The twelve Councillors, Tiergan, Alden, Fitz, and Sophie were in Oblivimyre, performing a dangerous healing on a dangerous— yet broken— man. We've seen the disastrous, tragic events that befall them from Sophie's point of view, and now we'll see them from Fintan's point of view, and Oralie's eyes...

Part 1
Fintan

*Cold.*

*So cold.*

*There was no heat, no warmth, no life...*

*No fire...*

*Fire...*

*Nothing...*

... But then, there was something.

He felt something— a strange, foreign sensation after the days... months... years... centuries... eternity... he’d spent in the numbing cold... or was it the searing heat?... ...The nothingness... and yet, the fragments that were everything... his fire... his life... his memory...

He felt fear.

It swirled around inside his mind, growing hotter, calling him back to the unfractured world. It was harsh and biting like ice— he fought the fear, still tearing at him like
sharp, cold claws. He fought it— burying his memories deep. He was not to be afraid. They were, those who’d taken everything from him...They should tremble. They’d taken what was his. And he would take everything from them.

He let go of the searing darkness he’d buried his memories underneath, and unleashed the flames of his memories.

He felt a sensation, almost like a laugh, reverberating around his mind as it filled with the intense blaze. The moonlark, the black swan’s doll— she was the cause of this freezing madness. The pathetic imitation of a council had sent her to heal him, because their weak minds could not handle the guilt. He’d known they were too weak minded to leave him in madness forever. Well, let it be then, he would make them regret their mercy. Because when he burned, so would they. Along with the very foundation of the their perfect, glittering lie of a world.

_I knew you’d come back for me, Sophie. And now everyone will pay._

He heard her panic in his mind as she scrambled to flee from his flames. Her telepathic presence quickly left his mind. He fought a smile and concentrated— oh, how it felt to think— on forming a mental maze made of his memories. By calling him back to consciousness, she’d unwittingly given him the means to destroy her. And by unleashing his memories, she’d given him the weapon with which he would trap her. He tore his memories into fragments, thrusting them every which way, to show her just enough to lure her deeper, constructing the labyrinth in just the way he knew would confuse her. Scare her. Terrify her.

And he waited.

And they came.
He felt their presence enter his mind, two of them this time. Sophie, and the boy, Alvar’s brother. Alden’s son. He would burn with his father. Too bad they’d never know the truth about their precious legacy.

He heard them transmit to each other, and their confusion blasted through his mind along with their words. He forced himself to wait, to lure them deeper, to contain his flames.

And then, the moonlark changed the game.

Images rushed into the forefront of his consciousness. He remembered the honor he felt that day so long ago, bowing to accept the Councillors circlet, surrounded by so many. Accepted. Exalted. And then the day he saved the Apatosaurs from the firestorm — the pleasure he felt, mixed with the sound of the world around him burning, his pride drowning out the call of the blaze... And then, the faces of all those he’d saved. Lying elves. Weak humans, strange things, but with a life and memories and adoring smiles on their faces. Back then, he’d been a hero. He’d risked his life for them, and it had made him feel wonderful. Powerful and heroic, proud, saving lives. Someone in their world. Useful, helpful, loved. He’d been good, and he’d been great. But he’d always wanted more... Even then, hungered for more, like flame, insatiable... And when he found it, it’d been taken from him... but no. He couldn’t let them see that. No. It had been his fault... He’d given in... If only... NO. She was getting at him. He couldn’t let himself regret...

Regret...

But she wasn’t searching for the day he’d first called everblaze — She’d already seen that. She must be searching for another day... The day he’d first taught his apprentice how...
You’ll never find what you’re looking for.
He shouted the words in his mind, desperate to hide his memories. They couldn’t see.
No, she was already seeing. No, he had to protect...

He remembered the bright scarlet of Brant’s long robes as he’d stretched his finger towards the night sky. Brant’s voice had been so hopeful as he’d whispered the incantation of everblaze to the stars. He remembered the pride he’d felt for his student, and how all the secret meetings they’d had suddenly seemed worth it. To share this gift. He’d known it would only be a matter of time before Brant would commit fully.

No— wait, she was seeing! The wretched girl would get what she wanted! Not that it mattered, she would soon burn... But he wouldn’t let her see. He focused his thoughts like a barrier, blocking her and shoving her away. He was too strong for her, ignorant child, weak girl. Their little science experiment.

And then, she broke through—

Brant had turned around, his pale skin sweaty, dark hair damp, with an astonished smile on his face. Everblaze had flickered yellow around his fingertips. And then Brant had released it—

He shoved the girl away from his memory, breaking her hold. And as he did, he started to smile. Not a semblance of a smile, not trapped in his mind, but a real, frozen smile. His icy lips cracked as they moved into a proud grimace.

And so we begin, Fintan told her.

She shrank backwards in his mind, away from the yellow flames.

Everblaze.
He heard the boy screaming mentally in the background. The girl’s mind was beginning to drift, but she held onto the purpose of finding out the identity of the pyrokinetic...

