

The Overshadow Of Asonavis

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Recognition:

I would like to thank my cousin, Simonetta, for inspiring me to write. If I had not met her in 2010 this might not have been a possibility.

I would also like to cite The Shadow Of Israphel series on Youtube by The Yogscast as an inspiration.

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In the baited, shadowed seas of death, the waves turn belligerently. They crash, they roll, but they never tumble. Modeled directly after the idea of pride, as even when it falls it always rises back. The dark water turned over itself.

Prologue,

I could feel him smiling wildly. His intentions were as black as the shadow he was standing in; concealing himself. I had been feeling extremely weakened since I was knocked out, whenever that was, for I had no perception of time right now. I was counting down until he started to steal my Xolt¹. I knew he was going to try.

“I don’t even know your name, Unknown One. Your battle might be strong, but I bet I could name something that is weak”, I spoke with a feverous tongue. We had fought a huge battle on our first confrontation, but I had never seen someone abuse blinking² quite like him.

He gave a laugh. Promptly, the chains that bound me in a T pose and hanging like Voalker³, tightened, pulling my arms, legs and neck apart from each other. I yelped a loud scream and felt tears coming in pain.

“It is good that you know not my name. The less known, the easier the taking”, he said, still encased in the shadow.

“What do you want?” I was starting to smell of discouragement. The chains loosened and I was in a small relief for it.

“Asonavis, what I want is what the gods have”, he leaned forwards into the light with a crippling hardened stare, revealing his purple eyes, the right of which had a long scar over it, and said, “Power.”

He leaned back from the light. We listened in silence for a moment. “Zekaos”, his voice sounded distant and soft-spoken.

“What?”, I spoke. I shook the chains that held me in another small attempt to get free.

“My name.. you were wondering.”

¹ Xolt - The personification of the energy that everything in existence, even Aethaedar itself (Existence), runs off of. Though, this personification is normally referred at as an inanimate object for obvious reasons. Everything in Existence has a set amount of Xolt. Deities can regenerate Xolt to live essentially forever, mortals can’t. Xolt makes up everything, it makes what is visible and physical, and what is invisible and unattainable.

² Blinking - Blinking is the word of choice to describe teleportation. Because teleportation happens at the blink of an eye.

³ Voalker - An evil primordial being of whoms xolt and consciousness is bound by unbreakable chains in the bottom layer of the underworld Nehro. He is held in Acrazar, in the void below the giant Acrazar Prison. Acrazar is the lowest level, of five, in the Underworld.

The Beginning,

It was high noon, and as the hot sun beat down on my head I looked bored off at the crashing waters below. I stood on the left port side of the boat, the Silver Bough, as I awaited my arrival in the New World. I was heading to the subcontinent of Khers⁴ of said world. I was, myself, a freshman of whom was a Riitusin⁵, hailing from the city of Unehradein, Neasend⁶, of the Old World.

I am to meet my Uncle, of which I had seen many-a times before, but only when he came to visit the Old World. I had never actually been to the New World, as far as I knew it could be a land of anarchy like Aldranamor⁷ Island, or a land of order like Tylacta⁸. The excitement of travel built through me, although the time it's taken to get here has made me fall into constant stupors.

Boredly, my mind wandered on about Tylacta, the capital providence of the world empire, Gouma, or The Gouman Empire. In recent years Truon Leaus⁹ Uchron Demensvásen, *Uchron Madvase*, was elected emperor from the quietus of his brother the previous Truon Leaus, Nuvather Demensvásen.

I liked the new Truon Leaus though, especially within the last year as he had been sending men to recruit menfolk of knowledge to work with what they called 'machines'. These machines were awe inspiring, running on steam and were full of gears. I, most of all though, liked their camera that could take paintings of life instantly! I smiled at the ingenuity of this new steam age.

Soon though, I was forced out of my daydreaming thought when I heard, "Sceur". Silvantus Felo was calling me. Silvantus was also a Riitusin from Unehradein, Neasend. I looked over at him running towards. "Mosa", *What*, I asked? "Binduota", *Land Ho*, Silvantus exclaimed excitedly! My face lit up with exhilaration and we ran towards the front of the ship. Standing on the forecandle, we looked anticipatory off towards the slim view of land. We could just scarcely see five of the seven peaks that make up the Pharklad mountain range, the towering mountains reached higher than the clouds and funnily looked to have made necklaces of them. They gradually grew from the slim view, into a long piece of land that stretched from left to right, to out of sight on both sides. I unintendedly fell into another

⁴ Khers - A subcontinent in the new world south of the subcontinent of Orwana, north of the subcontinent Eamand, west of the subcontinent island Naum and east of the Isalp ocean. Not to be mixed up with the Lusomnin word for dog, *Ker* or plural *Keraes*, and the Lusomnin word for get, *Cer*.

⁵ Riitusin - People who are from the subcontinent of Neasend; comes from the name of an old empire, Rettus.

⁶ Neasend - A subcontinent north of the Aeko Elo subcontinent, south of the Vlasts Sea, east of the Nuveths ocean and west of the Orbert and Raandeler subcontinents.

⁷ Aldranamor Island - A land of anarchy that everybody avoids at all costs, as it is run by the Vraothaen, a race of beings almost as powerful as the gods, but not quite so. Most are known for being beings of pure evil, namely Erumak, Flehdan and Valcron. Though these deities live in Plane of Kroplizen.

⁸ Tylacta - A subcontinent north of the subcontinents of Hranast and Vlahs, west of the subcontinent of Heoin Rost and east of the Unttlus Ocean.

⁹ Truon Leaus - The official title of the emperor of the Gouman Empire, like The Roman Empire had the Caesar and the Aztecs had the Tlatoani.

daydream as I started to think of my future experiences here in the New World. I had heard stories of this place, some good, some bad. I was coming to this new land hoping for two things, a life trade and a possible significant other.

“I must say”, Silvantus started snapping me out of my memorization, “the four week wait was worth it! It seems Tháttuost¹⁰ has blessed us.” He looked over at me, “And Paduon¹¹ has blessed you!”

“Yeah”, I agreed, “The Gods are great in their ways.” Silvantus nodded and then put his hand on my shoulder smiling, “And I wanted to thank you again for letting me stay with you and your uncle. I’ve never really had someone I could rely on to do something as kind as this.”

“No problem! You saved my life from the barbaric dock men. It’s the least I could do”, I said with a smile.

We looked back out at the view. We could see the townless port of Lahn now. The port grew and grew until we were waving to the dock men. As the ship pulled into its dock we practically jumped off and onto the wooden quay. Once on the dock we traversed the townless port and dispelled the outrageous rumors of the new world. We also made sure to stop at the shrine for Cranii¹² and Waka¹³.

Soon we came to and stared upwards at the tall Sabsot, *Cloudship*¹⁴, terminal; which was where we were destined anyway. The relatively short marble building erected a tall, highly decorated stone and marble tower. We marveled at the Cloudship that floated there, the hull of a sea ship and one huge pure white envelope. We walked into the building, climbed up the tall tower and boarded the Cloudship. Looking down from such a height, I felt a little nauseated but my excitement seemed to be dissolving it.

A few more people boarded that they had seen on the Silver Bough and the Cloudship was off. We watched as the lush forest on the coast dissipated into desert once we were halfway around the mountain range. From here we could see the Egward Pyramid¹⁵. It was a giant hexagonal pyramid made only of sandstone. It was huge, about a third the size of the towering mountain range that laid hundreds of miles from it.

We watched in specular sight, but the Cloudship turned its course southward and the view of the pyramid grew slim. The lands below turned to grassland and soon a town grew into our vision. It was a small town and didn’t appear to have any buildings higher than three floors. “Dahlmer”, I said. Silvantus nodded, almost memorized like as his eyes scraped the landscape.

The town was small with a statue at the middle. Very few buildings were behind one another, but those who did lay at the back were taller and had an equally amazing view of the center. The Cloudship flew over to an equally tall tower as the tower in Lahn, but this tower was

¹⁰ Tháttuost - The Patron God of Construction Builders and Foremen and the New God of Logic, Planning and Building.

¹¹ Paduon - The Protector of Houses and Old Goddess of Lakes, Streams, Deer and of Writing.

¹² Cranii - The Younger God of Water, The Depths of the Oceans and of Mirth

¹³ Waka - The Older Goddess of the Shruk (Race), Water, Seas and Oceans

¹⁴ Sabsot, *Cloudship* - The name of choice for airships / blimps

¹⁵ Perhaps one of the most interesting things about this giant pyramid, besides it’s size, is the fact that the creator or creators are unknown. Nobody knows who built the structure, but it is rumoured that Jabuso, Older God of the Zepco, Astronomy, Plague and Medicine knows as he and his book Eclait know every secret of the universe.

a little out of the ways of the town, on a hill. I noticed, also, that there was a graveyard on another hill to the north of the town, in the direction of the desert and mountain range.

We exited the ship; I noted that we were the only to do so. We descended the tower and out of the building where we were met with a longish stone path decorated at the sides with a plethora of flowers and trees. We paused, momentarily as we watched the Cloudship fly away. We then made our way down the path and when we came close to the town of Dahlmer, "Sceur", someone called out!

Silvantus and I looked towards a man wearing simple plaid. I grew a smile, threw out my arms and exclaimed, "Uncle", running up to him! My uncle, Barag, ran back with open arms and hugged me.

"I missed you", I said! We looked joyfully at each other before Uncle Barag looked over at Silvantus. He put out his hand and said, "Hello! I'm Barag, Sceur's uncle."

The two shook hands, "I'm Silvantus", Silvantus said, "I've heard many good things about you."

"Really, you talked me up", Uncle said with a smile as he turned towards me.

"Yep. I hope you don't mind, I offered him stay for saving my life at the dock in Neasend", I said!

Uncle looked over to Silvantus, "Thank you for saving my nephew's life. You can stay for as long as you please!" Silvantus thanked him. "Now, I'm sure you are very enthusiastic about being here. Follow me!"

Uncle turned and lead us into the town and to the center. There were smooth stone paths leading to all of the buildings that were themselves simply decorated marble and cobblestone, and some of wood. The town felt very cozy. I watched as a pretty lady walked out of a shop with a sign that read "Jovorker", *Jeweler*, and to behind the building, no doubt to her house. There didn't seem to be many people here, but the town felt fit for few. Once we reached the middle and up to the statue, we admired it and the small fountain behind it. It was of a man holding a sword high in the air with one hand and in the other a shield by his waist. The stone statue had a bronze plate on the front that read, "Kuevero, Zaldaker Áchea Furdker", *Kuevero, Adventurer And Founder*.

"This statue is of Kuevero", Uncle said, "He was a famous explorer during the Fourth Medieval Era¹⁶ and he founded this town." Uncle stood for a second in veneration, before he turned and walked up to the first building to the right of the stone path we had walked from. The building had two floors, as no buildings were behind it, and it was majority made of wood. Uncle opened the wooden door and walked in, Silvantus and I peered in for a second before we entered. We entered into a sitting room with large wooden couches covered in, no doubt, sheep wool and an unlit fireplace at the corner of the room. To the right and through a door frame was the kitchen with the stairs at the back going over it.

"Welcome", Uncle said as he turned around, "It's not much but", he pointed to a picture with the knitted words that read Home Sweet Home, "It's home."

I gave a little laugh, followed by Silvantus, as we looked at the picture with the knitted words Bless This Mess that hung over the door above us. Uncle led us upstairs to a wide room

¹⁶ The Fourth Medieval Era - The fourth of six Medieval Eras. The Fourth Medieval Era was four eras ago. The current era is The Classical Era.

with a double bed against the right wall and two big windows on the left and back wall. There was a single bed in the front window.

Uncle then led us back down to the first floor. He held his hand out to draw attention to the couch closest, "This is where you will be sleeping Silvantus. I'm sorry, the house is so small and I didn't know you were coming." But Silvantus seemed fine with it saying, "Don't worry about it, I wasn't expecting a mansion on such short notice."

Suddenly, I had just remembered some bad news that I had to tell uncle. "Uncle", I started, "I have some bad news that I urgently must share with you." Silvantus must of known exactly what I was thinking of and nodded in agreement. Uncle walked over to the couch and sat down, not knowing what to expect.

"Uncle, terrible news hails from the Gods. Paft¹⁷ has left godhood", I told. At first Uncle looked as though he didn't know how to react, but soon exhaled and looked on frustrated.

"Such a shame. He had such a good upbringing. But confusing yet; a God running away from Godhood, why I don't think that's ever happened before", Uncle said. "But, if Paft doesn't feel like a God anymore then that's up to him. I just hope nothing like Asnaer¹⁸ happens and that he's safe from monsters like Gegemost¹⁹. Do you know where he went?"

"Aeko Elo²⁰", Silvantus said, "The appointed king of Interon²¹ accepted him with open arms, but he seemed more interested in buying a ship and becoming a pirate."

Uncle looked a little surprised, and a little jealous. Silvantus and I looked awkwardly, not knowing what to say next. Uncle instead stood up and again exhaled, "Well, on a better note follow me. I have some people I want you to meet."

Uncle lead us outside, around the left of the building and to a farm at the back of the town. In the field was a dozen or so Criei²², but what caught my eyes wasn't the scenery, it was the elongated ears and white skin of a Gata²³ who seemed to be talking pleasantly to the Criei.

"Naharos", Uncle called! The Gata, Naharos, looked over and smiled.

"¡Tudos, migh go'ote cusco! ¿Glisen-bob?", *Hello, my good friend! How are you*, Naharos said!

"Ichen Omna Optam, áchea ho'o", *I'm very fine, and you*, Uncle responded?

¹⁷ Paft - Or as he became known as, The Lost God, isn't a god of anything as he didn't choose anything to be God of. He left "Godhood" because he didn't want to be held to the responsibility of a god, he just wanted to live as a pirate. He was eventually killed by Mugdom, of which they were in love. This happened because Mugdom was created by Vaolker in hopes she would free him. She didn't and as a result he causes her to have "fits" where she goes berserk at random moments and tries to kill everything around her, including Paft her lover.

¹⁸ Asnaer - A huge fight between all of the Gods that occurred during The Fourth Medieval Era, caused by a fight between Sthet and Piyrae over the title of Goddess Of Beauty.

¹⁹ Gegemost - Perhaps one of the most enduring beings that is an enemy of the Gods. It is a huge spider with the head of a frog and white scales all over it's body.

²⁰ Aeko Elo - A subcontinent that is the equivalent of the Caribbean. Recently, there has been a huge spur in interest in becoming a pirate.

²¹ Interon - A section of the Gouman Empire in Aeko Elo. It retains its name from it's old empire. It's kings are appointed to rulership from the Truon Leaus, emperors of the Gouman Empire.

²² Criei - Cows that are slightly smaller than the cows on Earth that are all black and have two short horns.

²³ The Gata - Essentially snow elves that hail from south of the Anist Desert. They are tall, thin, have snow white skin with elongated eyes and ears. **Note: The Yonkapas, the race the main characters are and the main race of the world, are light blue skinned. The Yonkapas are essentially Humans with light blue skin, and a few small other differences as well.**

“I’m great! And it’s all because the Crie are growing swell”, he said! “I’m sure to make good money in market.”

The two smiled at each other warmly after they shook each other's hand, “This is my nephew and his friend, Sceur and Silvantus”, Uncle introduced.

“Tud”, *Hi*, I said!

“Tuda”, *Hey*, Silvantus said.

We shook hands before Uncle turned to me and said, “Naharos was the clergy that married your late Aunt Thormorah and I. In fact, our family has lived here since the War Of The Mad King²⁴. It was your Grandfather, my dad, that moved to Neasend to be a scribe in Unehradein²⁵ twenty two years ago. Your Aunt and I decided to stay here in Khers because we preferred the rural feel of the town.”

“Wow”, I said, awe inspired.

Barag turned back to Naharos, “Thank you old friend, but we best be going to meet the others before sun down.”

“Understandable”, Naharos said, “I have some tending to do anyway.”

Uncle turned and lead us back to the stone paths at the middle of the town. “Next to meet is Chas. She is a woman from Chedor²⁶.”

“Chedor? Wow. I’m surprised a Chedan came here”, Silvantus said. I nodded in agreement, “I’m just surprised a Chedan left the island²⁷.”

“I was at first surprised too. But despite popular belief, she’s a very nice young lady”, Barag said.

Barag walked to the building that held a sign out front that read, Jovorker, *Jeweler*. As we reached the door, the lady that I had noticed before came walking around holding a small chest under her arm, no doubt full of gems.

“Tudos Barag”, *Hello Barag*, she spoke in an up toned voice.

“Farverñuugen Chas”, *Pleasure Chas*²⁸, Uncle said! “I wanted to introduce you into my nephew and his friend, Sceur and Silvantus.”

Silvantus and I stood in awkward motion before we reached our hands out to shake hers, saying hello. Once done she looked back towards Uncle, “Did you hear, we just got a shipment of mead and ale.”

²⁴ The War Of The Mad King - Also called The Invasion War, was a giant war three eras ago, in the Sixth Medieval Era, when the Yonkapas invaded the underworld, Nehro, lead by Emperor Horenda The Mad. This war caused the Underworld Brawl, where the Younger Gods, in a surprise attack, beat up the Older Gods and took over as the main Gods of worship. General Usafer Baddro(Buddromein - Battle Stone), who later became Emperor(Truon Leaus) Battle Stone the Wise, was the one that cut off Horenda’s head to stop the underworld siege. This is also when Tuttlus, The Older God of the Yonkapas, Half God of the Kochein, Of Moons and of the Night was almost killed by Parda, The Older God Of Death. Though at this point everyone thinks Tuttlus is dead. Though, this act from Parda showed a weak point in the Older Gods, causing said Underworld Brawl.

²⁵ Unehradein - The largest city in Neasend. Was the capital kingdom of the empire of Rettus.

²⁶ Chedor - A gigantic island subcontinent east of Orbert, south of Blanroth, west of Homsla.

²⁷ Chedan - Chedan is the demonym of people who hail from Chedor. They are known for being isolationists and for not leaving their island subcontinent. Whenever it does happen, it takes people by surprise.

²⁸ In this sense, pleasure is used as a greeting.

“Ooh”, Uncle said! “I’ll have to check that out!”

Chas smiled before she said, “I’m sorry I’m short on talk, I have a huge order to fill. Apparently the rich are coming from Lounda²⁹ and I have to have a hundred necklaces, bracelets and rings made in two weeks.”

“Really, Lounda?”

“Yeah. It’s some rich family getting married, but hey, money’s money”, Chas said before she opened the door to her shop and hurried in.

