hand *woman*. Taught at a young age with an axe, develop using a sword, then a spear and stuck with it, for now. Specializes in restorative and strengthening support magic. Things don't usually go her way but always makes it out ok. She's quick to attack and quick to think, and extremely selfless to the point where it's self-sacrificing. Even when it comes to people she's close with. The leader type. Also a glutton.

“Your last rescue mission” He responded quickly.

“If I recall correctly that was a successful mission. You were there yourself! Might I add you were the person being rescued.” She gave a small smirk. She almost felt like she bested him.

“If I recall, all the entrances of the building were sealed off and the most logical thing you came up with was going through the ceiling window by breaking it, coming down to the center of the enemy group without a rope, might I add, and you landed on top a guy in doing so

broke your ankle.” He said with a straight face and serious tone, but Equinox knew he was laughing on the inside. Equinox went a little red.

“First of all, I still fought those guys even with a broken ankle so you have to give me points for that. Second of all... you promise not to mention that mission ever again.”

Charder let out a deep, genuine laugh.

“How can I not! That story was hilarious! How you fell and fought, you kept falling over.” He gave a slight chuckle. Equinox went even more red.

“In any case, we don’t want that to happen again, do we? So I want this done without any casualties. These papers have more details” He gave the papers about the mission to Equinox.

After they both calmed down she said with confidence,

“Yes sir. It’ll be done before you know it”

The Rag-Tag Crew

Equinox had just left the room and waiting for her is her team.

“So what did your dad want? Sounded important when you told us to come here.” Mags said. Magnus Serlot is one of Equinox’s retainers and a family friend of hers since childhood. Uses a sword that is infused with fire mana which is able to slice and burn his enemies. User of fire mana and defensive magic. Keeps Equinox in check, make sure she doesn’t run off to do some reckless act and always backs her up but doesn’t choose sides. Cunning, flexible, and respectful and respected. A bit of a kleptomaniac.

“It’s just a mission. *The Boss* wanted us to get an artificial mana deposit in the town next door. I’ll tell you details on the way. Let’s go.” She said as she walked down the hall to the main entrance. Mags and Kana followed quickly.

“Why do you say always “The Boss”? Why not “my dad?” Kana said. Kana Syllas is also one of Equinox’s retainers who happened to be on her team by kill-stealing a bear she was hunting. He comes from a hunting village and his skills as one are extraordinary. He uses a bow, of course, as well as arrows but these arrows are special. He infuses elemental mana into his arrows like his ice arrows which can freeze his enemies in place. Very crafty, hands on kind of person, and a charmer.

“Not so loud” She said quietly and glared at Kana. He quickly looked away and mind his voice.

“Still.”

“... I don’t want people to know we’re related, especially people who can use me as leverage. Plus it’s weird.”

“Weird? I don’t think-”

“It’s for the best.” Mags cut in.

The trio left the mansion to the outside. The mansion is where the Macvid Mercenaries meet. The rooms that used to be bedrooms were replaced with desks. Outside was the huge lawn

that had many tents set up. Some full of supplies, armor, weapons, and some people slept in them. The trio went to the right where their tent was set up. Theirs was bigger than the others though it was the same size as those in the higher ranks. This is where their weapons and armor was, as well as Equinox's workplace to do paperwork. They went inside, Mags and Kana grabbed their belongings and went outside to change and prepare while Equinox does so inside.

"We'll ready the carriage." Mags says as he heads outside. Equinox nods.

As they leave she puts on her armor on. Which consist of a small triangular breast plate with round edges that covers where her heart is, a vambrace on both arms, and poleyn attach to her knee long boots. Her spear hangs on the wall behind her desk. She grabs it and gives it a little twirl before heading out.

Mags and Kana had already left to get the carriage near the entrance. Passing through the tents makes Equinox anxious. With a series of hellos and good mornings, as well as the occasional whispering, she met up with the others.

Mags had armor like your standard knight except it's missing a few pieces but that's intentional. This is how he stays flexible. He has an iron chestplate, shoulder and arm pieces, and greaves. As well as a sheath hanging beside his waist.