*His identity dies with me.*

He flicked his fingers, whispering the incantation, calling the flames, preparing to burn... He felt the moonlark’s consciousness still in his mind, along with the boy’s. And he willed the flames to spread, letting go of his restraint on the blaze. As he did, he felt the girl’s fingers leave his temples, and the hand touching his ripped away.

Their consciousness’s broke away.

Too late. He had won.

As he opened his ice-crusted eyes, he felt his flames begin to crawl all over the jeweled walls. Over the amethyst bricks and crystal pillars. Over anything in its way— Elves included.

Councilor Kenric.

Their first loss.

The fire’s gain.

His gain.

Burning everything to cinders.

And as the flames began to crawl over Fintan, over his melted-ice soaked body, as he conjured the crystal that would leap him to safety, and lifted it up up to the light, he controlled his furious rage with this thought—

They would suffer. As he had suffered.

The world would cry. As he never had, despite everything.
And they would forever remember this day as the tragedy that unleashed the blaze that would set their world of lies on fire.

Maybe, they would finally find out the truth.

And it would only take a death or hundred to burn away the lies.

As the light flooded over Fintan, tearing him into tiny pieces...

He smiled.

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Part 2

Oralie

She was monitoring Sophie's and Fitz's emotions, and suddenly, the freezing room became blisteringly hot.

Oralie opened her eyes to a nightmare.

Except— it was reality.

Distantly, she watched the bright yellow fire that must have been Everblaze rain from the top of the ceiling and land in the inferno in front of her, burning with a hunger that was nearly impossible to satisfy. The floor began to crack underneath them. She felt Fitz yank her backwards, and, in turning, saw he had done the same to Sophie.

“Where is everyone?” One of them asked.

The question jolted her to reality. She wasn't sure who had asked it, it didn't matter, not if someone hadn't made it...

Oralie shakily pointed towards the raging flames, knowing it was the only direction
anyone could be.

She heard Fitz yelling, trying to run to the others, and saw Sophie stop him. “The clothes won’t protect you,” Sophie was saying. “Everblaze burns everything.”

“But my father—” Fitz began, but was cut off by Sophie.

“—Is finding his own way out.” The words were confident, but Sophie’s voice had an audible waver to it.

Are they finding their own way out? Oralie wondered, staring at the flames as if she would suddenly be able to see through them to the others. She tried to convince herself that they were all fine, but questions were still attacking her from all sides. How will they get out— how will we? What if someone doesn't— she stopped herself. She wasn’t going to go there.

She was torn away from her thoughts by a searing pain. She screamed from the sudden agony, and turned to see melted amethyst dripping from her shoulder. She realized then— we have to get out now, or we might not make it...

“The jewels are melting— this whole place is going to collapse!” Fitz yelled as the walls began to bubble and the floor cracked more.

Then, without a warning, Sophie grabbed Fitz and her’s hands and began to run towards the window— or what was left of it. What is she doing? Oralie wondered as Sophie dragged them with her.

Then Sophie— still pulling them along with her— jumped out of a melting window. And they plummeted towards the ground.

Before Oralie could react, she heard a sound like thunder, and they vanished into nowhere. She would’ve asked where they were — and answered Sophie's question of where they wanted to go— but she was too busy trying to cough the smoke out of her
scorched lungs.

Then she heard another peal—of—thunder—sound and they were in a field near Oblivimyre, yet far enough away that they were safe from being burnt.

Fitz jumped up as soon as they landed, running towards the building, yelling for Alden. Oralie ran after, yelling for Kenric, Tiergan... anyone! *They have to be all right.*

_They found a way to escape. They're looking for us, just like we are for them,* Oralie continued to tell herself as she ran through the smoky air, looking for anyone who had been inside.

Then— she saw them.

Two of them.

“Where are the others?” she asked Councillors Terik and Liora frantically. She noticed they shared a sorrowful, slightly guilty look before Liora turned to Oralie and responded, “Collecting the other ingredients for frissyn.”

“And Fintan...?”

Liora glanced at Terik again, who responded quietly, “He... didn't make it out of his fire.”

Oralie could feel the sorrow emanating off of them in waves— that couldn't be all. Their emotions were too strong.

“And... who else?” She asked, voice shaking from fear and the pain of the other Councillors’ deep sadness.

Liora turned away and took a deep breath, eyes filling with tears. Terik looked sadly at Oralie for a long moment before... “Kenric.” His voice broke on the name, barely whispered.
Oralie stumbled back, eyes widening in shock before filling with tears. She felt herself begin to shake.

“Oralie, I'm so sorry...” Liora said gently.

No, no, no, no... Oralie felt the tears streaming down her face, but she couldn't stop them— she didn't want to. She could hardly stand. It was all she could do to whisper, “How...”

Terik's eyes were glassy as he began, “When the room began to rain Everblaze, he...” Terik's voice cut off, and he took a slow, steady breath before continuing, “He ran in to push the three of you away from Fintan, but when Fintan's body exploded with flames, we—” His voice broke again. After a moment, he continued. But Oralie barely heard him.

She barely felt Liora wrap her in a hug.

She barely noticed anything after that.

All she heard was one sentence, echoing through her mind constantly since it had hit her.

He's gone.