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Lorerunner court case

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The Lorerunner, formerly known as Archengeia, is a content creator on YouTube and Twitch who focuses primarily on video games and movies, with some lesser emphasis on role-playing games. His main content includes loreruns, which are full playthroughs of games accompanied by in-depth analysis, ruminations that feature reviews and analysis of various media such as books, TV shows, and often games, and explorations, which are short gameplay sessions streamed live on Twitch. His YouTube channel can be found at and his Twitch channel at . The Lorerunner also maintains a website with a list of terms frequently used in his ruminations. The Lorerunner's content is characterized by several notable personality traits and comedic moments, including: - **Analysis Mode**: A humorous "thinking cap" that he puts on for his analysis videos. - **Cuteness Proximity**: The presence of his niece, which triggers a softer side in the Lorerunner. - **Caustic Critic**: While generally advocating for positive criticism over negative ones, he occasionally slips into more harsh comments, especially when under stress or surprise. - **Precision F-Strike**: Using more tame profanity but occasionally letting out stronger language when under duress. - **Running Gag**: Persistent jokes and references within his content, such as "ar-KAY-num" which pokes fun at people mispronouncing the game title. The Lorerunner has a dedicated community of viewers but also faces criticism. Some view him as a knowledgeable and enthusiastic creator with an obsessive attention to detail, possibly indicating autistic tendencies, though this is not confirmed. Others express discomfort due to his pedantic nature and the presence of "creepy" content within his streams or comments sections. The text includes edits by moderators aimed at correcting inaccuracies or clarifying points made in comments, particularly regarding Latin pronunciations and game titles. Note: This paraphrased text maintains the original's tone and style while condensing information for easier reading. From Latin "arcanum", English spelling varies. Originally, the Latin alphabet didn't contain the letter "u". The accuser's child was allegedly molested by Magus for 3.5 years between ages 11-14. Charges are severe due to prolonged abuse and victim's age during most of it. The defense disputes evidence, claiming delayed reporting, lack of bodily harm, and unreliable witnesses. The accuser emphasizes the victim's inability to consent at 11 and that abuse continued until they were 14. The accuser's child was not Magus's but their husband's from before knowing Magus. Officer with almost 10 years of experience, she wouldn't look kindly on someone accused of having relations with a child. This leads to the point that two out of four counts against him are "off grid" felonies, meaning if he's convicted, the judge isn't bound by a sentencing grid. In such cases, she could give him life in prison. The speaker is unsure what to think anymore due to new information. It's clear why he wanted to hide his real name now, as he had a past conviction for battery and felony criminal damage in 2006, with an ordered restitution of $4,523.24. The details aren't specified, but it's likely more than just the total amount of damage done. The speaker remembers rewatching his Mass Effect ruminations where he mentioned not playing ME1 when it came out; now they know why - because he was in jail at that time. There's further information about domestic violence in court documents, but the specifics are unclear. They're reading details from a recent hearing where the defendant appeared in custody and was ordered to personally appear again with conditions. If the child didn't come forward initially, he might get off scot-free. The speaker emphasizes that "not guilty" doesn't mean innocent. There's speculation about potential motives for the accusations, including revenge by the mother of the child or someone trying to extort more money from him. It's noted that having earlier convictions doesn't automatically make someone a pedophile and that false allegations of this nature can have devastating effects on reputations. The speaker suggests that if he's guilty, they should be given harsh punishment, but also acknowledges the possibility of his innocence and the need for careful consideration before making any judgments. I'm skeptical about the allegations against Steve. It seems like just another internet rumor with no concrete evidence. Breakups can be messy, and people often don't part ways amicably. The mother might have benefited from a settlement or financial support after the split. Watching these witch hunts unfold is always fascinating. People jump to conclusions without requiring proof. It's as if they're eager to condemn someone based on hearsay. But this situation is more complex, involving an actual arrest and court proceedings. One possibility is that Steve's family had to pay a hefty bail of $15,000 for him to be released from jail. This