Kana had a traditional hunter garb from his village. It's composed of mostly leather but he has a silver chainmail under his shirt. He added some iron arm and leg pieces to it for more protection and his green cloth hood to blend in with trees. He brings along his backpack full of his crafts and arrow pieces.

"You sure took your time." Kana said. He already had a bag of apples and tossed one to Equinox which she caught while her eyes were busy. Mags was feeding a slice to the horses.

"We're all set up here. Ready when you are." Mags said as he got on the front of the carriage. He was driving.

"Alright, let's move." Equinox said and went inside, so did Kana.

Here's The Plan

It was still morning going into noon. The town was not too far, so by the time they get there the sun will still be up. During the ride, Equinox explained the mission in detail from the papers.

"When he said no reckless acts, did he say that to us or you?" Mags had asks. Equinox ignored him. Kana gave a small chuckle.

"When we get there we'll set up in different spots." Equinox continued and referred to the warehouse layout given to her, "Kana, I want you to be on the railing here. If there are enemies there then take them out but quietly."

"And deal with others outside, right?" Kana add on.

"The ones above the ground at least. I want Mags to come from behind the building and take out the enemies there and make his way inside. You can back him up too if necessary." As

she finished her sentence there was a pause. She was very focused on the paper. Mags broke the short silence.

“You didn’t come up with a plan for yourself?”

“I did. I just didn’t say it out loud.”

“What were you thinking, then?”

“That I... Go in from the front?”

There was another pause then a burst of laughter from Kana and a deep sigh from Mags.

“Sometimes for a brief moment I forget that you are yourself.”

“Well once we get there I’ll figure something out.” Equinox said. Another sigh comes from Mags.

“Alright. Kana, switch with me.” Mags then heads back to where Equinox and Kana were and Kana goes out in the driver seat.

“Let me see that.” Equinox hands him the building layout. After a few moments, Mags finally said.

“You could go with Kana and head to the opposite side. Then go inside through the window, land on the railing, stealthy attack enemies there, then you can figure it out.” He handed the paper back.

“...Thanks...” Equinox said embarrassly.

“No problem!” Mags smiled annoyingly. He had a bright smile that was almost blinding.

“No the ruin the moment or anything.” Kana said, “But, we’re here!”

They pull the tarp from the side to see the town in the distance. It was surrounded by colorful wildflowers.

“Welcome to the Bright Plains.”

Welcome To Bright Plains

Bright Plains Town, or the Bright Plains, is a town that settled upon a field full of unique plants and wildflowers. The town made a fortune using these plants for elixirs and the wildflowers for more decorative purposes, but they have their fair share of magickal properties. Still, they’re like roses, such rarity and beauty has its thorns. It takes skill to pluck those flowers and make them into something more. A skill only native to those of Bright Plains. The people of Bright Plains are down-earth but very serious when it comes to their craft.

The trio make their way into town. Once they settle in an inn and have their carriage place in safety, they would split up to find the warehouse. They had some time to look for the warehouse while the sun was still up. Once the sun reaches the horizon and the bright blue sky turns into a creamy orange they would meet up again at the center of the town. The center of the town had a fountain with an impressive floral design. The circular base had pictures of the townsfolk picking flowers and using mana. It was almost lifelike. The cylinder pierce through

three big flower tiers. As it goes up the size decreases. On the very top where the water spouts is a sphere with the towns symbol on the sides.

Equinox goes to the north side of town. Different parts of town specialize in different attractions. The north side is in charge of decorations, house plants, and clothing. Different scents of flowers from various shops cloud Equinox sense of smell which makes her nauseous. The further she went into town, the stronger the smell. One scent, however, seems to stick out to her as she was walking. She went back and forth in the street to find that scent. Low and behold, she found it and it led her to a pub. When she went inside the first thing that caught her eye was dish that was the same scent she followed. It was a grilled prime meat with sauteed peppers. *Maybe I'll have a snack break.* She thought. She looked outside and saw that she had some time before the sky turned orange. *Yeah, I still had time. Plus I looked pretty much everywhere.* She walked towards an empty table.