“Abrito biiñõ Ich poii’ra illmor”, *I know where we’re going next*, Uncle said with almost a skip in his step as we walked around the fountain and to a building that had a sign that read, *Aldalin, Tavern*. The building was only one floor and the front windows were stained multicolored glass. The left glass had the picture of a tall glass of ale, and the other had the image of a lady leaning back, pouring a tall glass of ale into her mouth.

Uncle opened the door and walked in. The room was small, with the bar to the left and four tables to the right. Uncle walked right up and sat down at the bar, Silvantus followed. But a sole man at the back of the room caught my eye and I stared for a second. The man was wearing reddish light leather armour and had an eye patch over his left eye. I broke my gaze when the man looked up and I joined Uncle and Silvantus.

Looking down the bar was the bartender, who was a tall man with blue hair³⁰, wearing simple plaid, like Uncle, and a brown apron. He was cleaning a mug, and when he finished he walked over and said hello.

“Biy-Mare”, *Welcome*, the man said!

“How ya’ doing Ervetis”, Uncle asked?

“Really well. I just got a shipment of ale and mead. I hope that people come from Wood Town like last time, really helps the business!”

“Well, don’t give them too much! Save some for us”, Uncle laughed!

“Don’t worry friend! I would never forget the peoples of this town!”

Uncle introduced Silvantus and I and once done, “What’ll it be”, Ervetis asked?

“Just a tankard o’ ale”, Barag said, I wasn’t thirsty and Silvantus asked for a glass of water.

“Coming right up”, Ervetis said.

Ervetis walked halfway down the bar, turned with a tankard in his hand and released the cap to a barrel that I had just noticed was one of four lying against the wall.

“Poor Ironeye”, Uncle said to no one in particular. Silvantus and I look on confused, but all Uncle did was nonchalantly nod towards the man with the eye patch sitting aloof in the corner of the room.

“What’s his story”, Silvantus asked?

“Can’t say I know. He never talks much. I knew his mother briefly before she died five years ago, and afterwards I didn’t see him for a while. Until one day he returned, more distraught than ever, and ever since then he’s been hanging around Dahlmer”, Uncle told.

“Should we say hi”, I asked?

“Best if we not. He’s merely grumpy anymore. Shame, he was such a good fighter.”

²⁹ Lounda - A very rich city located in south east Tylacta.

³⁰ The Yonkapas can have naturally blue and bright red hair.

Ervetis walked up and put the tankard in front of Uncle and a glass of water in front of Silvantus. They both thanked him, with Uncle holding out his hand giving a few coins as payment that I recognized to be the currency of Neasend, Drahkit³¹.

As Uncle began drinking, I peered towards the windows and noticed that it was becoming dawn. The beautiful multicolored sky shone through the multi stained glass windows and gave shafts of multiple colors in an array that I was beginning to think was the most basic but wondrous collage.

As Uncle and Ervetis engaged in conversation, I turned my attention from the shafts to Ironeye almost indistinctly. I, though not knowing why, felt bad for Ironeye. Why he was even called Ironeye made me think that he had been shot through the eye or something other of the such, in order to get iron in the eye or just the name sake.

“Did you hear that Scur”, Uncle asked. I looked over, “No, I’m sorry.”

“Ervetis was just telling me that we should stray from the deserts. Says that it’s been acting weird lately.”

I looked to Ervetis, “What do you mean?”

“Well, I’ve heard stories of people walking towards the desert and never returning. Some guy said he saw a whole deer get swallowed by the sands a week back. True or not, I’m not going anywhere near that sand. I’m fine on this here dirt!”

“I’ll take that as advise. You know I trust your word over everyone else’s”, Uncle said.

“Thanks old friend”, Ervetis said. Uncle nodded before he took the last sip from his tankard,

“Well we must be going”, he stood up. He looked to Silvantus and I and we headed out and to Uncle’s house. Here, we got Silvantus a blanket, of whom passed out almost immediately, and I followed Uncle up to the second floor. I climbed into the window sill bed and, just like Silvantus, passed out instantly.

³¹ Drahkit - The currency of the Neasend area. After the world had been united by the beloved Emperor Battle Stone the Wise, Emperor Battle Stone made it so that every region kept its own currency from the previous eras in hopes of keeping the economy easy for everyone. All money though, from that point on was based solely on gold.

Lorewalk 1,

When I was younger, my grandmother used to tell me the Tales of Gods. The most endearing story was of Anteros. He was a demigod, who died from the hate of others but used his kindness to benefit those who had killed him.

During the Sixth Medieval Era, after the Yonkapas had invaded the Underworld and Parda had tried to kill them, the Yonkapas returned to the Third Dimension. The Younger Gods, in retaliation of the actions that the Yonkapas had done, banned all mortal races from entering the Heavens and Underworld.

From this the mortal races built a huge hatred for Parda, of whom they blamed for their own faux pas, and took their anger out on his only son: Anteros. Anteros was living in the Graf'then mountains in a log cabin in Neasend. In this hatred, they marched up to his house, beat him, tied him up and threw him in the back of a wagon. They transported him to one of the largest squares in Unehraedain Kingdom where they built a huge pit to burn him at the stake.

As they lit the fire to burn Anteros at the stake, he somehow reached a state of Adeake³². He became one with Aethaedar, and instead of doing anything hate fueled, he reopened the Soul Roads for the Yonkapas's souls to get to the Heavens and Underworld.

³² State of Adeake - This state is an act of the conscious mind. It is when a person is in true tranquil with themselves and existence, and they become apart of existence. Depending on the amount of Xolt a person has, a god compared to a mortal, the person can live in this state. By doing this, and living through the state, one can harness the power of existence. It must be said though that once a person leaves Adeake, all the power they can harness is released from them and the person is always ripped to pieces in the process. Father Time is the only known survivor of this state, and some say that he is still in some form of it to still be alive.

The Mine In The Graveyard,

I woke as the light passed my forehead. I stared blankly up at the curved window arch. I climbed from the bed and stared out at the room that was lit by shafts. Uncle wasn't in his bed and I smelled bacon being cooked from downstairs. I proceeded down and was met with nobody in the living room. I turned into the kitchen and found Uncle finishing the last of the bacon and was putting it into a plate. He turned and allowed me to select.

"Qwad-Naze Sceur", *Good Morning Sceur*, Uncle said!

"Good morning Uncle", I said as I picked a couple a pieces of bacon and begun eating them, "Where's Silvantus?"

"He's outside. Said he wanted to see the fountain in the morning light", Uncle told.

"I think I'll join him", I said. I turned for the door before Uncle said, "Why don't the two of you visit the graveyard after. You know the saying, Pay mind to the dead, and the dead will pay you with their lives."³³

I nodded and then headed out the door. Immediately I saw Silvantus flipping small rocks into the fountain, staring at it with a memorized look.

"Hey", I said. He looked over and then looked back at the fountain. "It's beautiful here", he said.

"I know. I'm so overjoyed to be here! I can't wait to start exploring, maybe find a lady friend too", I said!

"Most definitely", he said! His eye didn't move from the fountain.

"What's wrong?", I asked standing next to him.

"Nothing, it's just this fountain reminds me of the one I was left on back in East Unehraidein", he said bleakly. I felt bad, but I didn't know what to say. Instead of talking I put my hand on his shoulder and we stood there for a minute.

"Say, when did you wake up this morning? It's still pretty early", I asked.

"Daybreak", he said, he looked over at me with a soft smile.

"Why", I asked, giving a little laugh in my voice?

"Because back in Unehradien I was an orphan boy, so I like to imagine that one of these mornings I'll be watching the same sunrise as my parents", he said.

"That's truly heartfull."

"But you see, there's also another reason, one I haven't really told anyone else about. Back in the orphanage I met the love of my life. We used to do this, watch the sun and hope we're doing the same as our parents. But then one day", he paused, "she was adopted, and taken only the Gods know where. Somewhere up north."

"Silvantus", I said, "I never knew."

"I know. Like I said before I haven't really told anyone else", he gave another warm smile, "But I figured I could tell you. I trust you enough."

Honestly I didn't know what to say. I had never had someone tell me something that personal before. I felt a sense of honor about it.

³³ This quote refers to Hjalt whom are the corpses of the dead that will rise to protect you if you run into a graveyard, yell a certain phrase and stab the ground with a Soul Stone.

“I wish I could tell you something that deep. Unfortunately I don't have any stories like that.”
“Trust me, consider yourself lucky. You at least knew your parents.”

I nodded lightly and then lightly shrugged.

“Why hello there”, a voice said from behind me.

We turned to see a man wearing a white tunic and brown pants, of whom looked to be a butcher, walking towards us. “The name’s Toristen”, he said as he reached us and then extending his hand!

We all shook hands before he asked, “I’m not familiar with you, where might you be from?” He had a high pitched voice that seemed to appropriately match his stature.

“We’re from Unehradein. We’re staying with my Uncle, Barag”, I told him.

“Ah, good ole Barag. A valued customer! I’m the town’s butcher, my shop’s by the grazing fields at the back of the town. Stop by at any time of the day”, he said with a smile before he started to walk away. We smiled. Once he walked away, “Anyway, we should probably visit the graveyard to pay respect.³⁴”, Silvantus said.

“That’s what Uncle just said to me”, I said.

“You wanna head there now?”, he asked.

“Yeah, I’d rather do it now than at sundown”, I said.

“Same”, he said. He lead, as we walked in between the buildings following one of the stone paths that lead straight to the graveyard. This path was also adorned with flowers and trees at both sides. When we arrived after the short walk we slowed our pace to appreciate more.

“Sure is a shame”, I said.

“Yeah, I’d just like to take solace in that they hopefully died in peace”, he said.

We walked towards the back, where a few small mausoleums, and one big highly adorned one, sat.

“Sceur, who’s that?”, Silvantus asked suddenly. I followed his pointed finger with my eyes until I reached the sight of a figure dressed in a large black robe with the hood covering their face. My eye’s widened and I pulled Silvantus to the ground, behind a large gravestone.

“I don’t know. I hope it’s not Stle-lim³⁵”, I responded in a whisper.

“Why would the Vraothaen³⁶ be here?”, Silvantus asked. I shrugged, “Small town, less to interfere.”

We peeked around the side of the gravestone; how had the man not seen us, I thought. We watched him walk along the graves until he arrived at the largest mausoleum. The figure stood in front of the door for a second before a light blue light flashed in front of them and the doors opened. Silvantus’ and my mouths dropped. The man walked inside and the doors shut behind him. We crouched there for a second, not knowing what to do. Soon I got the courage to stand up.

“Lases kwo tass gara”, *Let’s follow him*, I said.

³⁴ Along with the quote, it is also just a custom to visit graveyards to pay respect to those who had died.

³⁵ Stle-Lim - The personification of death, associated directly with Flehdan, the Vraothaen of Death, and sometimes Slaucus, the Vraothaen of Decay and Rejuvenation.

³⁶ Vraothaen - The Vraothaen are price gods, and inhabit Kroplizen in Pahmer. They are almost as powerful as the Gods but aren’t quite so; and most are known for being pure evil, namely Erumak, Flehdan and Valcron.

“What! No, you must be mad”, Silvantus said back.

“Where is your spirit of adventure”, I asked?

“Back in Neasend where I left it.” I looked at him funny, “Let’s go!” Silvantus made a face and we walked up to the mausoleum. I tried the handle on the door but it wouldn’t budge.

“See, even the mausoleum doesn’t want us to enter”, Silvantus said.

“Don’t give the mausoleum a say in this”, I said.

“What about my say?”, Silvantus asked, chills running his spine.

I stopped and looked at him, “I’m not stopping you from returning to the house.”

Silvantus looked at me awkwardly. “Didn’t think so, now help me get in.” We tried the door at the same time but it just wouldn’t budge.

“What should we do”, Silvantus asked?

“Not sure.” I peered at the door, looking up and down-~~it~~. I noticed that on the ground in front of the door were little blue crystals. “What do you think *they* are?”, I asked pointing.

“I’m not sure... at all”, Silvantus said. Silvantus reached down and touched them, “They feel like gems. Do you think that’s how he entered?”

I touched and then picked up a hand full of them. I stood back up, stared at them, and then made eye contact with the door. When Silvantus backed up, I tossed the gems at the door and once they made contact the door unlocked and opened. Silvantus and I stared wide eyed, again.

Inside was a large single room, empty. The only thing in the room was two large cellar like doors on the ground. Silvantus and I exchanged looks before we walked over. We each grabbed a door and then lifted simultaneously. To our surprise, hidden underneath was a large tunnel that descended. The slope that lead down had two sides, to the left was a staircase and to the right was tracks for what looked like minercarts. What surprised me the most wasn’t the tracks or even that the mausoleum was empty, it was the fact that about a half a mile down, where the descent ended and another level tunnel started, there was light that looked like it was from a torch.

“I have the feeling that someone’s been down there”, I said.

“I’m starting to get that feeling too”, Silvantus said back.

I started to walk down the staircase, carved from rock. I noted that the track was most likely made from iron. “Do you think that a mine was here?”, Silvantus asked.

“Or a crypts deep underground”, I responded.

When we finally traversed the staircase we came to a hall that lead into a much larger room. In the center was a statue and at the edges of the room there was lava flowing behind glass. We walked up to the statue. It was a sculpture of a women, but the head was missing along with several random chunks. As there was no sign to say what it was, or even who did it, we looked beyond and found a large arch behind. The rail continued through as well.

We walked through to the large adjoined room. This room was wider than long and at the center laid a canal of lava with a wide cobblestone bridge over it.

“It’s terribly hot in here”, Silvantus said.

“I know”, I agreed, wiping the sweat that was starting to form on my forehead.

On both sides of the lava river were passages that all looked like they lead to whole other parts. One of which, looking through, I could see what seemed to be another larger room

like this one. That must have been where the lava flowed from. The rail went off down one of the doors to the right. I peered up at the back wall, just over about the middle point of the wall, which had a long window that stretched from left to right. On the other side of the window I assumed was another passageway. Suddenly I started to hear echoed talking, Silvantus heard it too. In a random hurry we darted across the bridge and through the door arch on the left at the back of the room. Through, we found another smaller room full of barrels, but at the back was a staircase that lead up. We rushed up the staircase. We found a long hall that ran to the right with the long window I had seen from before. In the hall was a couple of barrels and boxes and some pickaxes leaned up against the wall. The end of the hallway was pitch black as there was no light to illuminate there. Here we crouched as the talking loudened.

Eventually we saw three people walking out the door arch that the rail disappeared into and towards the canal of lava. One of them I recognized to be Toristen. The person to the very right was completely hidden by a large cloak, the same we saw outside. The middle man was wearing leather armour, with his left hand rested on the sword that hung from his belt. But I was shrouded in confusion ~~about~~ how Toristen was standing there when we had just seen him ~~about~~ ~~a half an hour ago~~ in town.

"I must say Toristen, we are making substantial progress", the man in leather armour said.

"Yes indeed Tren", Toristen responded to the man in leather, "But we need more power!"

The man in the cloak turned to him, in a deep voice he said, "The orb has been set up. Now only time will support us. As the sands have started, we have started."

I looked over at Silvantus, "The sands started?", I said in confused.

"Well, I hope we don't mess up like in Krosa³⁷", Tren said.

"Most definitely", Toristen said, the man in the cloak nodded.

The man in the cloak turned to Tren, "Report to Aesanae, my child." Tren nodded and then walked back through one of the corridors.

I looked back over at Silvantus, "A child of Aesanse?"

"Who is Aesanae?", Silvantus said.

When the man in leather walked out through the doorway, Toristen and the man in the cloak turned to each other. "Don't forget who runs this show here in Dahlmer", Toristen said highly annoyed.

"Toristen, calm down", the man said back.

"No, Aesanae put me in charge, not you. Just because you're some fancyman close to her doesn't mean you're in charge here. I am!"

The man in the cloak stood undeterred. In one swift move the man in the cloak pulled out a sword and drove it into the chest of Toristen. The eyes of Toristen grew wide, "Treason", Toristen said, but he was muffled by the hand of the man in the cloak. The man in the cloak laid Toristen on the ground as he took his last breath.

"We have to leave", Silvantus said. "Immediately!", I said.

The man in the cloak looked around, but he soon turned to leave down the same hallway as the man in leather, but there was a sudden loud clink. I looked over to see that Silvantus had

³⁷ Krosa - A subcontinent to the east of Orbert, to the west of Gata Vur, *Gata Pass*, of which is in between Krosa and Chedor, to the south of Raandeler and north of Teligims Ulhaf, *Teligims Oceans*.

knocked over one of the pickaxes. Silvantus and I froze with dead fear. We watched as the man in the cloak stopped and stood still, listening. After a second he nodded and then continued to walk, as if he knew the we were here and decided to ignore it. When he left, we slowly descended the staircase, walked over the canal of lava, through the room with the statue and up the stairs, where we found the cellar doors open, and the doors to the mausoleum partly closed. We exited and ran through the graveyard, not seeing the man in the cloak, and to Dahlmer where we found Uncle.

“Barag”, Silvantus called!

“Uncle”, I called!

“What’s wrong”, Uncle said confused as he watched our scared run?

We scrambled to catch our breath, “A man.. Toristen”, Silvantus said. “Sands”, I said. Uncle looked at us as if we had two heads, “Is Toristen in the desert?”

“Close”, Silvantus said.

“Aesanae”, I said.

“Who's Aesanae”, Uncle asked.

“We don’t know”, I said with a small attitude, frustrated that I didn’t know how to explain.

“Listen, catch your breath and tell me when you can speak”, Uncle said. Silvantus and I nodded, and as we caught our breath we began from the beginning. Once done Uncle peered off towards the hill that held the graveyards. “Interesting indeed. We should consult Ervetis on this.”

“No, what if he’s apart of the cult”, I said.

“Cult”, Uncle said?

“Yeah, The Children Of Aesanae. The cult. It’s gotta be some kind of cult if they kill each other so easily”, I said.

“Well, let’s not get ahead of ourselves now. We don’t know for sure, and we don’t know who Aesanae is either”, Uncle said.

“What about Toristen”, Silvantus asked?

“Our town butcher”, Uncle asked?

“Yeah”, I said!

“I don’t know if he’s involved”, Uncle said.

“We just told you he was”, I said!

“We could check his shop for answers then”, Silvantus said.

Uncle nodded, “Maybe we should, I’m still not sold on him being apart of a cult.”

Uncle lead us around the town, towards the grazing fields, before we came to a two story building with the sign that read *Átavast, Butcher*. The shop was dark, and so was the upstairs windows. Uncle tried the door, which opened as if the store was too.

“Toristen”, he called? No reply returned. We entered. Inside was a counter with freshly cut meat on it, to the right was a staircase up, to the left was a staircase down and at the back was all of the tables for cutting with the appropriate knives hanging on the wall just overhead.