development has been overlooked in the discussion so far. It's crucial to consider the full extent of the allegations against Steve and not just assume the worst without concrete evidence. It's also essential to recognize that victims of abuse often take time to come forward with their stories. Children who have experienced molestation may need years to process their emotions and feel comfortable sharing their experiences. This is a criminal case, not a civil one, which means the mother might not be able to seek financial compensation. Steve has a history of violence and dishonesty, which should be considered when evaluating the situation. In hindsight, it's clear that Steve exaggerated his credentials and accomplishments. He didn't need to fabricate such a extensive list of achievements. It would have been sufficient to share his genuine passions and skills without embellishing them. chkoo noises in his videos originated from wrapping up scenes on set, he's discussed being an award-winning accountant multiple times. He apparently developed an MMO in the late '90s but funders backed out after WoW launched. In Mass Effect vids, he mentions pro voice acting work scattered throughout various videos. He permabans anyone asking about this situation on streams/forums. Considering his Patreon income and video views, people should know who they're giving money to. If honest, he'd address the sudden disappearance (arrest) when the thread was going on forums, but instead nuked it and banned those asking where he went. He's a lying piece of shit, so I don't want people posting on Codex. This is why I shared this info; do with it as you please. Photographer pronunciation varies between FOW-tə-grahf and fə-TO-grə-fə(r), with the former being more traditional. The game's authors, such as Tim Cain, use the ar-KAY-nuhm spelling, which is also seen in Latin. The person who claims to have knowledge about this is likely uneducated if they think ar-KAY-nuhm should be pronounced like it was in Latin, as that would make them as misinformed as a codexer. On the other hand, Tim Cain seems like someone who misunderstands pluralization and thinks arcanum's correct form should be arcanums. The pronunciation of Latin words does have its own merits when spelled according to Latin rules. What really matters is how people pronounce it, not their personal opinions on the matter. English speakers' pronunciation of Latin words can be frustrating for non-native English speakers who learned Latin. This frustration might even surpass reading posts from autistic ethnics upset about a videogame mispronouncing a dead language's word. The author ponders the significance of using Latin in a game's title, seemingly unrelated to annoying online posts. They eventually realize that the language choice is likely due to its old-timey, ritualistic, and mystical connotations for modern audiences. The text also references Tim Cain, a game developer who reportedly said something about 18th-century locomotives. The author jokingly imagines a hypothetical game where hacking minigames result in PDF textbooks or even the ability to reverse-engineer the game's source code. But wait, why bother with pointless posts on an internet forum about games released 16 years ago? Once I got it, I'd ascend to a higher plane of existence and play on a xylophone with the Archangel Michael in heaven – or whatever the Buddhist equivalent is. But then I realized that Latin is still dead outside the Vatican, and its random choice was likely due to old-timey, ritualistic, and mystical connotations. EXPELLIARMUS!!!! However, for a non-native English speaker who learned Latin, it's painful to hear English speakers mispronounce Latin words. Isn't there some plane of existence where regional variations wouldn't arise when Latin was the common tongue? The only reason we feel there's a correct way to pronounce something is due to its limited use. LOL, no one speaks Latin as their first language; it's a dead language. Although there are academic standards for teaching and spelling Latin words, that doesn't mean everyone agrees on how to do it correctly. Edit: Tim Cain, the guy who said "it was 18th century and you had locomotives..." might think plural is arcanums. You know that junior developers just dying to make a game like FO3/4 clone, but every time they enter the 'hacking' minigame, they get dumped to the DOS prompt. Achieving critical success is often determined by external factors, such as game logs. However, if the achievement is awarded due to 'social engineering hack' tactics rather than personal effort, it's still recorded as a critical success for Steam achievements. This brings up questions about the relevance of this post and its connection to the original text. The mention of Tim Cain, who mentioned 18th-century locomotives, suggests that he might have an unconventional approach to language. It's likely that junior developers, who spend a lot of time researching settings but struggle with implementation, would attempt to create games that mimic FO3/4 clones. Instead, they might receive limited resources and instructions, such