

**Scene 1**  
– ♣ 4 of Clubs ♣ –  
**The City Park**

Dusk was falling. Tall, dark city towers cut jaggedly into the evening horizon, contrasting vividly against the sky's backdrop of brilliant sunset colors. The sunlight melted high across the sky with long orange and red streaks, followed by deep purple shadows blending into the darker sky that lined the opposing horizon. Night would be upon them soon.

The quaint park was located at its city's edge. During the daytime, many citizens enjoyed the green shrubbery, garden paths, and artistic sculptures. Patrons of the park often discovered a unique moment of serenity as the bustle and noise of city life were naturally muted by tall hedge walls surrounding the park. However, those same green-leaved walls kept many secrets within—secrets that were only whispered after sundown. The park closed at dusk, so few ventured past the walls after nightfall—even fewer would be seen with the following sunrise.

Albrecht Eisenberger, the mortician, was an older man aged more by life than time. He had heard the park's sunset whispers before—but tonight, he would not heed those soft voices. Instead, he followed the pull of his ancestors. Their guidance gently pulled and moved within his skin, helping him, the last Eisenberger, in this unique adventure.

The mortician looked to the sky with concern. The hairs of his neck bristled, warning that time was a waning essence that could not be reclaimed. Albrecht turned to look at his acquaintances, Bezaria and Franklin. They were not friends; Eisenberger's did not require such frivolous people as that. These were people who worked, and moreover, they worked with him. People who worked with the mortician were people he could trust.

City ordinance closed the park at sundown—it was most inconvenient for the mortician. Yet Albrecht Eisenberger refused to be bothered by such dogmatic annoyances. Curfews could not stop him, not when there was so much at stake. Albrecht quickly and quietly ushered his acquaintances into the park through a small, secret hole in the wall, easily avoiding any guards at the entrance gates who might turn them away. The Magi entered the park first and found herself in a small secluded clearing surrounded by tall, mournful trees.

"This is amazing," Bezaria the Magi marveled in a hushed tone as she crept into the clearing. She flexed her fingers, feeling the soft leather of her gloves, then pulled her bright red jacket snug—impressed that the circus magician clothes fit so well. Gold buttons softly shook against the black accents of her jacket lapels. The magi admired how her outfit's red, gold, and black theme perfectly aligned with her thoughts.

"You look like you belong in the circus," Franklin huffed as he followed after the magi. Doctor Franklin Meadowlark, a medical examiner, was dressed in well-tailored slacks and a pressed designer shirt; it was buttoned up the front, except for the top button. He carefully rolled the shirtsleeves to his elbows as he stood in the clearing with a strong air of self-dignity.

"That's what I was going for," Bezaria replied happily. A quizzical look came across her face as she abruptly reached and felt inside her jacket, searching for something.

“You don’t have to look like you’re in the circus,” retorted Franklin as he frowned at a leaf before brushing it off his shoulder. “Considering our surroundings, something more subdued would have been more appropriate.”

The Magi had a look of surprise and excitement come across her face. As she withdrew her hand from her jacket, a flat black disc was in her grasp. Bezaria held out the black disc in both hands and smiled with uncontrollable glee.

“What is it?” Asked Franklin, unsure if he really wanted to know.

In answer to his question, Bezaria held the disc in one hand and flicked her wrist, causing the center of the disc to pop out. The Magi twirled her tophat onto her head and adjusted it to have a slight cant toward one eye.

“Perfect,” she said in pure satisfaction, keeping a gentle finger on the brim of her magic hat.

Franklin frowned. He raised a chiding finger and opened his mouth as if to speak.

“Yes, yes, yes,” an old, heavily accented voice exclaimed from behind. “This is all quite amazing, but we mustn’t forget why we are here.”

Before approaching his co-workers, Albrecht secured their entrance through the hedge wall by tightly closing the hole. He was slightly hunched, unkept, and looked much older than his movements suggested. Gray hair burst from the sides of his head and face while a few wisps of hair lined his otherwise bald top. He peered ahead through thick bushy eyebrows, contemplating their next move.

“This way,” the mortician said matter-of-factly and started walking.

“How do you know?” Asked Franklin.

Albrecht smiled a toothless smile. “I just know these things. Now, remember to stay in character—and stay close.”

Albrecht walked a short distance, then nodded to a faint path on the ground. Turning to the followers, he focused on each one for a moment. As he concentrated, names and levels materialized over their respective heads.

*Dr. Franklin Meadowlark, Level 2, Medical Examiner*

*Bezaria the Magi, Level 2, Circus Magician*

“If you focus on a person, you will see their name and level,” Albrecht said, pointing over their heads. “We are about to start, so now is the time to make any last-minute adjustments.”

Bezaria stared back at Albrecht, mimicking the mortician’s face. She was surprised to see the old man was right.

*Albrecht Eisenberger, Level 2, Mortician*