“I’ll check up stairs”, Uncle told, “You two stay here.” We nodded. He turned and walked up the stairs. After a minute Uncle walked back down saying, “This can’t be right. Where is Toristen? He must be out gathering materials.”

“Could he be in the basement”, I asked?

Uncle looked over at the staircase down, “Why, yes he could”, he said in a new light, hoping to disprove any wrong doing that tarnished Toristen’s name!

He started for the stairs, followed by Silvantus and I. Once down, we came to a wide room with what looked like a shrine at the back. The shrine had many curves in it, with two impressive green gems at the top that watched the room like eyes.

“Probably a shrine to Eckos³⁸, right”, Uncle said rhetorically. He huffed and then said, “I guess you’re right. If this doesn’t smell of cult doings that I don’t know what does.”

I put my hand on Uncle shoulder, of whom seemed be to disdained about Toristen now. “I should have realized his new patterns. A broken heart is hard to mend”, he said.

“What”, I asked? Uncle turned to us, “Well, you see him and Chas had a very loving relationship, but when he got mixed up in a fight with some kind of cultist years ago Chas suddenly had forgotten all about Toristen. He fell heart broken because of it, but I didn’t think it would cause him to join a cult.”

Uncle turned, distraught like, and walked up the stairs. Silvantus and I spent no time staying in the basement and followed Uncle up. He walked out of the store, Silvantus closed the door behind us. We stopped out front of the house.

“And you say he’s dead”, Uncle asked over his shoulder as he stared out at the grazing Criei?

“I think so”, I said. He nodded and then walked into the town center and to the bar where we followed. He sat down at the bar again and ordered a tankard of mead. We sat awkwardly at the bar.

Suddenly, a man sitting in the corner of the room caught my eye. It was the same man as before, Ironeye, I think his name was. He stared shocked like before he turned his attention back down at the tankard in front of him.

“Hey, Eretis”, Uncle called, “You havn’t seen Toristen around, have you?”

Eretis walked over while cleaning a mug, “No, I can’t say I’ve seen him today. Why?”

“Oh no reason”, Uncle said, he played it off as if he wasn’t still hurt by all that he had heard and seen.

Once Uncle finished his drink he turned to us and said, “I need to visit Naharos.”

“Should we come”, I asked?

“If you want”, he replied. He paid Eretis, stood up and walked out followed by us.

³⁸Eckos - The Tutelary of Agrarian Culture (not of sheep or cattle though), and The Younger God of the Harvest, Food, Alcohol and of Fall.

Obtaining Stones,

South of the town and at a cabin was where we found ourselves. The cabin was seldom in the woods. Uncle had explained to us on the way that Naharos was a Tlántlíi³⁹, and that he was bound to the deity Marais⁴⁰.

Once we reached the cabin, Uncle knocked on the door and Naharos stood in the doorway. Naharos invited us in immediately. The cabin was small, with everything in one room. The kitchen to the left back, bedroom to the right back and sitting room to the close right. We sat on the leather couch as Uncle explained everything to him.

"I see", Naharos said once Uncle concluded. "This is dire indeed!"

"I don't know what to do. What if this cult ends up being the Nuwaz Cult⁴¹", Uncle said in dismay!

"Now Barag, don't think like that. My soul may belong to Marais, but I'd be damned if I couldn't promise you that Kovit⁴² is watching over you with a protective eye", Naharos said.

"It's a welcoming thought indeed, but I still don't know what to make of it", Uncle told.

Naharos turned to us, "And you two were in the graveyard and saw it?"

"Just like he told it", I said.

"Than describe the three men to me", Naharos said.

"One was wearing a black cloak", Silvantus said.

"Did it have any symbols on it, or were they wearing any masks", Naharos asked, to which we shook our heads no.

"The other was wearing leather armor and the last was Toristen", I told. Silvantus nodded to that.

Naharos turned back to Uncle, "I'm afraid to inform you that it couldn't be the Nuwaz Cult."

"How can you be so sure", Uncle asked?

"Because when the Nuwaz members meet they wear black bone masks", Naharos said.

"Well, what about the Eustrido cult", Uncle asked?

"Nope, they have a symbol on the back of their clothing: a stick figure with a circle overhead. I have to say I've never seen a cult act with a lack of symbolism. It means that we might be dealing with a new cult or what ever they are", Naharos said.

"Great, just what we need", Uncle said.

"Well actually you might want to hold your tongue. From the sound of things this cult might actually be pretty big or have some really good supporters. Did you hear a name", Naharos asked?

³⁹ Tlántlíi - Very special clergy that receive "visions" about events that are going to happen. They normally live in solitude on the edges of towns and cities to stay high on Mattenoot, a smelly root that increases the likelihood of having these visions.

⁴⁰ Marais - Old Goddess of Mountains, Caves and Volcanoes.

⁴¹ Nuwaz Cult - a cult based around death in the subcontinent of Raandeler. They are known for killing tons of people and capturing their souls in Soul Stones.

⁴² Kovit - The Patron Goddess of the Shadow Night Order Guild and New Goddess of Dark Knowledge (Magic), Mysteries and Secrets.

“Um, they called the man in leather Tren, if that helps”, I said.

“Yes it does. I assume that it might be Tren Emvana, a Vraovrama⁴³. I say that because that’s also how he dresses, in leather armor”, Naharos told.

“A Vraovrama”, Uncle said? He looked worried, and honestly a little sickly, “This is some heavy stuff Naharos.”

“You’re telling me”, Naharos said, himself starting to look worried as he kept a pondering face.

“Well, what should we do”, Uncle asked after a brief moment of silence?

“I’m not sure”, Naharos said.

“Well what do the Gods say”, Uncle said a little aggressively?

“Never mind what the Gods say, what do you say”, Naharos snapped back. He apologized and then said, “The Gods only put us here, they gave us the gifts of thought and opinions. They also gave us moral strength, I use it everyday”, Naharos said as he looked out through a window at the far end of the house.

Naharos stood up looking a little disconcert, “What I mean is, it may seem hard to not hold the Gods responsible to having constant interactions in our lives, I learned that when my son died.” Naharos started to grow tears from the corners of his eyes, “And I know that’s even harder to hear from a clergy. But what you think is best, is the best advice I can give you on this matter. I’m sorry, honestly I don’t know what to do.”

Uncle stood up too and hugged Naharos. “I’m sorry dear friend. I didn’t mean to get irrational and strick a nerve.”

“It’s fine”, Naharos said, “I’m also kinda emotional because I’m partly high on Mattenoot.”

Uncle smiled and gave a little laugh, “I knew I smelled something smelly on you!” Naharos wiped away a tear and then joined in with a small laugh too.

“Now Barag, can I ask a quest of you”, Naharos asked?

“Sure, what is it”, Barag asked?

“It’s not a long quest, only a trek to gather somethings for me”, Naharos said.

“I think we can handle it”, Uncle said with .

“Great. I stumbled upon a small source of Dirt Stones⁴⁴ a little ways to the east from here in a small grove with a small ruined temple surrounding it. The path is relatively worn into the wildlife so it shouldn’t be *that* hard to follow. Could you go collect some for me”, Naharos explained?

“I’m not sure I want to mess with Delard Illmortha⁴⁵”, *Dark Knowledge*, Uncle said.

“Don’t worry. All you’ll be doing is collecting them, not using them. I can promise that nothing bad will come from merely possessing them”, Naharos said.

“Okay”, Uncle said, he seemed distraught but I couldn’t tell if it was because of earlier or of this new task.

“Just keep in mind, if I’m not here when you return it’s because I might be in a vision or something might have happened. In that case, just hold on to them”, Naharos told.

⁴³ Vraovrama - The Vraovrama are essentially lesser powerful Vraovthaen. They are most comparable to demons.

⁴⁴ Dirt Stones - Apart of a collection of Elemental Stones, this falls under Dark Knowledge.

⁴⁵ Dark Knowledge - The name of choice for magic. It has two branches, Alpher Meines, *Element(al) Stones*, and Nurec, magic directly.

Uncle nodded. Silvantus and I stood as Uncle declared “We best be off to gather them than.”

We walked outside and looked to the left where we saw the worn out path Naharos instructed us to go forthward on. He than instructed us as we all walked outside that we were to follow the path and that it would shortly come to a four way fork. We had to follow the third one which would lead to the temple and stones.

We started forwards, the trees and grass and bushes seemed to be welcoming us as they waved in the wind. The path was a little perilous and thin at times, but we made it to the four way fork within the minutes.

“Third one”, Uncle said as he walked towards it. We followed Uncle, noting that this path was significantly less defined than the last. The path soon ran next to a creek, and the path dangerously clung to the edge of said creek. We followed the creek for a while before the path split away and to a small grove. At the center was what looked like an ancient temple. It was a small building, didn’t take up that much room as it seemed to be placed in between three trees probably twenty feet from each other. The decomposed structure, what was left anyway, was made of blue colored stone bricks. The ruin had no roof to cover the short hallway that lead to the also roofless main room, which was not much bigger then the hallway leading to it.

At the center of the room was a small swirl of light, interestingly. It seemed to be twirling the leaves and rocks that laid around it and then softly throw them away. At the core of this swirl of soft light was a pile of brown colored, tetragonal shaped crystals. These obviously were the source of the light swirl around them.

“Are those what we need”, Silvantus asked, breaking the omnipresent silence?

“Uot”, Yes, Uncle said. The three of us walked over and circled around them. I had never seen any, I’ve only heard of them in stories.

Uncle squatted to get a closer look at them before slowly reaching forwards. He seemed scared of what would happen to his hand if it touched the swirling light, but when he did the swirling light simply dissipated. He stared for a second before he reached and grabbed the handful of crystals. He opened a handkerchief and carefully placed the gems in. Uncle stood. “We might be wise to leave now”, he said.

“Wait a second”, Silvantus said, “Look, there’s words on the wall.”

Silvantus pointed to the back wall. Looking at the cracked, carved in words on the wall I managed to read, *Taken the glaive on this very day, For our master all must pay.*

“It’s the first stanza from the poem The Rune Of The Lost King God”, Uncle said as he tilted his head in interest and moved closer, but as he retracted he looked more confused then consoled.

“What”, I asked?

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard of a Lost King God”, Silvantus said. I nodded.

“Well, nothing is really known about him. Except that he ruled a tribe during the Third New Era, and he wasn’t a good tribe leader in the slightest. Stories tell that he was a vicious miscreant. Not to be missed in the slightest; in fact the story is apocryphal”, Uncle told.

“I’m not a big fan of this place anymore, we should leave”, Silvantus confessed.

Uncle nodded and lead the way out. But as we exited the ruin I got a yell from my bladder.

“As eerie as this place is, we must stay for a moment longer”, I said.

“Why”, Uncle asked?

“Cause I gotta see a river⁴⁶”, I said.

“Oh”, he said. He nodded.

I turned and walked a good thirty-forty feet into the woods and found a nice size tree. After a second or two: “Sceur”, I suddenly heard someone call from behind the tree. I finished going to the bathroom and then I looked around said tree. There I saw, sitting on a rock, was a woman with silver hair and a loose black dress. I stared for a second, not knowing what to think. The woman wore a sensual smile and was twirling strands of her hair in between her fingers. Within the next second I dropped to my knee and bowed my head as a sudden realization grew over me, it was the deity Kovit.

“Stand Sceur, and you may speak your tongue freely”, she told. She gave a little alluring laugh. “My Goddess, I’m humbled to be in your presence”, I stood.

She stood up as well and walked over to me, “My child, it may have crossed your mind, might not of, but I am here to help guide you on a quest you know nothing about and for a long time this ignorance will stand.” She brushed her hand down my cheek and smiled. I blushed.

“What do you mean, my Goddess?”

“You will know soon enough, but do not let this slip through your lips to anyone”, she said before she walked away and to behind a tree where the sound of her footsteps disappeared.

Not knowing what else to do, I turned and returned to Uncle and Silvantus feeling especially honored, but as the Goddess spoke I didn’t let on.

“Let’s go”, Uncle said in an upward tone, he seemed happy to leave this ruin. “It’s gonna start raining anyway.”

I looked to the sky and for the first time noticed the dark clouds overhead. We walked away and within the minutes it started raining. We started running. We made our way back to Naharos’s house, but we found that the lights were off and the door was locked, he also didn’t answer when we knocked.

“Back to the house”, Uncle called!

Silvantus and I nodded vigorously. We ran the way back to Dahlmer, trying our best to avoid the mud. Uncle ended up slipping on mud so we rushed to help him to his feet. We almost cursed as the rain poured down hard.

“Might as well live in the Gods damned desert, there’s no rain there”, Uncle yelled!

When we finally got back to Uncle’s house we changed into dry clothes and Uncle hung the wet clothing near the fire with a very large pot underneath to catch the water that fell. We sat by the fire for a bit, not really saying anything. My mind was caught with the Goddess and I couldn’t shake what she said. That I was on a quest that I knew nothing about. What did she mean? Why me? So many questions formed before Uncle finally said, “Do you remember anything about your aunt, Sceur?”

I looked over at him, while Silvantus looked at who was talking. Uncle just stared into the fire. “Um, not much. I remember her warm smiles, her nice blue dresses, her cookies.” Uncle nodded, “She always was a fan of those blue dresses.”

“Why, what’s pulling your mind”, I asked?

⁴⁶ This is one of many alternatives to saying you have to pee.

“The rain. It was the same kind of rain on her funeral. I like to tell myself that the Gods were crying, especially The Silent Lady⁴⁷, but I know that’s not true.” He stood up and walked into the kitchen where he started to make tea. I knew he left for the kitchen because he was close to tears, I always remembered Uncle being like that, strong.

Silvantus looked on when Uncle brought the tea out. “Sorry about that”, Uncle apologized, “I just miss her so, ya know.” I nodded, “So do I.”

We sat in an awkward silence as we sipped our tea and watched the fire. Once finished Uncle and I headed upstairs as Silvantus made himself comfortable on the couch. I crawled into the window sill bed as the three of us called out, “Qwad-niš”, *Goodnight*, to each other. I, soon after, drifted off to Kraunlarg⁴⁸ where I knew Asta⁴⁹ would watch over my mind.

⁴⁷ Hulena - Older Goddess of Rain and Servitude(not slavery), and is associated with Sacrifices in Life.

⁴⁸ Kraunlarg - *Dreamland*, is a plane in Pahmer(the Third Dimension) that holds the dreams of the Yonkapas and all other beings. It was created by Skiymens and Asta, with the help of Lopetag of course, as a gift to the Yonkapas for being created. Dreams themselves were a gift to the Yonkapas by Protas, but being a Galooagotic she couldn’t do much, so she handed the title over to Asta. Belfarus(a Vraothen), though, has also tried to stay on the good side of the Yonkapas by deeming himself a bearer of good dreams. So while Kraunlarg is a real place, it doesn’t have an actual “God”, instead it has a protector, Asta, whom watches over it and keeps order among those whose minds had been teleported to the realm.

⁴⁹ Asta - Mavmen Kraun, *Lady Dream*, The Patron Goddess of Dreams and the New Goddess of Moon's, Darkness and Sleep.

Ironeye,

Argult, 28, Nelha, Year 2,896, Era 20⁵⁰

Yesterday I arrived in the New World. It was great to see Uncle again, it's been years. The lands that we call the New World aren't as bad as they talk about at home, maybe the traders are just trying to scare the youth; the rumors hold up like sand.

Queer like though, there is also some kind of mysterious cult here that troubles me. They seem more in the open then back in Unehtradein. Uncle seemed full of dismay at the hearing that a man by the name of Toristen had died, of whom was a member of said cult and was shockingly killed by another member in a black robe.

I peered up, thinking of what to write next. I let the journal lay flat across my legs.

All of this happened in a mine underneath of the cemetery on a hill adjoined to the town. Not that I'm not scared that anything is going to happen to me, but I feel apprehensive to leave my bed.

I looked up and over at Uncle's bed, of which he did seem to be in. I climbed from my bed and put my journal in my satchel that I keep on my person at all times. I walked down to the first floor where I also didn't find Silvantus. I shrugged it off and looked to the kitchen to make myself some quick breakfast. Once done I looked out through the front window and saw Silvantus on his knees, obviously praying. I walked out front with a smile and up to him; he was whispering and didn't seem to notice me approach. I reached out and tapped his shoulder, of which he jumped forwards, scared like.

"Sceur, thank the Gods you're still here", he said!

"What do you mean", I asked?

"Everyone in the town is gone, and worst yet the town is surrounded by sand", he said!

"What", I looked around for the first time, noticing. My eye's widened as I came to realize that the town was in fact surrounded by a wall of sand at least twenty feet high. The tan sands fretted not as it encompassed all. It blocked the way to the Cloudship hub, it blocked all routes leading out of the town, but interestingly enough it didn't block the route to the graveyard on the hill, instead it encompassed that too, forming a misshaped oval.

"This can't be happening", I said!

"By the Gods, open your eyes! It's happening! I've been praying all damn morning", Silvantus said, strenuated!

"With dirt nuggets⁵¹, what are we going to do!"

"I don't know!"

"We have to think of something!"

⁵⁰ Thursday, the 28th of the month Nelha, in the year 2,896. The Era has not been named yet so the amount of Eras so far is numbered. They won't find out what the era is named until the Dahdelpanei comes and exclaims it. This normally happens after a huge event happens. The Dahdelpanei is, in short, the Courtship of the Gods. There are five deities in this group, Sátarus - New God of Order, Uaı̂on - New God of Justice, Áttoune - New Goddess of Prophacy, Eviiı̂s - New God of Freedom Rights, and Thákı̂nı̂s - New God of Rights Established by Customs and Laws.

⁵¹ It's an alternative to saying by the gods.

“We’re going to die”, he sat down on the edge of the fountain and cried. I started to pace back and forth before I dropped to my knees to pray: *Please Guider Timenii, guide us through this perilous time, please give us the umph to save what can be saved of ourselves. And you too Kovit, if you’re here with us please help. Shadow Mother, I’m afraid of dying. You came to me for a reason.*

I climbed to my feet and looked over at Silvantus, who was still crying. *If the gods won’t help, than we’ll have to do this ourselves*, I thought!

“Silvantus, stand! We must save ourselves, we can’t rely on the Gods for everything. Naharos was right, we must take action too”, I said.

He looked up wiping the tears from his eyes. He nodded and then stood. “Maybe the Graveyard”, he said.

“What about it?”

“Didn’t the tunnels below the Graveyard have other routes? What if one leads out of the town?”

“Now you’re thinking!”

“Blazing inferno, why is this reality!”, someone yelled. We looked over towards the bar and saw the man Uncle described as Ironeye. He looked directly to us, “You! Thank Luck that I’m not the only one stuck here!” He ran over to us, “We have to leave now!”