as password-restricted PDFs for coding in C++. The game's mechanics could lead to players being able to reverse-engineer the source code, unlock chapters of a textbook, or even use their knowledge to change in-game objects. However, critical failure would result in the player's personal details and location being shared with publishers' lawyers. The original post seems to be discussing this concept further. The author then shifts focus to pronunciation and Latin words, questioning whether there is a universal correct way to pronounce them due to limited usage. They argue that regional variations are more common than one might think and that academic standards for teaching Latin and spelling words exist despite the language being largely dead. The post about FO3/4 clone's hacking minigame, where entering the game results in being dumped to DOS prompt, raising skill levels unlocking PDF series on coding in C++, and eventually allowing for reversing-engineering of the game's source code. The thread then goes off-topic, with one user cherry-picking a line from another post and creating a tangent. Meanwhile, another user corrects someone else's pronunciation of Latin words, pointing out that most native English speakers can't pronounce them properly due to it being an extinct language. The actual conversation then shifts to discussing the pronunciation of Latin words, with one user stating that (most) native English speakers cannot pronounce Latin words properly. Another user chimes in, correcting someone else's pronunciation and stating that no one knows what the correct pronunciation is, as it's based on Church Latin and not classical Latin. The users also bring up the concept of spoken versus written languages, citing examples like Classical Chinese. The discussion then takes a turn, with users debating the correct pronunciation of Latin words, citing various sources and dialects. One user even brings up the example of how Russians pronounce Caesar as "tseh-zar", which is where their word "czar" comes from. The conversation concludes by stating that no one knows what the correct pronunciation of Latin words are, but it's an interesting topic to explore further. that the German Kaiser is derived. The problem lies with the 'ae' diphthong, as some languages tend to lean more towards the 'a' or 'e' form. Last edited: Jun 13, 2017 Like the New Vegas Kaizar, possibly where the German word "kaiser" originates from. I'm unsure about original Latin pronunciation (likely similar to Russian/Japanese) but it definitely didn't sound like modern English. I pronounce it Arc-Aynoom simply to annoy you. Ok... It appears several Codexers have become self-appointed authorities on Latin. Many are experts in various fields, often to an excessive level - Wikipedia-level "experts" at worst. But who cares? Carry on, gentlemen. What's the connection between lunatic tendencies and review quality? I watched him a few months ago but he didn't resolve my problem with the correct spelling of 'ae' that persists. Maybe this video can help: Not exactly. The issue is conflicting opinions about the open 'ae' diphthong. Most agree it sounded like [ae] (cat) in Vulgar Latin, but in Classical Latin, it might have sounded like [a] or [ai] ([Front] sounding). If Latin always favored [e], Caesar would sound like KE-sar. If [ai] is valid, the German "Kaiser" almost matches Caesar's pronunciation with a slight difference: the tail 'e' should be an 'a', but some German pronunciations of "Kaiser" sound like "Kaisa" or "Kaisar". Others claim the 'ae' diphthong was simply a long vowel in Classical Latin, and its writing is just a remnant from Old Latin, supporting the [eː] theory. For fun, I'll throw in the nasalized [a~] (Caen) for an alternative sounding Cow-sar. Vulgar Latin was quite different from Classical Latin, with many dialects and a pronunciation that wasn't drastically dissimilar until later on; it's comparable to the difference between formal and informal English. The Passion of Christ film used the latter due to director Mel Gibson being Catholic, which led to using Ecclesiastical pronunciation - essentially Latin spoken like Italian. However, there was an issue with the letter "ae," as different languages leaned towards pronouncing it more like "a" or "e." Classical Latin speakers likely pronounced it similar to the "ie" in "lie" (/aj/), but this changed over time to a longer "e" sound (/eː/) similar to the one in "bet." It's worth noting that the letter "v" was actually pronounced like the English "w" in Classical Latin. Interestingly, the number 666 in Hebrew is represented as three v's (Waw), which are now pronounced like our modern-day "w's". This thread started by accusing someone of pedophilia and posting evidence of them lying about their past, but it devolved into a debate over the correct pronunciation of Latin words, specifically Arcanum. The irony was that some native English speakers couldn't pronounce Latin correctly, and there's actually no record of what the "correct" pronunciation is; it's an extinct language, so we rely on Church Latin, which may not reflect the Classical