Mags went to the south side of town. The south side is the fun side of town where most of the tourists go. It has forms of entertainment like music, dancing, and mana performance. As Mags searches a display of mana arts happens in front of him. The performer uses nature mana to create flowers out of her hands. As she dances, flowers come from her steps. Everyone is enchanted by her movements and skills. *It's impressive but its wasted talent.* He thought and walked away without a second thought. He searched everywhere for the warehouse and asked the locals. The sky was turning yellow, it was about time to head back. As he walked back to the center, the same floral performer was still dancing. Her flowers seem to shine brilliantly and her dance become more complex as the day came to an end. Every trick she did, an uproar of applause would follow. Mags slowed down.

Kana head toward the east side of town. The east is said to be the most magickal part of town. This is where the elixirs are made and their special plants are sold. The shops were painted in bright colors, each stood out than the last. An occasional mystic color would glow from inside the shops. Kana peeked through the window from these shops and saw two women with big goggles brewing elixirs from a pot. With each herb they put into the pot the liquid would flash into a different color. The flash made Kana stumble backwards looking a little flustered and moved on. He came upon an empty street with a building at the end of it. As he walked closer he could see it was a warehouse and it looked just like the one on the paper from earlier. There was a passersby and Kana came up to her.

“Milady.” he said and nodded. “Isn’t it a bit unsafe to be wondering around these parts”

“...Well, I know where I’m going. I’ve been walking through these streets since I was little.” she said.

“Then you must know a lot about this place.” He gave a dashing smile.

“I might” She smiled back.

“How about this building over here” He pointed to the warehouse.

“Oh, that’s been there for a long time. It’s owned by a lot of different people. Mostly business folk. There’s actually going to be a thing happening there tonight at midnight. People are told to be cautious around that time.” They both looked at the building.

“Midnight, huh.” He started deeply at the warehouse, “Well, thank you very much” he gave a small bow, “And might I say you have a lovely dress. It truly matches your eyes.” he winked at her and she blushed.

“Thank you.” Her voice turned into a high pitched. “Farwell.” She said quickly and walked at a fast pace down the street.

Kana chuckled. He looked back at the warehouse and around, sketching their plan out. Looks like it could actually work, for his part at least. He looked up at the sky, it was a faded yellow turning into bright orange. *I sure took my time*, he thought. He took a deep breath and made his way to the center, *Man I am never gonna hear the end of this*.

Back To The Task At Hand

The center only had a few people around so it was easy for Kana to spot Equinox and Mags. When he finally got there he didn’t see them. He walked around and looked around but they weren’t there. He sat at the fountain and waited for them to show up. Twenty minutes had past and the bright orange had faded into a pretty pink. *Meet at the fountain they said*, he thought, *don’t be late they said, don’t go chasing girls they said*, and on he went as he walked, feet stomping on stone, to the south side.

Kana found Mags quickly. He saw a big crowd of people and a voice they all know and love. He got to the center of the crowd and right there was Mags with a flower crown, flower bracelets, flower necklaces, flower anything; dancing with the performer. Kana stood there in disbelief and awe. He smirked there for the longest time until Mags saw him. Then he looked up. The sky was now pale pink. He quickly traded with someone else, grabbed Kana, and left the crowd.

“Looks like you were having fun. I didn’t know you dance” Kana said.

“Kana, shut up.” Mags said meekly. He took off his floral garments.

“Well if it makes you feel any better, Equinox didn’t show up either.” Mags stopped moving, which made Kana stop. He was still smiling.

“...What?” His jaw was slightly ajar.

“I also found the warehouse and when their big scheme gonna happen, midnight.” He walked ahead of him. When Mags didn’t move Kana grabbed him by the arm and ran. “I’ll lead the way.” He was still smiling.

Equinox was not so easy to find. They had to go deep within the north to find her. To their luck they heard her laughing. They follow her voice to the pub where they find her eating and drinking. There are many men beside facedown on the table. One of the men with a mug

full of beer struggling to hold it soon lets it go and drops to the side. Equinox then takes the beer and drinks it all in one go. People cheer and applaud for her. Mags and Kana are unamused. They've been with Equinox for almost five years, almost fourteen for Mags, and they already seen this from her multiple times. Mags walks to her and tries to bring her back to her senses. Kana goes over to the waitress and pays for the meal and drinks. Once he's done he goes over to where Mags is where he manages to get her to comply and they both carry her all the way to the inn.