“By route of the graveyard”, I studied his eye patch.

“The graveyard?”, he quandered.

“Yeah, there are tunnels underneath”, Silvantus said.

“What? No!”, he exclaimed. “I refuse to dig through the graves!”

“That’s not nearly what I meant”, Silvantus said, “The mausoleum has a staircase into tunnels! Some kind of mine’s down there.”

Ironeye paused while displaying a thinking face, “The cursed mine?”

“Cursed?”, I asked.

“Yeah! A mine use to exist there. The Gods grew weary of their digging and demanded that they not dig to the Pharklad Mountains. But greed took the better of them and they dubiously dug anyway. Than one day, the mine collapsed and they built the mausoleum over the shaft”, he explained.

“Oh”, Silvantus and I said.

Ironeye sat down on the edge of the fountain next to Silvantus, “Don’t suppose you have any other ideas, do you?” His voice sounded lighter; the thought of the lack of ideas and the imminent death seemed to disperse the panic and brought some version of acceptance.

Silvantus pointed at the graveyard, “That might be our only escape.” Ironeye sighed, and then ran his hand through his straight brown hair. I noticed, as well, that he had eyes like lapis lazuli, deep blue and bright. I wondered why he wore an eyepatch and what had happened that made him wear it.

“I guess you’re right, I don’t want to spend any more time here”, he said, standing. Silvantus stood.

“But wait, where do we go after the tunnels”, I asked?

Ironeye looked of to the distance, where the Pharklad Mountain Range could be seen.

“There”, he said simply. “Lases cer abrigo”, *Let’s get going.*

We walked towards the graveyard, watching as the motionless sand towered over us. I felt like I was in a crevice, or like an ant in the cracks of cement.

“The name’s Ironeye, by the way”, he said, he didn’t turn around. I found it weird how our fear had turned into a slight worriedness and that we could talk without yelling at each other.

“My name’s Silvantus.”

“I’m Scur.”

He nodded, again while not looking at us. He looked stern, for a lack of a better word. Even though I knew nothing about him, and seeing him lie around in the bar, I would assume him to be a drunk, full of dereliction. But something about his stature, the lack of the smell of alcohol and the way he presented himself made me feel that *he* had been failed and fell into a version of depression. I would pray to Diira⁵² for his sake.

We walked in awkward silence for the short walk we had, and when we reached the mausoleum Ironeye looked a little hesitant. But with him or without we were going to leave the town, so Silvantus and I opened the doors and led to the cellar doors. Opening them too, Ironeye peered down with a new found interest.

“If the gods punish us for this, I’ll never forgive you”, he said, his pointer finger up. He turned and then started the descent, us following.

“You know, I’d bet that it’s the Vraothen doing this”, Silvantus said.

“Who else would be doing this”, I said.

“True.”

“Vraothen or not, I don’t want to stick around to find out. This may be my homeland, but I’d leave if the Vraothen were running rampant. Unless it’s Belfarus⁵³, but where he is the others follow”, Ironeye said.

When we had traversed the stairs we came to the hall that lead to the room with the statue. Ironeye studied it, never breaking eye contact with it; though he also seemed weary about the lava behind the glass. We walked through the second large arch and into the room with the canal of lava. Ironeye did not seem in the slightest thrilled to be here, and quite frankly neither was I.

“Wow”, Ironeye spoke, “I had never thought it would be this big, or prestigious. The gods must have had a good reason to stop the mining.”

“Yeah”, I said, “Maybe there were summoning things.” Ironeye shrugged.

We stood, looking around until we all noticed that there was a distant sound of indecipherable motion coming from the same door arch that we had previously seen the man in leather, Tren, and the man in the black cloak walk through. Once I realized that, I did a double take. Toristens body wasn’t there anylonger. Silvantus didn’t seem to of remembered and so I spent no time rejoying his memory.

⁵² Diira - The Patron Goddess of those who are Depressed, and The New Goddess of Islands, Lagoons, Mirages and of Depression.

⁵³ Belfarus - The Prince God of Wishes, Good Omens, Ambitions, Hedonism and Good Dreams. He is the only Vraothen that any being, god, Yonkapas, etc., trust because he persistently tries to prove that he’s good and to get away from the Vraothen. But that’s also hard because he’s in love with Lunacratii, Prince Goddess of Darkness, Nightmares, Debauchery and Bad Omens, whom normally follows him around.

“Where do we go than”, Ironeye asked?

“Where the noise is”, I responded walking towards the arch. Even though I was indeed scared of what was making the sound, I was also very curious.

We walked through and found that, after a small hallway, there was a huge, square excavation with a staircase-rail track that wrapped around the edge. The staircase had a large wooden railing, and the rail track was powered by VuStone⁵⁴, as there was VuStone tracks built in every few feet. We walked to the staircase and peered down at the depth.

“I can’t believe this”, Ironeye said!

“What”, I asked?

“I’ve dreamt about all of this. You two, the sands, this mine”, he told, “It’s baffling me.”

Ironeye lead down quite fast, which actually surprised me given his level of precaution previously. The walk down wasn’t fun as it was a long descent. But when we got near the bottom, the sounds of people talking started to grow and when we reached the bottom itself Ironeye stopped to listen. The staircase lead to an opening in the wall and we had ducked behind the right side. Ironeye peered around the edge of the rock, “By the Gods, there’s Yonkapas down here. Traitorous bastards”, he whispered.

“Are you sure”, I asked?

“I can see it with my eye, and you can obviously hear their talking”, Ironeye said.

I looked around the corner, making sure to stay out of sight. Around the corner lead to long stone platform, running left to right, with a large ledge based metal fence. On the wideish platform was two rail tracks, leading out of a small mouth opening so only the minecarts could pass through on the right. The left lead on a good distance and the track followed before going into a taller mouth, of which I assumed that people could ride the minecarts to somewhere else.

There were two Yonkapes standing on the other side of the farthest track, one was holding a clipboard, though what they were saying was drowned out into mumbles. They watched as a minecart came slowly down besides them.

“Where are we”, Silvantus asked?

“The mine beneath the graveyard. Beyond that I haven’t the slightest”, Ironeye confessed.

“Should we try to get their attention”, Silvantus asked?

Ironeye turned, “What if they don’t want us here, or to know of this place? This mine has been closed for nearly two centuries.”

“Oh”, Silvantus said, “My fault.”

“So how do we proceed”, I asked?

“We can’t do anything until they move. As I said, they might not want us here”, Ironeye said. It was kinda hard to hear him.

So we waited for a couple-a minutes before the two guys dressed like miners, and as dirty as them too, turned and walked away. Once they disappeared down a staircase Ironeye stood, but looked around frantically again. “You can never be too safe”, he said. Quickly he, followed by us, darted across the platform to the rail. Looking over we found ourselves dumbfounded at the sight. Looking out at the colossal cavern, with all of the catwalks of rail

⁵⁴ VuStone - A graphite stone, found semi deep in rock, always near lava. This stone is a greenish black, but when activated with a Malt Torch, made of crushed up Sufralt gems, which causes a reaction in the Vu to glow red and actually power things like minecarts.

tracks, out at the floor that seemed to be seven or eight levels down, each level seeming to be twenty feet, and at the mine holes that dotted the walls like the stars in the night sky. On the floor were huge furnaces, smelting pots, plentitude of anvils, each with a person manning them and hammering away, there was huge machines compressing what I only could assume was the metal being mined. Those compressing machines, with their giant pumps on top, seemed to be what was making the extremely loud piston sounds.

“With Sthet⁵⁵, I’ve never seen anything like this in my life”, he flipped his eye patch up and I was even more shocked then when I first saw the cavern, that his eye under the patch was an ‘iron eye’ and looked exactly like a normal eye, with a pupil. I kinda stared at him for a few seconds, watching his eye look back and forth, before I forced myself to look away. *So that’s where his name came from*, I thought.

“Where do we go?”, Silvantus asked, yelling over the sound.

Ironeye flipped his patch back down before, he thought, anyone would see his eye, “I have no idea. I wish I knew.”

The portal Scur, find the portal, I suddenly heard in the back of my mind. My eyes opened wide, but I came to realize that it must have been Kovit. I remembered the stories my mom use to tell me about Gods that choose Yonkapas for quests and talked to them through their mind.

“Portal”, I said.

“What”, Ironeye said, “Speak up, I can’t hear you!”

“Portal, there’s a portal”, I said louder.

“How do you know that”, Ironeye said, his eyebrows slanting giving him a suspicious look.

“I’ll have to explain later”, I told, “Right now we have to find the portal.”

“Okay...”, Ironeye said. He turned his attention back towards the floor. “Look for a deep red glow.”

I looked down and watched the miners walking around, pushing carts, carrying tools from here to there, and others that looked like they were on a break.

“There!”, Silvantus exclaimed, pointing towards the back wall.

I saw it after a few seconds, Ironeye nodded once he saw it.

“But the question is now, how do we get over there? That’s about three levels down”, he said. A minecart passed behind us. “I’m not sure”, I said, “There’s too many miners here. A good thing, we don’t have to worry about making noise. I can just about hear you!”

“Exactly”, Ironeye said!

We scanned the two levels on the far wall. “What about the carts”, Silvantus asked?

“What about them”, I asked?

“Well, if the tracks connect we could hid in one and get out in front of the portal”, he said.

“Now that’s thinking!”, Ironeye said with a smile as he patted Silvantus’ back.

We stood and walked to the rail track behind us, “What happens if they don’t connect”, I asked?

“Than we have to do everything in our power to not get caught”, Ironeye told simply.

⁵⁵ Sthet - The New Goddess of Battle, War Tactics and one of two Goddesses of Beauty.

When the next minecart came by, empty, we climbed in. "Now do everything you can to not fly out!", Ironeye said. I nodded with a smile. The cart slowly pulled forwards until we came to the tall mouth at the end of the platform. The minecart suddenly picked up speed and I knew we hit a VuStone powered rail. We went rapidly into the torch lit tunnel, holding on for dear life as the minecart tipped down with the groove and made a sharp turn. We found that it came out on the level below us.

"They should make a ride out of this", Silvantus said.

Ironeye peaked his head out and looked around. He quickly ducked back in and said, "Don't move, there's people around."

He was right, as the minecart, slowed by the lack of momentum, passed by I could hear their chatter. I was clenching my eyes shut, thinking, *Just don't look in this one!* I breathed easy when their talking drifted out and was consumed by the piston sound of the compression machines. I jumped a little when the cart again hit another VuStone powered rail and we picked up speed again. Just as before we rapidly flew down the tunnel and came to another slow down on the third level down.

"We have to get out here", Ironeye peak his head out and looked. He must have seen nobody because he, while keeping himself low, climbed from the cart. Silvantus practically jumped out, but I did the same as Ironeye. Ironeye lead us to the cavern wall and we stopped. We gazed out at the sliver of portal that we could see, through a doorway.

"We gotta get over there", he said.

"There's three tracks here, do you think that one leads around to that side", I asked?

Ironeye scanned the level, "I guess, we'll have to wait and see if another one comes around."

And soon enough one did. We, again while keeping low to the floor, ran over to the cart and jumped in. But we were not happy that we found that the cart had a ton of coal and our clothing got blackened.

"Almost there", Ironeye said, keeping his head peaked. I felt the cart make the first turn, hitting another VuStone powered rail, and then the second, hitting a final VuStone powered rail.

"Out, out, out", Ironeye said!

We all jumped out and ran into the room with the portal. We leaned against the wall with the door as not to be seen and caught our breath, we all were in a state of panic. The air was also thick and hot from the furnaces and smelting.

"The portal", Ironeye spoke semi out of breath. "I've never one in person, only in tales!"

The portal's black and lava, looking, translucent form resembled a vortex, though no through image showed on it's surface. It glowed a deep red color, much like VuStone when it's activated. It was encased by either bedrock or some other kind of dark stone.

"Should we press through", Silvantus asked?

"Do we have any other choice? I think not, we must", I told.

"You first", Silvantus said!

I looked over at Ironeye, "You first." He huffed and then walked up to the towering portal. He stepped up and entered the portal, disappearing instantly. Silvantus and I stood in stupor, before Ironeye reappeared and said, "Břául", *come on!* He disappeared again and then we jumped through. It felt a little weird, and lasted only a second.

Once through, we found ourselves in another room. Ironeye lead us out, but made us hide behind a bolder to the right because there were people walking around.

“Oh boy”, I said, “More people, we can’t catch a break!”

We were in a cave, a large cave. Nowhere near the size of the last, and this one looked like it formed naturally. Ironeye suddenly dropped his mouth, “The Helcras⁵⁶!”

We looked over and found that the lifeless bodies of the Helcras laid in the rocks of the cave side like fossils. They looked peaceful, but at the same time like they were in pain.

“A race that disobeyed the Gods and payed the ultimate price. Honestly I thought it was one of those myths used to keep the children in line under the Gods. Now I know for sure the Culture Leaders⁵⁷ weren’t lying”, Ironeye confessed.

“Not at all”, I said.

“I’d never turn my back on the Gods”, Silvantus said!

“Neither would I”, I said!

“Me three, look at what happens to those that do. Look at Horendinii⁵⁸ and their place in Nehro⁵⁹”, Ironeye agreed!

We smiled at each other, and I was happy that we had just made our first connection together! We looked back out at the cave, also lit by torches. It, by far, was more quiet in here and we could actually hear what they were saying, well in parts. The people were talking about how the cave was much more colder than the outside, and that there was a man on a ledge near the cave entrance with an Airship. Though they doubted that he had any knowledge of the cave or what they were doing. I didn’t even know what they were doing.

“Did you hear that”, I said!

“Yeah, there’s a cave entrance”, Ironeye said, “But where?”

I pointed to the right, where there was a bend in the cave, “That way, that’s where they walked from.”

“Good eye”, he said!

Ironeye then started, leading us from boulder to boulder as to not be seen. Eventually we got on the edge of the bend of the cave, still a little ways down from the bodies of the Helcras, and we could see the very bright light from outside.

“There”, Silvantus said!

“I can’t believe we’re gonna get out of here alive”, I said!

⁵⁶ The Helcras were tall and dense, and had a resilient grey skeleton that made up their body. They also had a small flame in their chest, and if by chance or some kind of intervention it goes out, they die. They were killed by the Gods for worshipping their Pretender God, Buolwarke.

⁵⁷ Culture Leaders - They are the Cultural Leaders of the Yonkapas society. They remind the people of their places in the world under the Eyrthruosus Religion and of the history of all the lands, where they live in particular. They are normally arbiters, scholars and priests and can be found primarily in cities or other important locations.

⁵⁸ Horendinii is the belief in what Horenda, The Mad King, said and did. He, himself wasn’t as when he died the faith was made in his honor, but the belief is against the entire religion, the New Gods, the Old Gods, the Galooagotic, the First Seven, etc..

They are against the Gods and are for humanism, not divinism.

⁵⁹ Nehro is the Underworld of this mythology.

“Well believe, we’re gonna do it”, Ironeye said, “But we gotta get there first and we’re running out of boulders on this side.”

I looked at Ironeye and then to Silvantus, making eye contact, “What are you thinking?”

“Do you think that Ironeye could pull off being Tren Emvana”, I asked?

“Who me”, Ironeye asked, pointing to himself before sneezing.

“I think he could”, Silvantus agreed, “But what about the eye patch?”

“If they question him he can question who they think they’re talking to. You know they’ll buckle under the pressure, or they think they’ll be killed”, I said.

“That’s smart”, Ironeye said, “But how do we pull it off, what about you two?”

“Easy, we’ll walk back to the portal and act like you just caught us snooping around. If anyone asks, tell them that you want to personally ‘deal’ with us, if you know what I mean”, I said.

“Yep”, he said, he drug his thumb across his neck and made a neck snapping sound.

Ironeye turned and we, low to the ground, walked back to the portal. Once there I instructed Ironeye to hold one of our arms each behind our back. He nodded and then we walked out.

“Make sure to look scared Silvantus”, I said!

“I will”, he said, and boy did he look it. I felt the same way because if this didn’t work we would be killed on the spot. We walked down the path to the main way of the cave and everyone looked at us, but we kept walking. Soon though, before we reached the bend, approached us.

“Hey, who are you”, the portly man questioned?

Ironeye turned to him, sinister and annoyed like. It actually kinda scared me.

“Who do you think moron, do you not recognize me”, Ironeye said!

The man looked a little intimidated, “N-n-no sir.”

“I’m Tren”, Ironeye said!

“Oh, yeah it’s just that you look a little different”, he put out his hands in a calm down way, “Not that there’s anything wrong with your look! Um, who are these two though?”

“Two Gods lovers I found snooping around”, Ironeye said, “But I’m gonna deal with them personally. Now mortal, lead me to the cave exit so I can do what excites me and throw them from the cliff!”

“Y-y-yes sir”, the man turned nervously around and I couldn’t help but to grow a small smile in the corner of my mouth. The portly man walked pretty fast, as he was obviously scared out of his wits. As we walked by everyone stared at us as well, unnerving me.

“And portly man”, Ironeye called, “What’s this talk about a man with an airship?”

The man turned and started to walk backwards, “Word is he’s a Cloudheart from the Old World. Don’t worry though, sir, he doesn’t suspect a thing that’s happening here!”

“Good”, Ironeye said slowly with a smile.

We walked what seemed like a mile until we finally reached the cave entrance. “Here ya go sir. Nobody’ll bother you while you do your doings”, the portly man assured Ironeye.

“Thank you”, Ironeye said, “and where in location is the Cloudheart, I wanna spook him. I can dump these two as well near him. Hit two things done at once. Make today efficient, ya know.”

“Yes, of course sir. He’s in that direction”, the portly man said pointing to the right and down a path, “If you follow this trail it’ll take you to just underneath him. And good luck with your scare!”

“Luck, ha, I don’t need luck. I’m a Vraovrama”, Ironeye said!

The portly man nodded with a smile, nervously rubbing his hands together before he power walked back into the cave. Ironeye lead us down the trail before I said, "Alright we're far enough, let my arm go."

"Oh right", Ironeye said, "Sorry!"

Looking down off the edge of the mountain we were on, the Pharklad mountain, I could see the extremely large Ogarii Nalsad, *Ogarii Desert*.

"Wait, where are we", I asked?

Ironeye and Silvantus both look over, realizing to the same degree as I that we weren't near Dahlmer anymore.

"I don't know. I don't like it", Ironeye said.

"I second that", Silvantus said.

"Third", I said.

"We need to stop staring and move though, they're going to notice my lack of return within the hour and have search parties."

"Look, there's - er was Dahlmer", Silvantus said, pointing. He was right, there was nothing but a big lump in the sand where the town use to stand. Most of the forest around it too was also consumed by the sands.