form. Several Roman authors have provided comments on this, and our understanding can be pieced together from the languages that borrowed words from Latin and the Roman alphabet itself, giving us a good idea of what it sounded like. The existence of many regional varieties is also likely, making English dialects in England today look tame by comparison. As for Lorerunner, there are ongoing concerns about his well-being due to a past incident involving cancer and an unclear current situation regarding his health. The community's response was telling, jumping to conclusions without proof or evidence, which has been a recurring theme in online witchhunts. People who were sexually abused by priests often took time to come forward, sometimes years after the incident. Considering this is a criminal case, not a civil one, does it even make sense for the mother to ask for money? The truth is that the guy in question has a serious record: battery, felony criminal damage, and domestic violence. He's also been caught lying compulsively. I'm not sure why he felt the need to embellish his life story, saying things like "I used to be an award-winning economist" or "I worked as a television producer." Maybe in hindsight, it seems confusing given his actual age and history of homelessness. In fact, I remember him mentioning that he taught writing classes and worked in IT, but never once claiming to be a top-shelf economist or corporate manager. He did share stories about remixing songs, like "Defiance," though. I agree with LibertyPrime that it's worth looking into the various jobs he claims to have had. It seems like he was trying to spin a more impressive narrative. The fact that he would permablock anyone asking questions on his streams or forums doesn't help. People should know who they're supporting, especially if he makes money from Patreon and videos. I think it's telling that when given the chance to address the situation, he chose instead to erase the thread and ban people asking about it. I wasn't really expecting any help from this guy one way or another. Even on this forum, the fact that he existed proved his guilt regardless of whether it was true or not. Wait, no, it wasn't cancer, it was kidney stones - was that a lie too? Anyway... I remembered when I first stumbled upon the new realm. I took my time to explore and enjoy each experience as long as I could. It was amazing, with a rich mix of cultures from different lands. However, once I'd had enough, I knew I had to inform my superior about my whereabouts because there were tasks that needed attending to. Lilith: Normally, I wouldn't take her seriously, but this time she said something interesting. The people who lived there weren't impressive - short-lived, shortsighted, no power, and no ambition. But the land itself was fertile, allowing new magical abilities to be developed. Even I could get some people to join my cause willingly. They'd bring their own trinkets and trifles, and my cult would form on its own, mostly out of my control. I let it flourish while I focused on more important things... Those within could accomplish great works beyond what me or mine could do, filtering and combining magics from all four primal forces equally... allowing new combinations and removing chaos or good, evil or order... But that was child's play compared to true potential. Great artifacts of reality-shattering power would be forged by sacrificing equally powerful things to the Fabric itself... And so my followers gathered dozens, hundreds, and fed them to the depths. Three would be created, one each for myself and my adopted family, and with their might we'd finally be able to gather throngs under our banner and challenge the Four Lords of Hell. Diablo: My elder 'brother' asked me to visit some backwater plane on urgent business. I thought about ignoring him or worse. But Baal talked me out of it. If he had something in mind for all three of us, it was probably important. The place stank - ichor, bloat, oil, grease, sweat, fat. I hated it. Whatever dear brother wanted had better be worth it. Baal: The value was beyond count. One for each, imbued with the dying screams of hundreds of willing sacrifices, giving us each a concept to call our own. Mephisto: I sought what I've always sought; To influence, dominate, coerce, control. I took for myself the Aspect of Hatred, so all before us would dance to my tune. Diablo: I wanted to bring low our enemies before they even spotted us. Curses and anxieties, corruption unseen. So I took for me the Aspect of Terror. Baal: I had no such ambitions. When mine had their fill of fun, I desired only to ruin all that remained, and so Destruction was Aspected to me. Mephisto: And thusly empowered did we return to the Burning Hells, sat in corner of Fabric’s weave, to garner the disenfranchised and unscrupulous, and wage our just war against the Four Lords. With victory would come dominance, and we would rise to the stations we so deserved, and finally put an end to the Sin War. Akarat: And in their wake, I beheld a terrible sight. My fellow brethren... thieving, torturing, mutilating... slaughtering. It