"We have about 2 or 3 hours until midnight. Plenty enough time for her to sober up." Kana said. They were at the inn. Equinox was on the bed and Mags was sitting close by comforting her. She was a heavy sleeper when she drank. The boys came up with ways to wake her when she was like this.

"I'll be right back." Kana said walking out the door. He came back a couple minutes later with a corked bottle.

"Sit her up. Support her back. Keep her head up." Kana ordered. Mags hesitated for a bit but did what he asked. Kana opened the cork, orange smoke came out of it. He held it up to Equinox's nose and she sprung up from out of the bed and onto the floor covering her nose.

"That did the trick." Kana chuckled and corked the bottle.

"What was that?" Mags said.

"Something I've been working on for quite some time for this exact situation. Want a whiff?"

"Hard pass." Mags helped Equinox up. She was mumbling about how much it stings.

Much time had passed, everyone was dressed and they readyed their weapons. Kana lead the group to the warehouse. They brought their carriage with them, Mags tugged on the horse's leash, and Equinox was inside. The streets were quiet, the shops were closed, and as they walked closer to their destination a faded light came from the direction of the warehouse. The air swirled with dullness and a bit of shame. Not to mention the smell of beer coming from behind.

"Any plans after this mission? If all goes well at least." Kana broke the silence.

"We'll buy some supplies then head home." Equinox said, her voice still wobbly.

"Go home! That's it! Why can't we stay a little longer and have fun?" Kana said, he turned around and walked backwards to face them. He had a bold smile.

"I didn't get to do anything all day. I was too busy looking for a big building." He turned around and stopped. "Oh, we're here. Well, I'll get to my spot. We don't want to get off task, now." He walked away to the left and jumped high onto the ledge. *He's never gonna let this go, is he?*, They both thought They hidden the carriage in a nearby spot and went to their spots.

Challenge Accepted

Twenty enemies including the big boss, three marksmen on the railing, nine guards on ground, two with swords on one side and two with axes on the other side of the building, two with staffs and three with swords at the back, and the rest inside guarding the artificial mana deposit. All against a lance, a fire infused sword, and a bow with unique arrows.

Equinox met up with Kana who had already dealt with the archers on the railing. Equinox went to the other and entered the warehouse through the window. She landed on the railing causing the metal to creak under her weight but the enemies paid no mind. They were all spread out guarding a large movable crate with handles. Close to them was the big boss. From what she can hear, he was monologuing about having all the money in the world and blah, blah blah. Now, she waits.

Meanwhile, Mags dealt with those on the ground with Kana's ranged support he only had to deal with five.

"Well, that's been dealt with." Mags spoke into the communication stone. A small jewel that hangs on the trios ears that is use to communicate with each other. "Now for the hard part."

"I've got a plan for that." Equinox said, "Meet up with me. But, Kana, wait outside at the entrance and give us your flash bombs"

Kana helped Mags get on the railing and to where Equinox was and Kana head towards the entrance."

"Good. Okay, so, here's my thought." A series of whispers and nods come from the two.

"Any questions?" She finished off.

"Sounds good to me." Mags said.

"What's the worst that could happen?" Kana said from the communication stone.

And with that they carried out the rest of the plan.

Equinox waited for the right moment to drop the bomb. Minutes passed for the right moment. Then she raised her hand and down went two round glass containers with a pale white powder. *Crack* they went off on opposite sides of the room, a flash of white light appeared in an instant, and yelps of pain from below sound the building. Equinox and Mags jumped and Mags created glowing white, circular platforms between them in the air and made it to the ground. From there they run to the crate, Equinox grabbing the handle at the front and Mags pushing from the back. With all their strength they move the crate to the outside where Kana waits. Kana sees this amusing display and lend a hand at the back. With their carriage nearby, the run was short. They lift the crate and placed it in the carriage. A small snap was heard due to its immense weight but it will manage. Mags sat at the front while the other two held against the side. They rode through the empty street to the east entrance of town. Luckily, the gate was open for them. They rode through the night cheering for themselves all the way back home.