"Grim indeed", Ironeye said

"Most definitely", I said!

"Dahlmer aside though, we have to leave now. I'll scale this damn mountain if I have to to reach that Cloudheart", Ironeye said!

We started to the right again, wondering for I have no clue how long until we could see the shadow of the envelope on the mountain side. Not having a trail we had to walk up the semi steep slope. We started running when we when the slope leveled and little until we reached the cloudship. There we found a man with a tight white, but dirty, sleeveless shirt, big baggy jeans and a big utility belt, and goggles.

At first when he saw us he was a little apprehensive, but he soon gave a warm welcoming smile.

"How can I help you folks", he said, "Honestly I didn't think anybody'd be up here."

"Please take us as far away from this mountain as we can go!", Ironeye sounded frantic almost.

The man's expression deepened, "Why?", he asked.

"There's a cult mining this mountain", Ironeye told.

The man looked around, "This mountain?"

"Yep."

"But that's forbidden by the Gods."

"I know, but they're a cult. They don't listen to rules."

The man huffed, "This better not be a whoose to rob me."

"We swear, let's just go!"

We boarded the ship and as the Cloudheart started up the Cloudship he talked to us from the exposed engine in the middle of the small deck, "The name's Cloudheart Sterd."

"I'm Scur", I said.

"I'm Ironeye", Ironeye said.

"And I'm Silvantus", Silvantus told.

“Nice to meet you all”, Cloudheart Sterd said!

We stood up straight and walked towards the steering wheel, “So where’ya going?”

“Fiiř Fellenhob”, Ironeye said.

“Wait, who can we go to in Fiiř Fellenhob! We can’t trust anyone”, I said pessimist like, “Sorry Sterd.”

“There is someone I know we can trust in Fiiř Fellenhob”, Ironeye said.

“Who”, Silvantus asked, worried like?

“My sister”, Ironeye said, “She’s the toughest of the toughest, and very pious too! There’s no way a cult, or anyone for that fact, could get in her head.”

Fiiř Fellenhob,

I reflected softly, falling into a reverie. I seemingly traveled back, years ago, when my father would bring me to the mountains of Neasend, to my grandfather's house. It was a small house, made of bricks with a white spackle finish. I use to lay in the grass near the patio that overlooked the sloped green and lush valley below. Grandmom use to come sit with me and tell me the stories of the Gods and of our people. The view from the left port side of the cloudship brought back a flow of memories. I only wish they were still alive.

I looked over towards the steering wheel and saw Silvantus and Ironeye standing next to Cloudheart Sterd. They were engaged in a conversation, so I walked over to join in.

"So from the Kelp Forest⁶⁰ we flew to Krosa", Sterd told.

"Wow, you've been all over", Silvantus said.

"Tell me, what was the Kelp Forest like? I know what it looks like, but what's the feeling", Ironeye asked?

Sterd paused and grew a thinking face while fluctuating his chin, "Eerie. Very eerie. It creeped my cartographer out even though he had been there many-a times."

"I'll bet", Ironeye agreed.

"Hey Sterd, if you're from the Old World, why'd ya come to the New World", Silvantus asked? I nodded.

"Well, I came to the New World on a quest. A search for a god. I need to ask a favor of him", he told.

"What god is in the New World", I asked?

"Sterdigii⁶¹", he responded.

"The Mountain God, but why", Ironeye asked? Sterd looked over, expressionless.

"There's only one reason why someone would want to speak with Sterdigii...", Ironeye told. The look in his eye was empathy and he grew a long face. He put his hand on Sterd's shoulder saying, "I'm sorry."

"It's okay", Sterd said.

"Wait, what happened? What does that mean", I asked? I looked over at Silvantus who shrugged.

"One day you'll understand why people look for The Mountain God", Ironeye told, "Just hope you never have to."

Sterd put a wooden square box around the steering wheel, I think to keep it from moving, and walked over to the engines again. Silvantus and I walked over to the front of the ship and stared off at the long desert under and to the right of us, and the seemingly receding

⁶⁰ Imagine a forest where the trees are kelp and there is a very heavy mist overhead, that's a Kelp Forest. It's on land, not in the water.

⁶¹ Sterdigii - Moniker: The Mountain God, is a really powerful being made from stone, who deals specifically with necromancy for loved ones. Though very, very few actually find him.

subtropical landscape to the left. We watched the Jóvairn⁶² floating around on the desert floor, which didn't seem to care if they were blended in or not. I looked over, he was sweating and so was I.

"Sure is much much hotter here than Unehraidein", I said.

"Much, but we are pretty far from the Anist Desert", he said.

"That's true too", I said in agreement.

I let my head fall into my arms that I was leaning my chin on and exasperated, lifting my head back up, "I can't believe that all of this has happened so far", I said. Silvantus looked over, "I know what you mean."

"Well yeah. I just - It's happening so fast! That's what I can't wrap my head around", I said.

"Yeah, only, what like two weeks ago we met. And now we're in the New World avoiding a cult and riding in a Cloudship", he said.

"I'm just glad to have someone to go through this with. It would suck a lot more if we're weren't in a pair, ya know", I said.

"By far", he replied.

I took a second, right there, to stop and just enjoy the cool wind that was blowing past us. It felt welcoming, like a refreshing hug. Even if the discussion earlier was slightly downing, there was a tranquil about all of this.

Just then Silvantus tapped me, pointing out at the lands to the far forwards left, "Look! There's a town, must be the one Ironeye talked about!"

"Oh yeah.. I see it. Ironeye, look", I called!

Ironeye and Sterd came power walking over.

As the Okta Ucran, *Hollow Mercy*, Sterd's cloudship, flew closer and closer I could see the entire extent of Fiiř Fellenhob come into view, and I noted it's features. The town was a slightly distorted square shape that was itself surrounded by a large stone wall, and everything inside of those tall walls, except for the frame working of the builds and the network of catwalks at the back of the town, was made of wood. These buildings though were taller than that of Dahlmer and some were even seven floors high. Not as high as the tallest buildings in Unehraidein, though.

In the center of the town was a tall fort looking castle, which was all made of light colored cobblestone and was surrounded by a small field on all sides. To the south of the castle, inside of a plaza were two twin fountains with a single tree in the middle, and on three sides of the fountains were large temples with highly decorated multi stained glass windows. Each of the temples had one large stained glass window looking at the plaza that the said temples formed. From these pictures I could just make out which deity each temple was to. The one to the left of the fountains was to Hiyathan⁶³, the one in the middle was to Nanso⁶⁴ and the one to the right was to Gultdii⁶⁵. There was also a statue I noticed in front of the temple for Gultdii, which

⁶² The Jóvairn - Human sized floating snow monsters typically found in the north and on mountains. Their counterpart is a copy but in sand form. They both have a swirl under them that basically keeps them afloat, snow for the snow one and sand for the sand one.

⁶³ Hiyathan - The Older God of Autumn and Nature, specifically Trees, of which he came to inhabit

⁶⁴ Nanso - The Protector of the Wilderness and the Younger Goddess of Nature and of Women

⁶⁵ Gultdii - The Younger God of Suns, Light and Summer

seemed to be of him with his right hand extended forwards, and his left hand was around whom I presumed to be Oris⁶⁶, his wife. And at the far back of the town, in the direction of the desert there was a grand, white stone cathedral to which I can only presume one deity, Ygmar⁶⁷.

"This is what a proper town should look like", I said excitedly, extending my arm outwards as if to hug the town with my excitement.

"Hey, watch it Scour", Ironeye said, "Dahlmer is a very fine town!"

"I know, but this is more like Neasend", I said!

Sterd walked back over to the steering wheel, followed by Ironeye. Sterd maneuvered the Cloudship downwards and to the network of catwalks when we reached the town. He stopped the ship here. The four of us exited, only to be surrounded by guardsmen with swords drawn. Ironeye stepped forwards, drawing a short sword, "What is the meaning of this!"

The guardsmen stood stern, not saying anything.

"Answer me! I demand council with my sister!"

Within a minute, a man in more prestigious armor stepped forwards. He approached Ironeye with a smile, and when Ironeye recognized him the two hugged.

"Gevhe, ho'o gro'ote tass korav", *Gevhe, great to see you*, Ironeye said! Ironeye turned and told, "Gevhe, this is Scour, Silvantus and Cloudheart Sterd", Ironeye pointed to each of us respectively. He then said to us, "Hekhiedil Gevhe os theet", *This is Highshield Gevhe*. The four of us exchanged handshakes.

"I have the three of them to thank with my life", Ironeye told.

"Really, for what, may I ask", Highshield Gevhe asked?

"Well, first these two saved me in Dahlmer—"

"Dahlmer, what happened in Dahlmer", Gevhe asked cutting Ironeye short?

"Well, that's why I need council with my sister", Ironeye told, obviously withholding the information. "Then they helped me in a deep tunnel, exit a cave, and then Sterd flew us away from danger."

Gevhe looked pleased at hearing that and thanked us for it. He then looked back at Ironeye, "And, sorry for the scare first of all. We've had some, let's say, *troubling* reports of attacks from other towns near us. Anyway, you and your friends are more than welcome here!"

Gevhe started to walk away when Sterd spoke up saying, "I'm sorry, but I really must be going."

The three of us looked over at Sterd. There was no point in asking why. Even if I didn't understand who the Mountain God was, or why people go looking for him, I knew it had great importance.

"Well, good luck adventurer", Ironeye said!

"Yeah, it was very nice meeting you", I said!

"I hope you are able to find the Mountain God", Silvantus said!

Sterd shook all of our hands and then turned to walk on the ship, but he stopped suddenly and then walked back to Ironeye. He put his hand on Ironeye's shoulder and then said to him full heartedly, "You'll find a way. I can bet my life on that."

⁶⁶ Oris - The Younger Goddess of Astronomy, Snow and Winter

⁶⁷ Ygmar - The New Goddess of Deserts, Plateaus and the giver of life to the deserts(of which the other gods ignored)

Ironeye looked very emotionally, knowing exactly what he meant even though I was in the dark for a second time. They shook hands again.

“You have safe travels, you hear! May the Gods bless your journey”, Ironeye told!

Sterd smiled and then walked onto the ship. We stood watching as Sterd piloted the soon to move Cloudship. We watched as it ascended and then fly off back in the direction of the Pharklad Mountains.

We turned, noting that most of the guards had gone. Only two stood left, so I figured they were stationed there. Ironeye started forwards and down the catwalks. We found what looked essentially to be an abandoned town, with buildings, homes, stores, etc., on several levels of the catwalk. I found it weird that nobody lived here, but Ironeye kept on walking like it was normal, something not to be mentioned.

When we had reached the bottom of the catwalks, we found another man also dressed in prestigious armor. He had a war torn face accompanied by a few scars. He smiled when he saw Ironeye and they too hugged.

“Welcome home Nintur”, the man said!

“Thanks Torteniius”, Ironeye responded. Ironeye turned and said, “This is Sceur and Silvantus”, he pointed to us, “And this is Ironshield Torteniius”, he said pointing at the man. We exchanged handshakes.

“I’m sure your sister will be happy to see you”, Torteniius said!

“She’s okay, good”, Ironeye said, relieved.

“What do you mean”, Torteniius asked, eyebrows slanting?

“Nothing, just been a while”, Ironeye said, lying.

Torteniius turned and lead us to a large road, all surrounded by tall wooden buildings. The buildings had red roofs, which gave the town a homey feel. The street was relatively packed, mostly by women with the occasional group of children running through. There was construction on one of the corner buildings, which didn’t seem to both the street musicians that seemed to take the extra noise as a challenge to play louder.

We continued on this road, and as we came to the castle at the center of the town we walked in through one of the large gates. Torteniius lead us to a staircase that lead up to the upper floors, and to a room where we found a lady dressed in light iron armor leaning on a very large wooden table. She had long brown hair with several braids, and the biggest green eyes I’ve seen in anyone. She gave a look of innocence with a flair a power.

As we approached closer I realized on this table to be a map of the town and the surrounding areas. Other towns, I assumed, were marked with green flags.

“Heartshield Tesala, there’s a man to see you. I think you’d be happy to see him too”, Torteniius spoke to the lady.

“Ala”, Ironeye said power walking to her! Heartshield Tesala turned and smiled when her eyes met Ironeye. They hugged, “Thank the Gods you’re okay!”

“What do you mean Nintur”, Tesala asked?

“I have some troubling news sister. But first, I want you to meet my companions”, Ironeye motioned for us to come closer. “This is Sceur and Silvantus.”

Tesala bowed her head, "I am Heartshield Tesala. Ironeye's sister. It warms my heart that he has you to watch his back." We bowed our heads back, each with smiles slightly from nervousness.

"So how is the Shield Faction lately", Ironeye scratched the back of his neck, "I've been gone for a few years."

"Still in power", Tesala said with a small laugh. "We have managed to stop the fighting in the southern streets, but the other factions are still stale at us. We're just hoping that with these new concerns everybody comes together, and not at each other. Oh, and Milla still asks about you."

Ironeye smiled with a small laugh, "Old Milla's still kicking."

"Yep, she'll be kicking until the world ends", Tesala said.

Ironeye chuckled. But what was on my mind was this deal with the factions, what did the Houses have to say of this? Or maybe this is what Grandfather said when he told me many years ago that the Houses here worked very different than in the Old World.

"But what about these new concerns? Highshield Gevhe spoke briefly about it."

"Well that's the thing, we don't know much about it. The only thing we know is that towns around the desert keep claiming they're being attacked and that the sands are flowing towards them. We don't know what to do", Tesala told.

"Has the Book Faction commented", Ironeye asked, "They normally have an explanation."

Tesala sighed, "We haven't been able to talk to them. They refuse to speak to us. I have written a letter about it, but I fear walking there or sending someone there. It might cause another fight."

"Well, what about us", Silvantus suddenly spoke up?

Tesala looked at him confused, "What about you?"

"We could give it to them", Silvantus responded.

Tesala's manner changed, "Yeah, maybe we could send you to go. You have no affiliation with any faction."

"No", Ironeye said, "The faction's are too hostile right now. Even to the unaffiliated."

"It's worth a shot, it's the only way. They might know something that we don't", Tesala said.

Ironeye huffed. "If you can promise their safe keeping." But the look on Tesala's face spelled out that she couldn't keep that promise, even if she wanted to.

"I think it might work", I said. "We're not even from the New World, why would they care. Plus, it might even be like a truce."

"Exactly", Tesala said. "Where exactly are you from?"

"Unehraidein, the both of us", I said.

"Oh wow. I can't say I've ever met someone from Unehraidein direct", she said.

"Fine", Ironeye said unexpectedly, "I'll take them there myself though."

"Heartshield Tesala", someone called from the door. We looked over to find a man in light leather armor standing in the doorway.

"What is it Oneshield Nook", Tesala asked?

"The meeting is to be had without, not without you", Nook said.

"Don't get snappy, I'm coming", Tesala said. She handed me the letter and then walked towards the door. "When you do return from the Book Faction, look for me here."

"Will do", Silvantus said.

Ironeye turned to us once Tesala left the room, "I am afraid that once you are inside there is nothing I can do to protect you."

"Are these people really that hostile", I asked?

"Yes, very. Ever since Advento the Foul Tongue, a mayor five years ago, the factions have been at each other's necks. He, for whatever reason, had tensions here between the factions very bad. He favored the Shield Faction, hence why we are in power, and condemned the other factions."

"How many factions are there", Silvantus asked?

"Five at the time, now only four. The Shields, the Books, the Cloudhearts, the Farmhands and the Forgers. The Cloudhearts left years ago, during the fighting. That's probably why Sterd wanted to leave so fast", Ironeye said.

Ironeye turned and started for the door. We exited to the stairs and then to the outside. It was high noon, but that didn't seem to deter the amount of people out and about. Ironeye lead us south and we came to a street highly decorated with graffiti of books. There were a lot of people whom were dressed like scholars, and all of them giving dirty looks to Ironeye. I noticed that they were also wearing a shiny medallion with the symbol of a book on it. One man approached us and started to yell, "Go away, you're not welcome here", but Ironeye kept walking, practically ignoring the man.

We made our way through as we came to a building made entirely of stone. It looked like a library, the likes of which we have many in Unehraein. Ironeye turned to us and said, "From here is where I stop. I cannot enter; you are on your own. Give them the letter and then leave. Our time here is dwindling like a hourglass."

We nodded and then walked through the tall doors, with guards on both sides, into a large room with a table at the center and several people standing around it. Around the edge of the room there was a large loft space packed full of books. The vaulted ceiling was a good thirty feet high and there were chandeliers hanging, all lit.

The men standing around the table all turned and looked at us, studying us. They seemed to be scanning for anything that I assumed read faction.

"Yes", one man finally spoke up, "How may we help you?"

I stepped forwards and cleared my throat, the air in the room was unusually stiff, "I have a letter for the Book Faction."

The man that had spoken before, and had the most prestigious robe with several medallions draping, said "From whom?"

I pointed towards the door, "The Shield Faction." The man's face twisted, "I should have known! Good for nothing faction'll send anyone!"

"Excuse me", I asked?

"Well, excuse my tongue but you're no diplomats", he said.

"But that's the best option. If we were with the Shields you wouldn't even talk to us", I said. Their whole demeanor changed, "You're a non-affiliated?"

I could feel myself raging slightly. "What does it matter! There's a cult that we just escaped, the sands are moving, other towns are getting attacked and that's what you care about", I told! They looked a little shameful.

"It is true, this cult you speak of. And the sands are connected to them. You'll have to forgive our attitudes towards others, there was blood shed", the man told. We walked over to the table and I put the letter down in front of the man. The other men, and one girl that I had just noticed, stared at us. "Tell us, everything about this cult. They have my uncle", I said.

"Are you sure of that", Silvantus whispered, tugging my arm, "We don't know what happened to him."

I turned my head to him, "He would never leave unless taken. And those sands seemed pretty conspicuous. They just said they're linked with the cult that Toristen was apart of." He nodded and let me speak, "Now, if there's anything tell me."

The man straightened his back and then huffed, "We don't know much either."

I huffed, "Well, thanks for the information." I looked over at the girl who was my age, whom grew a little smile when our eyes met. She had two markings on her face: a stripe down her right cheek and a moon that followed her left eye downwards. I nodded to her and then Silvantus and I walked out. "Quite a conversation", he said.

"Quite", I responded.

We found Ironeye standing right outside, leaning up against a wall, not making eye contact with anyone. When we walked up to him he relaxed his shoulders and said, "Let's get out of here."

He turned and lead the way. We walked back through the busy streets until we came to the castle, up the stairs and to the map room where we found Tesala just as before.

She turned to us, "How did it go?"