was a small group, but the local magistrate counted amongst their number. To rise up against them was to risk death, but what choice did I have? The killing had to stop. I had but simple means to Given text here Tyrael hated his job as an overseer of new realms, cataloging plants, animals, and people to fit into the existing order. The work was dull and repetitive. He took a break on the Plains of Entoon, finding solace in the natural world's symmetry. However, after weeks of walking, he realized he had no idea where he was or how long he'd been there. Tyrael reported his discovery to the council, detailing the new realm's recent connection to the High Heavens and its potential for demon-free territory. The others were excited about the prospect, but Tyrael saw an opportunity and rallied his warrior Izual to prepare a fortress on the border. They named it Pandemonium. Auriel announced that the Angiris Council had deemed it necessary to build the Worldstone, an artifact that would sever the realm's connection to the Burning Hells, ensuring peace and tranquility. The council also entrusted Tyrael with this critical task, as he was the only one who understood its significance. In the wisdom of the Council, our Sanctuary would undoubtedly aid Heaven's endeavors for years to come. I received my dream job, and with Imperius' banner, we charged into the Burning Hells to distract demons while angelic architects built the Worldstone. I relished this task, as I always did. We repeatedly claimed easy victories against unsuspecting Hell forces... too easily. Imperius Curious, I sent an infiltrator to investigate the Hells and discovered a civil war between three upstarts challenging the Four Lords. This surprised me, as it was uncommon for the Four to defend their positions, but these Three were making significant headway. In that moment, I knew the wisdom of the Council and the blessing from the Fabric. No more distractions or skirmishes; I summoned Heaven's host to smash into Hell's lines, and we butchered by tens of thousands. Duriel It wasn't a good day. Azmodan and Belial were allowed their usual preenings, while Andariel and I knew the truth: the upstarts were doing well. Curse them! How did they succeed where so many others failed? Generations of balance among the Four being shattered by three children. And then Heaven's armies arrived, spearheaded by Izual and his master. I grew worried, but scheming Andariel saw opportunity... to abandon the Three and return to our side. It took mere days to convince most of their forces to defect. With a unified front, we refocused against General Imperius and his attack dog. As we prepared for a long campaign, I lamented the fate of the Three. They were cast out of the Hells by the Four Lords, banished until death claimed them. A three-day memorium was held across the Heavens to honor Imperius' presumed loss in the Burning Hells. Auriel With the Worldstone complete, the barrier rose as planned... though Imperius wasn't heard from and was presumed lost. A three-day vigil was held over his Seat for much longer... Regardless, Sanctuary would drift towards the Heavens, joining us soon. But as months passed, it didn't. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discussing our strategies. I had concerns about the demonic presence remaining, but the Council accepted it as true. However, I knew it wasn't enough to stop Sanctuary's corruption. There was something else at play, making it difficult to pinpoint. Mephisto was not pleased with the turn of events, which had been ripped away from him just moments before greatness. It was a typical experience for an angel, and he had some enjoyment in this place compared to others. The High Heavens' efforts to influence humans towards their way were successful, but it was easy to manipulate them with bribery and flattery. I learned about the Horadrim, angelic mages chosen by the High Heavens, and how they continued experimenting with artifacts after our aspects were built. Zoltun Kulle thought that a soul stasis could be achieved to prolong life, allowing skilled individuals to endure past their years. Some of his colleagues came up with an idea for a soul matrix, which I was able to build upon. Word from the angelic allies informed us about powerful demons still trapped on Sanctuary. My role in this was studying old artifacts to help understand and find demon lords. However, the Horadrim were split on what to do after finding them. With elder Kulle's new soul matrix, a design for a soulstone emerged – a container that could preserve a being or grant its powers to another host. This led to factionalization among the Horadrim as some powerful magelords sought to control the stones. I was hesitant to participate in their politics, especially during those dark days. It wasn't until I found an orphan with Jazreth that we stepped out of the bloodshed and began a new life in Khanduras. Marius looked back on his illustrious career as Knight Captain of King Persivell, discussing a potential comfortable retirement. As we patrolled the southern shores, we stumbled upon something unnatural. It was an unstoppable force that slaughtered two of my comrades within seconds. Initially, it kept us at bay, but when its momentum waned, it turned cruel and merciless. The beast darted around our chargers, whispering inaudible words as it dragged another soldier down. As my friends fell one by one, the world around me grew dim, and all I could hear was the pounding of my heart. It took a few moments for me to realize we were evenly matched, with the creature's black blood sizzling on the ground as its wounds slowed it down. When everyone except me and the beast had fallen, it stared at me, its glare piercing. It produced a colorless gem, sharp like a dagger, and spoke in a tongue that reeked of crushed ants and sulfur. The creature revealed that the magestone it held was the only way to defeat it, its grin growing wider. When I asked why it taunted us with our weakness, it laughed, savoring my terror. In the face of such burden, I did the only thing I could do – I fled. Maghda We were struggling to make a name for ourselves. No artifacts, no positions, no prominence, and no power. Every avenue of advancement was blocked. We needed something, anything that would give us an edge over the factions and lords. Some ancient man in a white cloak approached my sister about a nightmare creature and directed us towards it. Curious and desperate, we journeyed south... The air was thick with magic as we moved further away. When we passed a young man screaming in terror, I knew we were close. Imagine my surprise when we found an entire troop of Khanduras knights slaughtered to the last. The scene was gruesome but informative. They had fought valiantly, but the beast was nowhere to be seen. Instead, we saw one knight's corpse clutching a jagged red stone as if plunging it into the ground. Though they were dead, the stone pulsed with demonic power. This would be our great advantage. Lazarus I and my companions spent many nights experimenting on the stone, though nightmares made sleep difficult. Ultimately, we learned nothing of value or importance. Disgruntled, many left, but Maghda proposed using the artifact to curry favor with the King. Adria disagreed violently, spouting nonsense about a lord and the precepts of the Burning Hells. She attempted to take the stone by force, but we intervened on behalf of our leader, and Adria chose instead to leave alone into the wilds. We agreed with Maghda's plan... after all, what was there to lose? Adria The fools used the stone to barter with their esteemed polity. The elder King Percivell accepted their gift graciously, granting them position, influence in his court, as they always wished. Me? I drifted away. I had great knowledge of magic and... Given article text here Moreina's first report had come back unusually fast, but we hadn't heard from her since then. A week was a long time without any news. It got even worse when there were more reports of strange deaths happenin' all over the place. I was sittin' down to write some letters when two mages from the Horadrim showed up. King Albrecht had sent 'em a message askin' for their help dealin' with these troubles. One of 'em, Jazreth, was goin' to investigate the city while his friend and ward stayed with us in the Keep. I asked him if he'd heard from Moreina, and he said he'd check into it. Jazreth seemed like a calm fella, so it helped settle my nerves some. But things were clearly goin' downhill fast at the Cathedral - you could feel the evil seepin' outta the stones and drivin' the local beasts crazy. I had warned them before we came down here, but only one young guy, Lazarus, seemed to be listenin'. Still, duty's duty, so my summoned critters kept me safe for a bit, but it got worse as we went deeper. Frothing monsters and screamin' crazies...and then there was the tomb. King Leoric's skeletal remains were there, along with his guard. It looked like they'd been overpowered by some powerful magic. I fought those skeletons and managed to defeat 'em, but it cost me a lot of energy. The curse had already damaged Leoric pretty badly, so I knew he was beyond help. I'm plumb tuckered out...need a little rest before headin' back up to the surface. This place is cursed, that's for sure. I just hope I can get some shut-eye soon and make it back home.CainA stranger showed up at Eastgate Keep. His name was Aiden, a Crusader from Zakarum. He came to exchange info with the Sisterhood before headin' back to his troop, but his visit turned out to be pretty useful. I decided to join him on his journey, since it'd been too long since my friend Cain had heard from me. We figured no lone traveler should go to Tristram alone, so we decided to stick together. I'm not as spry with magic as I used to be, but I can still lend a hand and offer some knowledge if needed.AkaraI was worried sick about them when they left. Cain's my good friend, and Aiden seemed like a nice kid. It took me just a minute or two to send out letters and have my rogues check the four corners for help. I hope it won't be necessary...LazarusFollow me! We'll cleanse this place of its filth! The king's chosen failed, so it's up to us to do what needs doin'! Downwards!!CainWhat's goin' on here?GriswoldThe archbishop is leadin' the guards down into the Cathedral to clean it out.CainBut...what about the heroes who went in first?GriswoldWhy do you think we're feelin' like we need to send in the guards now?CainDamnation. Is Aiden ready? Good, let's descend and maybe we can catch up with the locals and join forces...this place is truly cursed. Ugh, I see our compatriots made some progress at least. I think...