"Better than expected", I said. Silvantus nodded.

"And they accepted the letter", she asked?

"They received it, anything is beyond me", I told.

"Okay good", she said, "Hopefully we'll be able to mend the relationships and get to the bottom of the strange happenings around here!"

Fjarnin,

Ironeye told us of a bar and stage called The Crowded Fire. It was a large ballroom with a bar at the back, tables scattered everywhere and a small dance floor in front of the stage. The stage had a small orchestra playing moderately paced music when we walked in. He lead us to the bar and ordered a tankard of mead. I ordered a small tankard and so did Silvantus.

“Look”, Ironeye said nodding.

I turned and saw a few men and the girl from the Book Faction. They were dressed in nice suits and her in a nice dress. I felt poor, as I was still in my tunic and pants. I was thankful though that they allowed Silvantus and I to wash before we came here in the castle.

“I’m going to sit down”, Ironeye announced, and Silvantus followed. I snapped out of my gaze and followed them to a table where several other Shield Faction members were sat. They were all bearded men, and all had tankards of ale.

“I’m telling you Unireviel, we caught that Uvatha⁶⁸ ourselves! No help from anybody”, Caric said!

I had briefly learned some of their names before coming here. Caric was a heavily bearded man with bright chain armour that rattled when he walked. Unireviel was the least bearded man here, besides Ironeye, Silvantus and I, and had long curly blue hair. Jaramalo was a portly man, the oldest of us all. And Corvanus was a shorter man with dark green hair.

“Get out of here! I know you drunken idiots had help”, Unireviel shot back!

“Hogwash”, Corvanus said!

“It’s true! We caught it and tagged it”, Jaramalo told!

“My arse”, Unireviel said.

I looked over towards where the girl was sitting. She looked beautiful. Her long golden hair dangled down over her shoulders and her bright blue eyes could shine through the darkest light.

“Hey, Sceur, pay attention”, Ironeye waved his hand in front of my face!

“What”, I asked, blankly looking around at them. I couldn’t get my mind off of the girl.

“How was the boat ride? Silvantus seemed to enjoy it”, Corvanus asked?

“Fun”, I said.

“Awe, look at ‘em”, Ironeye teased, “He’s blushing. He must have a thing for that pretty girl over there.”

The four of them looked, but they grew long faces. Jaramalo leaned towards me, “But she’s a Book.”

“So, I’m no Shield. I don’t have to pick any sides”, I told. He didn’t seem happy at the answer but I could tell he respected it.

Suddenly a man walked out on the stage, he was well dressed.

“Attention! Attention! Everyone please shut up”, he yelled, and everyone quieted down. “Tonight we have a special guest all of the way from North Fork! Treat her with love as she treats us with

⁶⁸ Uvatha are basically mimics. They themselves do not change shape, but they can disperse a sightless gas around them that makes them look like whatever they want. Inanimate objects only.

a song!" The man walked off the stage and a very pretty lady with long, straight black hair and holding a lute walked out. She sat on the stool and straightened her back.

"Tudos Fiiĩ Fellenhob", *Hello Wood Town*, she said with a big smile, "I'll be playing a song I wrote when I was actually here a few years back. It's called Down That Long Black River."

She adjusted herself and then started to play a slow and soft melody before she started to sing,

*"As snow does in a fire that bleeds blue pierced with light;
Skin pours burning of love in mad seas;
That by starlight, we be done! But the bark of the boughs is in the way!*

*In a great bronze chariot who dreams with,
Of worlds in journey, down that long black river.
To the evening breeze to be whisked away in endless flight,
To the black gallows where the stars are sleeping.*

*And on the horizon, I shall let the wind be!
Falling into the ocean deep below your white skin,
of an internal voice, but endless possibilities;*

So be no more fright!

*The rivers let me sail, for shadows flower the air,
Of the sea and stars which are to be infused,
And the blackening yellow that seems to arise,
Into burning funerals, down into abysses.*

*Atoning one's not so fine self,
Shadowed hunger, failed to decline.*

*For how long, she chased her dream,
Only to be left in the seems,
Wanting to be the children of gods,
But not having the foresight of a saint.*

*In how many places, has she walked out of the world,
Stop for a second and look through her eyes,
For the dubious of the menfolk desire to be before a god,
But the prophecy has been no more defined.*

*Because when at the crossroads,
All is grotesque before the dream."*

She played out the song and when she was done everyone stood up and started to clap. I thought that the song was beautiful and set a really nice mood for the room. She bowed,

thanked the crowd and then left off the stage. The orchestra kicked up and started to play more slow music and the room started to be filled up with better dressed people. The 'drunks' seemed to find their way out.

I figured this was my opportunity so I poured back the rest of my mead and I stood, announcing I was going. I walked over to the girl with the blue eyes, extended my hand and then asked, "May I have this dance?" She seemed shocked, and so did the men she was with, but in her hesitance she managed, "Yes."

She stood up, not breaking eye contact with me, and we walked to the dance floor where other couples had already begun dancing. We lined up and started swaying back and forth at first, and then we started to move and slowly spin with the crowd. Her face was fully red, and mine was probably too. Her hands felt soft though and no matter how shy I was I was not letting go!

"My names Scur", I said with a smile, breaking our silent streak.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Fjarnin", she said back with a smile as she let her long, curly ginger hair fall in front of her eyes. She glanced over at the men she was with, while whipping the hair out of her eyes, and then back at me. "Say, are you a part of the Shields", she asked?

"Well, you don't have to be spying on me. I'm a-, what did you guys call it, an unaffiliated", I responded.

She looked a little disconcerted at the first comment, but she soon lost it. "I ain't spying." "Never said you were. Just said you didn't have to", I said. She shrugged.

"So, Fjarnin", I smiled that I said her name for the first time, "What's it like here in the town?"

"Fun, once you get acquainted with everyone. Or at least it use to be before the intra-fighting", she said.

"And Mr. Advento did that, I hear", I asked?

"Yeah", she said with lethargy.

I figured I change the subject because the current one was getting her down.

"Anyhow, I wanted to say that you looked extremely pretty in your dress. Though I'd say it's not the dress that's making the beauty", I said. She blushed again.

"Awe, thanks", she said. I took a second to notice the paint marks on her face. "Say, what do those markings mean? I've only seen such ones from the rich that come from Tylacta⁶⁹."

"My family lineage is from Tylacta, but I was born and raised here. My families been here for generations, about two eras to be exact. They are just representatives of my pledge to Asta, ya know the Younger Goddess of the moon." I nodded, I knew what she was talking about. "How about your family", she asked?

"My family story is similar. My family actually moved here after the War of the Mad King though from Neasend. But my grandfather moved back to Unehraein to be a scribe years ago. My mother recently sent me here, I just arrived a couple days ago", I told.

⁶⁹ There is also a big switch in power and wealth from scholars, kings and high military officials to royal families and company owners during this era. The rich are traveling the most. A lot of these people become misers and there is a huge testament to the mass amount of money people own. This stems from the previous era were there was a huge, taxing war between the Yonkaps and the Grytos. The Yonkaps won, and from this a huge racism grew against the Grytos. As the economy grew back miserism came about.

“Why’s that”, she asked?

“Well, when my father died my mother thought that I would have a better life here with my uncle. But I’m worried because he’s gone, and so is the entire town of Dahlmer”, I explained.

“Mosa”, *What*, she asked?

“Yeah, I couldn’t believe it either. Sorry for the semi-outburst earlier. That’s why I got so into it, because I have no idea what happened to my uncle and this quarrel is not helping to find him or anyone that was in the town”, I said.

“Wow”, she said. She seemed to be drifting closer to me, “Gods, if my father ever disappeared like that, why I’d lose it.”

“Who’s your father”, I asked?

“Bookmaster Yegorov. He’s the equivalent of a jarl of the Book faction. He basically is in charge”, she explained. “And you lost yours. How’s that been?”

“Rough”, I said nodding. I was seemingly having flashbacks to his smiles, and all of the things we did together, everything he’s taught me. “It was exactly like losing a neck you’ve grown accustomed to. One day it’s there, the next it’s not.”

She rested her head on my shoulder, allowing us to still slowly spin and keep with the crowd, “I know how you feel. I lost my mother years ago. It was really tough because it was only me and my dad, and we couldn’t really connect. We still can’t, but we try.”

“I’m sure you’ll connect some way. I had the same thing with my mother and we somehow pulled ourselves closer. It was really the fact that we had lost someone so close to us, that that love we had for him drew our relationship. It’s a really touchy conversation though so we don’t talk about it much, but there are moments where we look at each other and can tell that he’s still on our mind.”

She looked up at me with a smile, “That’s deep. Not gonna lie, I’m a little jealous. My father and I never seem to have those kinds of moments.” I felt bad. “I can tell you, he thinks about her. It’s just that some people have a harder time getting their thoughts across. Give it time, you’ll have a moment like that or at least something close to that.” She smiled again as she peered off, probably thinking of the scenarios where that would happen.

“Fjarnin”, someone called from the side of the crowd!

Fjarnin looked over and then huffed, the man was motioning for her to come. “Well this was very nice”, she said turning to me as we broke apart, “I’d like to do that again. I’ll be around. Particularly at the Book faction.”

“I swear on Tel I’ll be coming around”, I said. She smiled and blushed, walking away. The man started talking to her.

I walked back over to the group I was with earlier. Silvantus congratulated me and we all started to laugh and tell jokes.

Lorewalk 2,

Of the stories my grandmother use to tell me, one of my favorites was the titular of Farso Theka, *Father Time*⁷⁰. The story goes, Aeraaner⁷¹ had to fight Time⁷²(the Force of Existence⁷³) and stop it from destroying everything.

Over the years, since Times rebirth during the era F.Z.U.F., the Force of Existence Time had been getting considerably more powerful. It was tightening its hold on the other Forces of Existence and was starting to take a Physical Form⁷⁴, which looked like a white black hole. Everyone immediately got defensive and a fight soon broke out between Time and The Older Gods, the Younger Gods⁷⁵ and The Three Spirits⁷⁶. The fight took place in the space above Planet Green⁷⁷.

While fighting though, Time had severely wounded Hiyathan⁷⁸ and was about to kill him when Zarna⁷⁹, his wife, stepped in front of Time and took all of the damage, rendering her also close to death. Zarna and Hiyathan then transferred most of their little Xolt⁸⁰ to Aeraaner. Aeraaner started to battle Time with this new gained strength. The other gods saw this and convinced Aeraaner that he had to be the one to conquer Time. The Three Spirits told him that they would do their best to postpone Time to let Aeraaner have as much time as possible.

⁷⁰ Father Time - New God of Planets and Time and is associated with History and Ageing.

⁷¹ Aeraaner is Father Time's 'dead' name, of which he took the name Father Time when he defeated Time.

⁷² Time is an existential force that can never be stopped or reversed. This is the most powerful Force of Existence there is. It makes sure that existence 'flows' one way and can never be repeated. This Force works in coherence with the other two Planes of Existence.

⁷³ The Forces of Existence are formless beings that don't take a Physical form. There are nine of them, one of which was born and another of which is not technically a Force or real. The nine are: Time, Fate, Luck, Death, Life, Evil, Good, Gravity and The Happening. They are so powerful that they manipulate the worlds to bend to their wills and essentially control how events play out.

⁷⁴ Forms is a very simple thing to understand, as there are two of them: Physical and Nonphysical. In a Physical Form you have a materialistic appearance and body, which is made of Xolt and secures your livelihood. In a Nonphysical Form you survive solely through Xolt, in a Metaphorical state. You can still be sentient and communicate in a Nonphysical Form, but it will take a lot of Xolt to create a new Physical Form, and without one you will slowly start to run out of Xolt until you disappear from existence entirely.

⁷⁵ The Older Gods are the children of the Galooagotic, of whom in comparison are the 'Titans' of this mythology. The Younger Gods are the children of the Older Gods, who didn't form their own branch of Godlyhood like the Older Gods from the Galooagotic, they conglomerated with their parents, the Older Gods.

⁷⁶ They are the rulers and enforcers/safe holders of Fate and Luck. All bow before them expect The First Five and the Galooagotic as they have no authority over Pookii. They are also not aligned with any Gods.

⁷⁷ Planet Green is the world where this book takes place.

⁷⁸ Hiyathan - God of Autumn and Nature, specifically Trees, of which he came to inhabit.

⁷⁹ Zarna - Old Goddess of the Night, of which she became.

⁸⁰ Xolt is a very tricky idea to master. Nobody knows where it came from, and it does not have a voice to tell us like the Forces. It is the single thing that everything runs off of, even Aethaedar itself. It is an energy force only just barely controlled by the Forces. It is the fuel to life, to death and to existence. Xolt determines your appearance and the amount of Xolt you have is randomized by the Force Of Existence Luck.

He left for Yaeber⁸¹, hoping his knowledge and closeness to Ysdrucker⁸² would help. He found out that Time had a heart outside of the dimension, in Litlatlargo⁸³. Yaeber told him never to forget about Aeraaners' children. He told about how he lost his children, The Olversket⁸⁴, first because they were banished by Fregdeaviyte⁸⁵, and second when they fought the Older Gods and were banished to Voahela⁸⁶. This gave Aeraaner the push that he needed to reach the state of Adeake, full tranquility. He then moved sideways, through Existence itself, and into Litlatlargo where he found Time's Heart, a literal heart that produced the Xolt that Time needed to exist, and beat it up: officially making Aeraaner the God of Time and earning him the nickname, Father Time. This stopping the Force of Existence Time from becoming ultimately powerful and destroying another universe like the Genesis World⁸⁷.

⁸¹ Yaeber - Yaeber is the only god that isn't quite a god. Only son to Fregdeaviyte he is considered the "God" of Knowledge, Life and Destruction.

He is not considered a "god" because he was born way before the Gods were and he has considerably much more Xolt than the Gods.

⁸² Ysdrucker - The Eternal Creator of The Forces and First Planes of Existence, and the Progenitor of birth.

⁸³ Litlat is a primordial being that when the Genesis World was destroyed from the Force of Existence Time, he became The Holder of Existence, protecting Aethaedar (Existence) from being destroyed. He created a shell around Aethaedar called Litlatlargo or Litlat's land. The Force of Existence Time keeps its 'heart' here.

⁸⁴ The Olversket are giant humanoids with the upper half of a human, the lower half of a wolf and the tail of a scorpion. They weren't the gods of anything but had talents in certain things. They were created by Yaeber as his children.

⁸⁵ Fregdeaviyte - He is destruction and chaos in a physical form and is the second oldest living source of evil. Vaolker is the first oldest.

⁸⁶ Voahela is a Plane in the Second Dimension that is basically a place between heaven and hell.

⁸⁷ The Genesis World is the world before the four current dimensions that was destroyed by the Force of Existence Time when he killed the primordial being Teogic Fts, and in doing so he destroyed the Genesis World. From the death of Teogic Fts, his Xolt formed the two voids Vaolker(The Void of Chaos) and Galactis(The Void of Perfection). This is also when Litlat created Litlatlargo to protect Aethaedar from the destruction of the Genesis World.

The Forgers,

I woke up early in the morning and just laid in bed. They had been nice enough to give us a hammock with a pillow and blanket in a spare room. I looked over to see that Silvantus was already out of bed so I could tell that it was past sun rise, but Ironeye was still asleep. I took out my notebook and started to write about before. I wrote for a good five minutes before I put the notebook away and then fell back to sleep.

What felt like an hour later, Ironeye woke me up. "Sceur, come on! Wake up", he said nudging me.

"What.. what's wrong", I asked, stretching?

"Nothing, I'm about to go council with my sister you wanna come?"

"Sure, yeah", I said half mindedly. I climbed down from the hammock and finished stretching. In my drowsy stupor I followed Ironeye to a dining hall where we quickly ate, accompanied by coffee. We then made our way to the map room, likewise before, and found Tesala on the small stone deck that was adjoined to the room. With her she had a cup of coffee. She wasn't dressed in armour as I expected her to be, instead she was dressed in a white toga.

"Tesala, qwad-naze", *Tesala, good morning*, Ironeye said.

"Qwad-naze bróder", *Good morning brother*, she said.

"How's the coffee tasting", Ironeye asked?

"Quite good, as always. But you know that of course."

Ironeye shrugged nodding, and then the two stood in awkward silence for a second. I felt like he was trying to think of a way to tell his sister something but couldn't find the words, "Um, what's the plan for today", Ironeye asked?

"We have a meeting with The Forgers faction and then tonight is the Festival of Solidarity", she told. She turned and looked at us, waiting almost for our response.

"Festival of Solidarity?", Ironeye questioned.

"If you were here you would've known. It was created just two years ago, this being its third consecutive year."

"What's it about Tesala?"

"The mutual agreement of cooperation between the Factions", she told. Ironeye looked impressed, "And how was that pulled off?"

"Gevhe and Longshield Umbroch worked out a peace agreement with the Books and the Forgers, and the Farmhands just kinda joined. Even the Cloudhearts visit", Tesala explained.

“Interesting”, Ironeye said. I nodded in agreement. “It reminds me of the Duuves na Dakaes⁸⁸”, I said.

“It’s based on that, but since it’s not celebrated here we substituted it”, she said. My eyes widened in almost offense, but I let it go figuring that they celebrate the Gods in other ways.

“I can join you to the Forgers”, Ironeye said, he turned to me and Tesala’s eye’s followed, “You wanna tag along?”

“Might as well”, I said!

“Good”, Tesala said, “Some new faces might lighten the mood. Though the Forgers have never given us a real problem. It’s mainly just been the Books.”

“Yeah, unfortunately”, Ironeye said.

Tesala looked at him the same way Ironeye had before at her, wanting to say something but not knowing the words. She took another sip from her coffee before she said, “Well I better get dressed.”

“Yeah, gotta look professional”, Ironeye awkwardly joked. Tesala smiled and walked out of the map room. I looked at Ironeye, “Forgive my nosiness, but did something happen between you two?”

He looked over at me, huffed and then looked towards the door that Tesala had left through, “Something did happen, and we were never the same.” He left off like he didn’t want to talk about it further, and stared off at the city around us. He leaned on the short stone wall, that was the rail of the deck. I peered down and saw the business of the town. There were people walking, running, yelling, arguing, holding hands, kissing, everything you would expect from a town this size.

Ironeye shifted from his left leg to his right, “If only”, he said. He looked off into the distance where I noticed for the first time gigantic trees making part of the horizon.

“What are those giant trees”, I asked?

“Where I belong”, Ironeye said softly. He said something under his breath that sounded saddened, and then looked over at me, “It’s where the Goddess Aduona lives.”

My eye’s widened, “I knew she was here in the New World but I never thought I’d get this close to her fortress⁸⁹! I’ve been really lucky lately with deities.”