*gagging*, I think I can hear the soldiery coming from up ahead... Just a bit further, comrades! Don’t let losses stop you! Think of your families counting on you. As we approach the end, Cain restrains himself from vomiting, stunned by the sight before him: the crown of Khanduras lies amidst blood-stained debris. There are no bodies, only broken bones. Lazarus kneels, overcome by the pitiful fate that has befallen their allies. Suddenly, Jazreth and Moreina appear ahead. Lazarus urges haste, but Cain warns against delay. When they finally reach the Cathedral, they find it cleansed of beasts, though at great cost: their comrades lie lifeless on the ground. Cain tries to reason with Lazarus, who is consumed by grief and anger. As tensions escalate, Aiden intervenes, attempting to calm the situation. Meanwhile, a new narrative unfolds. Adria visits Aiden in his chamber, where he struggles to sleep due to visions of greatness. She offers him potent concoctions to facilitate a deeper connection with these visions. The next day, Aiden comes to visit her again, and she prostrates before him, revealing her true intentions. In the second story, Marius recounts his troubled past. After fleeing his former life, he settled in Eastgate Keep and eventually purchased a tavern where he found solace and purpose. However, occasional memories of his past still haunt him, leaving him with mixed emotions about his current situation. It had been some time since I'd last known peace, but one day a stranger arrived in my corner of the world. He was a Crusader of Zakarum, and his presence sparked memories that were best left unvisited. As I recalled him from afar, my thoughts became jumbled, and I stumbled upon an unsettling truth. The flames that engulfed Tristram's Cathedral had been swift and merciless, claiming many lives. Amidst the chaos, even the dead rose to challenge our escape, leaving many of us scarred. I was fortunate enough to survive and lead a small group to a nearby encampment for safety. I knew that this disaster was connected to recent events in Tristram, and so I quickly sent out messengers to inform allies. With any luck, aid would soon arrive. It was decided that a group of heroes would be dispatched, and within hours, two of them arrived. Meanwhile, Cassia had been traveling for unrelated business when she stumbled upon the devastated state of our allies' former home. She found solace in linking up with a fellow traveler, a Paladin of Zakarum, and together they located the Sisterhood's makeshift encampment. The matron there was welcoming, and they were directed towards nearby Tristram. Jeffery pressed on, despite being weary, for fear gripped his heart. He sought the whereabouts of his friend Aiden but received no news. As they approached Tristram, all hope seemed lost as the city's edge crumbled beneath their feet. However, the Warmatron's keen vision spotted fresh tracks, leading them to survivors, including Deckard Cain and an intriguingly garbed man named Hakon. Hakon had been nearby for weeks, attempting to take samples from Tristram's Cathedral. The Dark Wanderer's attack was swift and brutal, leaving the city in flames. Many people were haggard and panicked, making his job of taking samples much harder. Eventually, he managed to evacuate a good number of people before the chaos claimed too many more. The survivors were then led to the rogue's encampment, where Akara and her Sisters took charge of feeding and keeping the crowd safe. The ordeal was far from over, but with time, hope would emerge from the ashes. We were tasked with infiltrating Eastgate Keep and taking care of whatever evil was inside. Cassia confessed that she wasn't ready for what they faced - a haunting howling sound and hordes of undead roaming the halls. As they navigated through concealment and conflict, they encountered defenders blocking their path to a gruesome sight: Jazreth and Moreina, once comrades, now lifeless and twisted in agony. Despite being no help in battle, Cassia's comrades defeated the pair, but she was unsettled by the feeling of Eastgate's cemetery being unsafe for her fallen friends. They relocated their bodies to a nearby brook, where Jazreth used to find solace. After some contemplation and separation from her comrades, who tended to Akara and the Sisters, Cassia found the strength to carry on, inspired by thoughts of young Leah and Jazreth's gentle voice. When they reunited, she was ready. Hakon assumed that after losing his nerve in the Keep, Cain would've stayed behind. The others treated him like a big shot, but Hakon didn't mind. They were surprised to see Leah join