“Yeah. I’ve been there, ya know”, Ironeye said.

“Really? What’s Aduona like”, I asked?

“Nice”, he said lightly, “And very pretty. Very, very pretty.”

⁸⁸ Duuves na Dakaes - *Days of Ashes*, this is a huge celebration mostly celebrated in the western Old World subcontinents. It celebrates the Gods and has a long history. It was first made during the Second Medieval Era to celebrate the Older Gods in Neasend. During the Sixth Medieval era, by Truon Leaus Usafer Baddro, it was made a world wide holiday to celebrate the New Gods when they won the Underground Brawl fearing that the Younger Gods would punish them if they celebrated the Older Gods. After Truon Leaus Usafer Baddro’s death it was used to also celebrate great leaders, specifically Usafer Baddro. During the Dark Era it was used to celebrate both the Younger Gods and the Older Gods. During the Dark Era, it also fell in popularity as Horendinii grew.

⁸⁹ Aduona’s fortress of nature was designed to protect nature from any kind of threat that threatened the future of nature. She is known as the Guardian of Nature because of this. The fortress is built near the desert, even though her and Ygmar are on good terms.

We stood there for another ten minutes, watching the town, the giant trees, the birds and the clouds. All of which seemed to be just as busy as the others. Tesala reemerged wearing light armour, equipped with a short sword on her belt.

“You ready”, Ironeye asked? I admired Tesala in her armour, she was very beautiful, but yet had a strong and cunning look to her.

“Yep”, she said, “Oneshield Nook will be accompanying us.”

And almost on cue, Oneshield Nook walked in. He was a man of moderate height with a strong jawline.

“Nook, this is Scur. Scur this is Nook”, Tesala said as we shook hands.

“Nice to meet you”, we both said.

Ironeye looked at him with a bit of vexation, but seem to loose the face when Nook looked towards him. They shook hands, “How’s it going”, Ironeye asked? Nook looked over at Tesala and said, “Gro’ote”, *Great*, with a smile. Ironeye seemed annoyed at that and turned away really fast as to not have Tesala see his frustration.

“Fink”, Ironeye said under his breath; I just about barely heard him. I guessed that him and Nook had some bitter history between each other, and I assumed further that he was extremely upset by that fact that Nook might be bedding with his sister.

“I’m gonna grab my short sword. I’ll meet you on the north side of the castle”, Nook said.

Tesala smiled and said, “Okay.” Once Nook left the room, Ironeye turned fast and started out of the room, obviously upset. Tesala huffed and then followed after him, with me following her. Once we got outside we found Ironeye standing at the foot of a column of the castle, tapping his foot aggressively.

“What’s your problem”, Tesala almost yelled? “Can’t you accept me being happy!”

“I can accept your happiness, but not when it involves him. I thought you to be better than that”, Ironeye snapped back!

“What, you think I’m some kind of harlot! We haven’t slept together Nintur”, she yelled! She realized how loud she was a lowered her voice, “The most vile thing we do together is kiss.”

“But with Nook”, Ironeye said!

“Yes, with Nook”, Tesala said!

“That scoundrel is at fault for so many things! I can’t even call him Oneshield, let alone shield”, Ironeye said.

Tesala looked at him, tears forming at the corners of her eyes, “I’m not gonna take this kind of talk anymore. Accept us or disappear, you seem good at that”, she said. Ironeye looked like he was about to explode, “How dare you!”

“What, you gonna cry about a broken heart? News flash Nintur, I had my heart broken too by a man I loved! But I don’t run, I find someone else to love. That’s how life works”, Tesala said!

“What’s how life works”, Nook said, walking up to us? He acted like he didn’t know that they were arguing, but I knew that he knew they were.

“Nothing Nook”, Tesala said softly. Her tears had disappeared and she seemed as if she was calming herself down. Ironeye looked heavily annoyed as his and Nook’s eyes meet, but neither one said anything. They just stood, staring at each other almost like they were talking through their eyes.

“We should go. That meeting is going to be held soon and we have to make it”, Tesala said. I kinda just stood there, not knowing what to do or what to say.

Ironeye exasperated and nodded, “Yes, if we miss this meeting then tensions are only going to get worse.” But we still stood awkwardly. Nook finally spoke up and said, “Alright, I’ll lead then.” He turned and started walking across the small field and once we made it to the street through the busy people. We made our way north and I noticed right away that there was a lot more craftsmen shops here as opposed to the other parts of town, especially when compared to the area the Book faction was centered in.

“The Forgers Faction”, Ironeye said to me without looking towards, he seemed a lot more calm now.

“Why is this only where the faction is? I’ve seen many more shops of the likewise elsewhere”, I asked?

“There are other craftsmen stores elsewhere, but the faction is here and so is most of the density. Think of this side of town as the factory district. I know they have districts like that in Neasend”, Ironeye explained.

I noticed, as if for the first time, that there wasn’t a ‘uniform’ here unlike the Book faction where the most common wear was a sage's robe. I wondered why, but figured that there was a difference in culture within the culture of the town between the factions.

After a short walk we came to an elevated, open roof smithery. We walked up the stairs and came to a large forge, that was the smithery. In the center was a long anvil with several dents spotted all over. At the back was the large forge, with a long hearth and a tall bellow.

Several men were working the forge, one of which had prestigious iron garments and I figured him to be the head of the Forgers faction. The man extended his hand to all of us saying, “If there’s one thing you Shields are known for, it’s your punctuation.”

“And we pride ourselves on that”, Tesala said!

“Alright, let’s get down to business. The agreements I read seemed up to par, except the part that suggests we lower our prices to accompany others. We don’t like this as you can probably guess why. Prices are already low enough”, he said.

“Now, Grand Smith Oñustel, it’s designed to help the internal economy of the town”, Tesala said.

“Economy be damned! I make the products, I set the price, I expect to be paid”, Oñustel said!

“Oñustel, the compromise isn’t bad. If the prices go down, more people will buy products from inside of the town and your profit goes up as more people buy from inside of the town”, Nook said. Tesala nodded in agreement.

“You said it yourself, it’s a compromise. I do compromise, not when it comes to money. No, if I can charge what I want then I refuse the treaty, so to speak”, Oñustel said.

“Well think about the rest of the craftsmen. What about them”, Ironeye spoke up, “If you don’t take this deal then people will continuously buy from outside of the town. And think about how that view will impact their decision on who they choose to back as the Grand Smith.”

“But they will lose profit and so will I. Not to mention, there isn’t another smith that could compare to me. I know every metal and how to forge it! I’d bet my position as Grand Smith on that”, Oñustel said!

“What’s Tepriil”, I asked, knowing fully he wouldn’t know the metal that was used mainly for rings? Nook, Tesala, Ironeye and all of the smiths at on the forge platform stopped and turned towards me.

“Te-Tepriil”, Ořustel stammered?

“Yeah”, I said.

“Why it’s-it’s-it’s not real of course”, he said. I could tell he was lying and so could everyone else.

“It’s very real and it’s a black metal found in Raandeler. Do you know how to smelt it”, I asked him?

He didn’t say anything, he just stood, frozen.

“You have to put a metal rod through the center of it and rotate it above the forge for a half an hour at exactly a foot above the embers”, I said. Ořustel gulped. “Does that mean I’m the new Grand Smith”, I asked looking at Ironeye whom had a big smile on his face? Ořustel suddenly turned vehemently and picked up a large warhammer. Ironeye drew a sword and stood in front of me. Suddenly everyone drew their swords, the smiths stopped and drew anything they could get grabbing swords, wroughted pokers and shovels. Tesala and Nook both drew their swords and backed to next to Ironeye.

But suddenly Ořustel busted out laughing, followed by the other smiths. Ironeye, Tesala and Nook gave nervous laughs. I joined in with a nervous laugh.

“Why, I think the boy has outsmarted me”, Ořustel said in between laughing. Another smith walked up to Ořustel, laughing too, and leaned on his shoulder. All of the smiths put down their weapons and returned to their previous task. Ořustel walked up to Tesala, “I guess since I’ve been outsmarted I have to agree”, he extended his hand. Tesala cautiously shook his hand. “I will have my assistant send over the paper with my signature later, as of now I need to redeem myself and craft a masterful sword”, Ořustel told.

Ironeye seemed a little dazed at how fast everything went and how it escalated and than calmed in a matter of seconds.

Silvantus, Kovit yelled in my mind, *he’s in trouble!* And as quick as she shouted in my mind I knew the exact location of Silvantus and how to get to him.

“Silvantus”, I exclaimed! Ironeye seemed a little startled at how abrupt I was and Ořustel stared at me. “Don’t look at me, we have to save him!” I turned and started to run down the street.

“Sceur, what about Silvantus”, Ironeye yelled, obviously chasing after me. But my mind was only set on finding him, not talking. I ran through the streets, left, right, right, until I came to the edge of the Book and Shield Faction and into an alley where I saw Silvantus laying unconscious on the ground and two guys standing over him, one with a dagger to Silvantus’ throat. The two guys were wearing heavy leather armour and had hoods on.

The alley was dimly lit but still enough for me to see. It was the kind of dark alley that common goers on the street wouldn’t even look down, would even care about; the perfect place for something like this.

“Stop”, I said running up to them! I drew my dagger and held it hard in my fist. I felt an overwhelming feeling of hate towards them and a protective feeling towards Silvantus, almost like a guard dog.

They turned, looking surprised at me, not expecting anyone. In one motion the man, while looking at me, the man with the dagger to Silvantus' throat pulled, slicing. The other stood tall, drawing a sword.

"Silvantus", I yelled! "How dare you", I said looking solely at the man holding the dagger!

"Sceur, where did you-", Ironeye said as he ran into the alley, pausing as he saw the sight of me running over to the man with the sword drawn and the man hovering over Silvantus' body with a red neck. Ironeye drew his sword.

"I'll fucking kill you all", I exclaimed, charging at the man with the sword drawn. He swung forwards, but with an unexpected thrust I managed to jump out of the way, getting close enough to jab into the stomach. The man yelled in pain, but I ran to the other as I heard Ironeye running towards. The other man stood up, still over Silvantus, with his dagger ready in his hand. He swung, cutting my arm but just than Ironeye charged into him, knocking him onto the floor.

I heard the sound of lots of others footsteps and gasps, but I ignored looking at them and dropped to my knees next to Silvantus.

"No", I said defeated like, tears forming at my eyes.

Three men in robes, from the Book faction, ran over with medical supplies and begun to do their work, though I was completely doubtful that he would see another day. Tesala, Nook, Tortenius, Gevhe and many others crowded in. They lined the two men on their knees in front of us, with their hands tied behind their backs. I power walked over to them, wanting to kill, but Ironeye grabbed me, saying "No, let the law handle them."

"I'll kill you with my bare hands", I yelled at them!

They looked scared like. They knew fully well that they would not leave this alley alive. Tesala looked extremely angry, just being briefed on the ordeal by a guardsmen.

"This wouldn't have happened if you were at your posts", she said quietly to them, obviously upset. She turned to the two men, "You better start explaining."

They said nothing, they looked on stern with their mouths firmly shut. Tesala walked up to the one who held the dagger and practically threw off his hood, grabbing his hair and forcing him to look up at her, "Answer me", she said through her teeth. The man didn't deter. Tesala put out her hand towards the guard next to her who handed her his sword. She put the sword to his nose and lifted, cutting it off. The man screamed in agony and blood spewed from his face. She moved the sword to his throat and sliced it, again blood spew. She let the man fall to the ground and she eyed the next man.

"Last chance", she said. The man gulped, looking nervous as tears dropped from his face.

Tesala walked over and put the sword to his nose, but before she lifted he spoke out, "Memalet, memalet", *Wait, wait!*

Tesala smiled and she removed the sword from his face, "Dood", *Speak*, she said.

"My masteress is Sivanosa", he said. Suddenly he had convulsions as it was apparent he started to die. He fell to the ground too and blood started to leak from his mouth. A member of the Books stepped forwards, "That was death by divine. By the Gods, the Vroathaen have their hands on the lands! It all makes sense, the sands, the attacks, now this!"

"Bury them", Tesala said, not moving her eyes from their corpses. Guardsmen walked over to the bodies, "Bury that one with his nose on his ass", she said pointing at the nose on the ground. Tesala turned looking at Gevhe, "A word." Gevhe nodded.

They walked off, but Ironeye and I stood. We turned towards Silvantus' body. He must have still been alive because the Books wouldn't have continued to work on a dead body. They had his throat stitched up and had wet towels on his forehead. One turned to us, "Thankfully the cut wasn't deep enough, or done correctly, to kill him. But it might be a few days before he can speak again."

"Oh dinslaken Váusch", *Oh thank you Gods*, I said! Ironeye exhaled in relief.

Never Trust The Gods,

“Never trust the gods”, a man yelled! He was standing in the middle of the market square on a soap box, “They have lead to too many deaths in the past!”

“Shut up Horendav⁹⁰”, someone yelled at him!

“I’m no Horendav, I simply believe in humanism”, he responded!

I watched them continue to argue further as I leaned on the edge of a market stand waiting for Ironeye to finish talking to the attendant. It was a hot day, getting hotter as the day went on. But the wind provided a soft relief from the sweat I was enduring. I started to wonder if the sweat was from the heat or my nervousness about what happened to Silvantus. Only a few hours ago he was nearly killed and now he was sleeping in a bed in the hospital about a mile from this market, by the temples near the center of town.

“Alright, well it was good talking to you Albreda”, Ironeye said as he waved and then turned towards me. “You ready?”

“Yeah”, I said. We turned and walked through the marketplace, passing the man yelling on the soap box. Ironeye spat in front of him and the guy nearly jumped off and towards Ironeye.

“Listen you disrespectful mongrol”, the man yelled!

Ironeye turned with a twisted face, “You call me disrespectful! You’re the one spitting in the eyes of the Gods!”

“The Gods have abandoned us, leaving us to the reaches of evil”, the man responded!

“The only thing that has abandoned us is your sanity! You’re a mad man”, Ironeye yelled!

A crowd started to form around us, clearly wanted to see a fight or some kind of action at least. The man rolled up his sleeves, “Why if my name wasn’t Gadarn I would have punch you by now”, he said!

“You’re drunk! Go home”, Ironeye yelled!

“Back to your mother”, Gadarn said!

Ironeye gave him a dead stare before he pulled back his fist and drove it into Gadarns’ face. Gadarn fell backwards onto the ground, clearly knocked out. Guardsmen ran over to us and grabbed Ironeye. “Come on Nintur, you know you can’t do that”, the guard said. He must of known Ironeye. The guards walked us through the crowd and to the castle where they left us.

“Damn flouts”, Ironeye said.

“Why are they disobeying the Gods”, I asked?

“I don’t know.”

“Do you think it has to do with the cult?”

He shrugged, “I bet it has to do more with the fact that the town’s been isolated for so long. Forget the cult, the sands; this kingdom has been isolated from Gouma for so long that people have lost touch completely.”

“What do you mean?”

⁹⁰ Horendav is the demonym of someone who is a follower of Horendinii.

“Well, most of the reason that people are acting out is because the empire isn’t doing their job well. Their influence has been slowly loosening on the New World. I’d say that people aren’t actually going against the gods, rather the empire itself.”

“Weird”, I stared off towards the road. The sun was very bright and so I had to squint my eyes.

“Rising against the Empire isn’t such a bad thing.” I looked over at him confused and almost outraged.

“But the Empire is great! It unites the world under one banner, all races... even those Gryts”, I said, defending.

“To some it’s not as so. You’re from Neasend, Unehradein no less. To speak with my teeth behind my tongue, your breed to love whomever flies their flag on your castles. Which isn’t a bad thing don’t get me wrong. It’s a land of pride. But that reality is convoluted to others”, he said peering over, “Everyone is entitled to an opinion, be it love or hate, and we have to respect them because of it. Unless people die, then we pick sides.”

“I guess. But than why did you spit towards Gadarn?”

“Oh, I just hate Gadarn. That spit wasn’t ment for his message, just him”, he said, “And you’re not allowed to soap box in markets anyhow. That’s what the streets are meant for.”

“Oh”, I said. He exasperated, “Oh well.” He turned and started to walk towards the Book faction.

“Why you walking there?”

“To buy a book of course. Something new to read is always good for the mind.”

“True.”

We walked across the small field and started in the streets of the people dressed in robes. Ironeye seemed to know where he was going so I just followed. He turned into a shop with the picture of a book and above it read Lorbess, *Books*. It was hard to see through the small curtained windows of the front of the store, which gave it a reserved look. The worn door rang the shop keepers bell as we entered. The walls were decorated with old paintings coated in dust. There was what looked like tree boughs lining the middle of the hall looking room that supported the upper floors. The entire hall room was full of bookshelves, all packed with books themselves. To the right was a counter with a small elderly man behind it.

“Ironeye”, the man behind the counter exclaimed in joy, “Why it’s been years my old lad!”

Ironeye gave a huge smile and walking over he said, “Kólôg!” They hugged over the counter, “Where have you been?”, Kólôg asked.

“Dahlmer.”

“Did you find someone special?”

“No”, Ironeye huffed.

“Still worked up over her I see”, Kólôg said, “Well as my father use to say, there’s nothing better for a sad heart than to read a book and be someone else!”

I wasn’t sure what he was talking about, so I just followed their conversation with my eyes.

“He was a smart man”, Ironeye said.

“He was. Anyhow, what kind of book you lookin’ for this time lad?”

“Something good, I’m not gonna be picky today.”

Kólôg turned and looked at the shelf behind him. He reached up, but he could obviously not reach the book he wanted. He turned to Ironeye, of whom seemed to know exactly what he

wanted. He walked around the counter and grabbed the book Kólôg was eyeing. Kólôg smiled and then handed the book back to Ironeye, "This is the book I wanted to give you. It's new, just written by a woman from Raandeler. Called Heir of the Night."

Ironeye looked at the book meaningfully, "Thanks!" Kólôg smiled and then patted Ironeye's shoulder, "You know, if I had a son I'd want him to be like you." The two hugged, Ironeye looked crestfallen. When the two separated we left, Ironeye fingering the book.

The Festival of Solidarity,

Playful music filled the air, accompanied by the scent of foods - notably pies and pastas. Beyond the scope of sound and smell, the town lit up the night sky with bright lights and costumes of rainbow colors. I smiled, the costumes featured feathers that stuck outright. This was a very joyous celebration indeed and I was happy to see that nobody was hostile to each other. Nothing but smiles dotted every face, and those that weren't smiling were eating. It was warm, for the night. That was one thing about being next to a desert that I minded.

They had set up two stages hugging the side of the castle. On the taller one Tesala, Grandsmith Oñustel, a man I recognized from my brief meeting with the Books, and the father of Fjarnin, and four others stood talking to each other. Two looked very much like Cloudhearts with bowler hat, the other looked like a glorified farmer with ritzy farm like clothing, and the last wore a suit. I assumed the last to be the mayor, though I wasn't sure. The lower one held the musicians who filled the air with their said playful music.

Ironeye stood next to me, watching. He seemed hesitant to join the crowd, of whom were dancing and singing and enjoying themselves. He almost had a saddened look to him. He turned his attention back to the book in his hands, but in vain as Tesala came to us and invited us to the stage. Tesala and Ironeye eyed each other kind of awkwardly, obviously thinking of their previous argument, but I was glad that they had a mutual silence about it. Once we got onto the stage we shook the hands of everyone and Tesala introduced us to those we didn't know.

"Ironeye, Sceur", Tesala started, she pointed to the man in the robe, whom was Fjarnin's father; he had a suspicious look towards me, he knew I was hanging out with his daughter, "Lorbpruosintor Yegorov os theet", *This is Bookmaster Yegorov*, Tesala pointed to the two men in bowler hats and as she said their names they tipped with caps, "Sabhanil Avediir áchea Velintriet Gauwyn Peltlan os theet", *This is Cloudheart Avediir and Merchant Gauwyn Peltlong*, she pointed to the glorified looking farmer, "Pvutamussactroc Caric", *Pumpkinlord Caric*, and then she pointed to the man in the suit, "Áchea pos saclesk, Nook, theet os", *And this is our mayor, Nook*.

I peered at Tesala and motioned that I wanted to talk privately. She looked at me with a confused look, but followed as we stepped a few feet away.

"Excuse me Tesala, but have you questioned them about Dahlmer, or the sands, or anything?"

"We have, several times since their arrival. They wouldn't know anything about what happened to Dahlmer though, they came from Nord Forken which is in the north", *North Fork*.

"Oh." We walked back to the group. Ironeye was engaged in a conversation with Pumpkinlord Caric. I stood listening until I made eye contact with Merchant Gauwyn and from the back of my mind, *Hello Shadow*, Kovit said.

Hello Kovit, Gauwyn said back in my head. My eye's widened and I looked at him funny. *Don't worry about Sceur, we'll stop using your head to talk*, he assured me. I looked at him like he was crazy, but I tried to distract myself from it until Kovit said, *Sceur you probably want some more explanation, am I right?*

Yes please!, I thought.

Merchant Gauwyn isn't an actual Yonkapas, he's actually a member of the Shadow Night Order, she told.

What? This is going much deeper than I thought it would. What are you trying to do? Is something about to attack the town?, I thought.

This is deeper than you originally thought, but don't worry about anything. I'll make sure to change your thoughts so you don't have to think about me, she said.

WAIT WHAT, I quickly thought, but in an instant my mind had moved on to Ironeye who had finished his conversation and had sit in a chair a foot from me and was reading.

I eyed a pretty lady that walked over and up to Ironeye, "Come on Nintur, dance with me!" Ironeye looked up, a bit scared like. "What's wrong, I don't bite!" Ironeye smiled, "Nildinslaken, Mauer", *No thank you, Mauer.*

She looked disappointed and said, "Alright, you're loose." She walked away and Ironeye turned back to his book.

"Why'd you turn her down?", I asked.

"Mh, not really feeling it."

"Not feeling it? If you would have ogled at her she would have kissed you, straight up!"

Ironeye shrugged. "Come on man! Man to man you gotta stop mopping!" He looked over slightly annoyed, "Mopping?"

"Yeah!"

"I ain't mopping!"

"Than what are you doing?"

"Not joining in, that's what."

"Why!"

"Because I miss her!", he looked angry, and awkwardly looked at the group next to us to see if any attentions had been turned, they hadn't. My face straightened, "Who? Is she here?"

"No", he huffed, "Now no more. Go somewhere and leave me be."

"Sorry."

Ironeye looked swallowed, "I don't mean to be a grump, just that I'm not feeling well." We were in silence for a few seconds, "Should I?", he said softly, I could just about hear him say it. I peered over at him, "Why not? What's there to lose?"

He grew a thinking face for a second before he nodded, stood and then walked after Mauer. I smiled, I was glad that Ironeye was going after her. I started to reflect on what he meant before about who he missed, was it a past girlfriend? Was he married before? Was it like Silvantus and the one he loved had to go away? I wasn't sure at all.

"¡Koravuten, koravuten!", *Attention, attention*, Mayor Nook said. "Dinslaken", *Thank you*, he said once people turned towards him. A group gathered in front of the stage as if everyone was excited to hear him speak. He gave a big warm smile, "Welcome to the third annual Festival of Solidarity. As your mayor I would like to personally thank all of the staff that helped set this up, and to you fine folks for partaking in this. I also extend a warm welcome to the Cloudhearts for joining us." He turned and opened a bottle of mead and held it in front of him, out towards the crowd, "This first taste of alcohol is to signify our union here in the town of Fiiř Fellenhob", he took a sip. The crowd around the stage cheered. "Now enjoy each other!"

The crowd semi parted, some people went back to tables, games, groups; others stood around and talked or continue dancing. I looked around with boredom until my eyes stopped at Fjarnin standing with a group of five others in front of the stage. I looked for a second, mustering up the confidence until she looked over and our eyes met. She motioned for me to come and I thought, *No going back now*. I walked off the stage and to them.

“Tudos Sceur”, *Hello Sceur*, Fjarnin said. We stared at each other with fondness, smiling slightly.

“Hey lovebird, you gonna introduce us”, a girl said. Fjarnin broke her gaze and said, “Oh right!” She pointed as she introduced, “Isltu, Juna, ÇelimΛs, Theucán and Netóla.”

“Hello”, they all said. Isltu was tall with blonde hair. Juna had long wavy blue hair. ÇelimΛs had short black hair and was kinda short. Theucán had short green hair and looked reserved. And Netóla was tall with curly blondish brown hair.

I laid down and smiled. Soon after Ironeye came stumbling and mumbling in, singing the song from the festival.

Shallow Heart,

“How do you think Gu’unav Fos⁹¹ keeps sane”, I asked?

“What do you mean”, Ironeye responded?

“Well, she’s been in isolation since the First Medieval Era. I wonder why she’s not insane yet”, I said.

“Probably because of the State of Adeake she’s in”, Ironeye said.

“I’d put my money there too”, Silvantus said, “In fact, I think the isolation has made her more sane.”

This text is for the end of the chapter

While walking through we noticed smoke rising in the distance. Silvantus and I exchanged looks before we continued forth. Once we neared we could see a clearing and at the center was a fire contained by rocks. There was a small cart to the north with a barrel and crate in it. Standing with his arms out towards the fire was a man wearing light brown armor. Before we even reached the edge of the clearing he turned to us and said, “Who goes there?” The veins in his face looked purple, giving him a defined poisoned look.

We paused before I said, “We are travelers, we mean no harm!” We walked into the clearing, but he turned defensive and backed away towards the cart.

“No, I don’t believe you! Your apart of that cult, coming for me because I escaped! I don’t want no more trouble! My heart can’t take it!

“What”, Silvantus asked, “You know of the cult?”

“Don’t play stupid with me! You know who I am, you called me Shallow Heart, don’t you remember? Of course you remember!” He drew his sword.

“Woah, hold on”, I said!

“We’re looking for our friend! We’ll leave once we know a little more if you have some information for us”, Silvantus said!

“No more lies”, he said! He charged us, limping as he did. Silvantus blocked his swing and than pushed him away.

“Stop, we want no war”, Silvantus yelled!

“You should have thought about that before you killed my wife and children”, Shallow Heart yelled back! He charged again, this time he held his sword over his head. He swung down, but we barely managed to dodge it. Silvantus and I backed off away from each other.

⁹¹ Gu’unav Fos - *Golden Fire*, is the Vraothaen Dar Gehden. She’s the Vraothaen of Fire, Reprimanding and Reconciling, with yourself and others. She was thrown into the Eternal Fire of Apnos for trying to take fire away from the Yonkapas. She was also the lover of Erumak so she was an all around hated Vraothaen by the Gods. But instead of dying to the flames, she reached a state of Adeake which kept her alive, and from there she actually repented for her sins and became a “good” deity. Some Yonkapas even worship her.

“Stop, we didn’t kill anyone”, I said. Silvantus and I were started to get frustrated!
“It’s not murder if you don’t consider them human, is it”, Shallow Heart said, black tears pouring forth from his eyes! “You guys poisoned me, corrupted me! Made me see black when all I wanted was to see light!”

“Sir, we have no idea what you're talking about”, I said!

Shallow Heart took another swing at Silvantus before Silvantus lost his patients and swung back, cutting Shallow Heart’s left arm. Shallow Heart backed towards me, and once he realized he swung at me. I blocked it, but he pulled out a dagger and stabbed my unprotected, and unnoticed, side. The dagger was no doubt made of Jab⁹², and it went deep. I could feel it penetrated my lungs and heart.

As he pulled the dagger from my side, I peered over at Silvantus in shock as Shallow Heart then drove the sword through my chest. I didn’t even feel the sword. I could see complete hatred build up in Silvantus’s eyes, but I knew that from my fading vision I was no more for this world.

I fell to my knees as the pain left from the dagger, and my vision, subsided. I was upset; not at the fact of dying but at the fact that I had let Ironeye down. Once I got to Nehro I would plead with Ogva The Watchful⁹³ for my life back to finish our quest, I thought. But for now, death.

⁹² Jab - A bluish purple gem that is normally fashioned into a dagger or jewelry. It’s the most common ore to be used for daggers.

⁹³ Ogva The Watchful - Ogva is a floating, stone carving looking, flat eye with three Aclu(Hellrock) tentacles waving out from behind him. He looks like a massive stone coin. If anyone opposes what he says he shoots a fireball and, though it doesn’t kill, it severely hurts the souls. The living can get by him by shooting him in the eye with an arrow though. He decides two things, one if you can enter Nehro and two what part of Nehro you’re going to be sent to. If you have repent what you’ve done and are true at heart than you can be sent to the Aestra Nedo Runa (Heaven). And if you really convince him, you can return back to your body.

Lorewalk 3,

Another story my Grandmother told me was about the Incident At Blue Lake during the Dark Era.

In the subcontinent of Orbert, Waka created the Shrulk, Humanoid Painted Turtles, in the belly of the Blue Lake, Orbert. Paduon quickly got mad at her, as Paduon was the goddess of lakes and claimed sole responsibility for all life in all lakes. Having Waka now a goddess of something in a lake made her furious.

The two Goddess got into an argument that soon lead to heated fight, literally. The fighting soon moved to inside of the lake where the water around them heated up. The rough fighting also caused water to fly everywhere, even as far as Rettus in some cases.

Cranii caught wind of the fighting and went as fast as he could to try and stop it. When he arrived he broke up the fight, forcing them talk to explain. No matter what was said the two Goddess could not agree on anything and were nothing but hostile to each other. The Dahdelpanei was called to deal with this, coming up with the idea to move the Shrulk to Voahela. Waka at first resisted this, but she soon agreed to it in fear of being punished for resisting the Dahdelpanei and receiving a punishment like the one in The Third New Era. Thus ended the incident.

My First Breath As A Dead Man,

“I’m not gonna let a giant floating stone coin decide my fate”, Ironeye said as we helped him to his feet.

An Dorda Vutermav,

Aduona,

“Hey guys”, Silvantus called, “You might wanna come check this out!”

Ironeye and I jogged over, pausing when we came to a monumentally large smooth dark stone wall. The trees all around had been cleared, saving a space about ten feet between the actual forest and the wall.

Ironeye looked on excitedly, saying to himself, “Aduona⁹⁴ here I come.” But just as we started walking forwards we heard what sounded like crashing waves of water. We turned and saw a tidal wave of tan a couple miles back.

“The sands”, I asked?

“Yep”, Ironeye said simply. We ran to the wall and began to bang on it while yelling, “Help!”

To our surprise a shimmer occurred to the left of us and a drawbridge appeared from it. It started to lower and we hastened not a time to run over to it. It hadn’t even fully opened before we jumped through the crevice that was the space between the wall and the reclining gate. The gate slowly closed back, and as it did we could hear the sand, that sounded like water, smash up against the side of the wall. The gate simmered and then disappeared.

Feeling a small relief, Silvantus and I turned around to see a woman with greyish blue hair and white blue eyes in the arms of Ironeye.

“You came back”, the woman said. Her and Ironeye kissed. She looked his age, but something about her made her seem older. They stared into each other’s eyes, until after a few seconds they turned towards us. The woman gave a smile as she put out her hand to us, “Aduona”, she said, “Guardian of Nature.”

Silvantus and I shook her hand awkwardly. “Are you a goddess”, Silvantus asked?

“Yes”, she said, “My father is Isttus⁹⁵ and my mother is Gol⁹⁶.”

“Wow, I’m in the presence of a Goddess”, I said.

“I’m guessing it doesn’t happen often to you”, she said, “Where are you from? You don’t seem to be from here.”

“We’re from Neasend”, I said.

“Then you should know the Gods personally⁹⁷”, she said.

“No, I’m from the north of Unarehdien where the Gods don’t visit”, I said.

“I’ve met Tuttlus and Skiymens before”, Silvantus said.

“But Aduona, we must talk”, Ironeye spoke up!

⁹⁴ Aduona - Protector of Forests. Daughter of Isttus and Gol.

⁹⁵ Isttus - The New God of the Gata, Swamps and and Woods of Any Kind of Tree and Location.

⁹⁶ Gol - The sister Twin New Goddess of Trickery, Opposites, Twins, Choices and Madness. Her twin brother is Fol. Moniker: The Opheliac Gods

⁹⁷ Neasend is the place where the Yonkapas were created. For all of time it has been the most visited place by the Gods, and Unehradien is one of the biggest and most populated cities in the world, reaching about 2,500,000 people during this era.

Aduona turned towards him with a semi worried look, “What?” Ironeye looked at us and then took her by the hand and lead her towards a giant tree that I had just noticed. They began to talk in whispers and as they did I looked around for the first time. I noticed that the stone wall encompassed an extremely large area, probably about five miles in all directions from the center. Looking towards the center, I saw an even bigger tree, but the bough was a grandfather clock. I could clearly see the time that it told, one o’clock in the afternoon.

Unexpectedly though, I started to hear what sounded like a waterfall and I turned around thinking only one thing, the sand must be climbing the walls. Promptly, the sand rocketed up higher than the wall and started to pour over the wall. Aduona pushed Silvantus and I backwards, falling to the ground, and we watched as she threw her hands out in front of her and seemed to shoot yellow translucent waves out of her fingers. The yellow waves smashed against the sand, forming a bowl almost, collected the sand and then starting to push the sand back over the wall. The flowing sand looked like a waterfall in reverse, until it was fully pushed back over the wall. Then, she lifted her hands towards the sky and seemed to shoot the yellow waves twice as fast. These waves flew to the edge of the wall and looked to form a cap that stopped the sands from entrenching the wall.

Ironeye ran over to her, almost expecting it when she collapsed without warning. Ironeye lifted her and started to carry her towards the grandfather clock tree at the center, following a path that I had just noticed.

“When I was born this forest grew”, she said in self ego!

The Red Orb,

This is chapter like 10 or 11

"I finally realize now", Ironeye said suddenly, his voice could be heard clearly even at the edge of the windy swirl.

"Realize what", I asked?

"To sacrifice myself to save Aduona would surely win the gratitude of Isttus", he said.

"What, are you mad", Silvantus asked in an urgent manner!

Ironeye looked over with a peaceful smile, no doubt he was thinking all of the time he had spent with Aduona, "Yes.. mad with love."

Ironeye took a step forward, but Silvantus jumped in front of him. I grabbed Silvantus, of whom Ironeye hadn't even noticed was there, and pulled him out of the way shaking my head.

"Are you just gonna let him kill himself", Silvantus said with a face the mixture of anger and worriedness?

"It's what he wants. Let him have his peace. For once he is tranquil with himself. Let him have his moment, even if it's the last he'll ever have", I said, tears forming at my eye. Even though I could feel more and more tears coming as I looked towards Ironeye, I did nothing but I felt all. Walking towards his inevitable doom he looked serene and for once, happy. And as for Silvantus and I, we felt wrecked and saddened as he entered the swirl and lightly began to be pulled apart as his Xolt seemed to be stolen from him.

He stopped in the middle and turned around towards us. He had a smile on, but tears flowing down his cheeks. He waved goodbye, closed his eyes and then sat down in the middle of the swirl. He tilted his head towards the sky and for the next few seconds he sat there as the swirl ate at him, tearing little parts of his skin and clothing from him. Promptly, the red swirl, from behind Ironeye started to turn yellow and soon the whole swirl was engulfed said color. We watched in horror as Ironeye began to dissolve completely and within a few minutes, he and the swirl was gone forever.

The air suddenly stopped, motionless. Lightning struck through the sky, even as no rain fell. The sand about twenty feet from us started to circle, forming a small tornado, and then dropped and a hole was formed. Out of this hole jumped Ygmar, and she looked angry. She held with her an Odar⁹⁸.

"Asonavis", she yelled! Asonavis turned slowly to look, annoyed like. "What are you doing in my lands!"

"I figured I take a walk through and smell the cacti", Asonavis said sarcastically.

"Leave now and you will be spared the embarrassment", Ygmar told, pointing the top tip of the Odar at her.

⁹⁸ Odar - A double sided scythe with a bow string through the middle of it.

“Flee? You must be mad, just like when you chose to be the goddess of these infertile lands”, Asonavis shouted back!

“You dare make mockery of my choice! How about we mock your attempts at wooing Valcron”, Ygmar shoot back!

Asonavis looked extremely irritated by that. Ygmar lifted and aimed her Odar, an arrow spawning in her hand, and she fired at Asonavis of whom effortlessly deflected it with a swing of her spear. Asonavis yelled, “That’s it”, as she walked towards Ygmar and then stood battle ready with her spear in her hands.

“You and your kind were banished from this dimension long ago, stay out of where you don’t belong”, Ygmar said. Asonavis shifted her movement, and so did Ygmar. Promptly Ygmar swung into Asonavis but Asonavis blocked it with her spear and pushed Ygmar back.

An Underhanded Deal,

All About The Eýrthřuosus Religion,

The Eýrthřuosus Religion is a very unique religion most comparable to that of Dodekatheism. Drawing upon such for influences, this also includes The Elder Scrolls, Norse and Nahuatl religions. This chapter is dedicated to answer questions about the religion to an extent. This chapter will only be naming the deities, the races, planes and the timeline, no further explanation will be given than what is told as some explanations could be a book in itself.

Deities:

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