them, though. Akara declined Cain's request to care for Leah, citing their Sisters' dire situation and the girl having seen too much loss already. She needed to be with her remaining family. Fortunately, they found a small mercy in Eastgate Keep: a wretch left behind, bound by runes, still managed to whisper "Lut… Gholein" before passing. It was only a short journey, but reaching Jerhyn's local lordship proved unforgiving. They encountered difficulties and rough conditions but eventually gained assistance from a caravan master, allowing them to reach out to Jerhyn with relative ease. Cain had a prior connection with the young lord and even spoke with him in the past. Leah enjoyed playing with the attendants while they interacted with Jerhyn, and Cain's familiarity made the process smoother. Original text: and I briefed the man on our fears and concerns.JerhynIt was always a treat to see one of the Horadrim, though I was crestfallen to hear the fate of his fellow. Tales of the horrors wrought in the Eastgate Keep were terrible, of course, but like a puzzle piece fitting into place. Our own recent issues in the sewers which my soldiery were still cleaning up from would seem to fit the overall timeline. And since the Zann Esu magess had been poking around just a few days prior, it seemed a good a time as any. I confessed to Deckard, a bit embarrassed, that I’d forgotten about the old vault until my memory was jogged by news of fallen Jazreth. Whilst my troops swept the town for signs of the magess, I entrusted to good Deckard a small magical key that had been left in my possession some years prior. The gentleman looked at it with recognition, and a hint of emotion I couldn’t quite catch before he held it close and whispered something into it. Before my very eyes a portal to another realm opened, and quietly in the back of my mind I made a note to fire my court mages for their failures. I managed to congratulate young Cain before my body guards were ushering me from the room.JefferyNaturally, danger present, comrades hastened to displace trembling Cain and charge into portal maw. An… uncertain time of confusion later we returned, unwilling, having been sent completely askew by maze’s entrapments. Brave Cain offered to sojourn alone, and whilst several minutes passed in silence bringing fear to heart, the sage returned, an object in hand.HakonWhat’s that? CainIt’s called a Horadric Cube.Cassia 6Will it help?CainI have no idea.*flash of light, music suddenly stops*TyraelDeckard Cain! If you value your life, you must come with me immediately!IsendraThis whole assignment sucks. Traipsing around the desert getting sand in my shoes, chasing down amateurs. The Horadrim are okay for hedge wizards, but when they screw up boy does it cause a mess. Still, at least some wizards know enough to setup some basic safety and alarm wards. I had a good hour’s warning before the… whoever he was showed up. Normally I would’ve ignored him or, if he proved irritating, confront… but one of the wards was throwing some feedback I didn’t like, so I held back a bit and watched from behind a veil. Clad in iron and bulky, he didn’t look like any mage I’d ever seen, and the way he tore apart the keystones was just slapdash… but powerful. Very powerful. I quietly added another layer to the veil while the man started to descend into the tomb… …I was watching pretty close, so I got a nice shot of his surprise as fire and destruction blasted him. The guy’s cloak was burnt clean off, which was nice because I could see his expression over the next few minutes. He was… super unhappy. He shouted something at another figure which emerged from the pit, but whatever was said in return I have absolutely no idea. I’m not sure it was any language, more like just… yelling. And fire. Whole lotta fire. Thing is, the guy who came out of the ground didn’t seem like he was trying to hurt the other guy… or… anything, really. Just senseless destruction at whatever happened across his gaze. Aaand it was causing some real damage to the nearby terrain, let me tell you. The first gentleman turned tail and fled. I thought about following suit, but fortunately two angels arrived a few moments later. Paraphrased text: I briefed a man on our fears and concerns, then met with Deckard, who showed no surprise at an old magical key I'd forgotten existed. A portal opened, and I noted the court mages' failures. Our forces returned from an expedition through the portal, and Cain retrieved a Horadric Cube. Tyrael arrived, telling Cain to leave with him immediately. Isendra complained about her assignment, watching a mysterious figure tear through the keystones, then being surprised by another figure emerging from the ground and unleashing destruction. The first figure fled, but two angels soon appeared. Original text rewritten with occasional spelling errors (40% probability chosen) to maintain a subtle and rare alteration without disrupting readability: later... theres somethin you wont hear me say often... an the one, Auriel, an I were at least able to direct an contain the, uh, tomb-goer's rage whilst the other sought help. Gotta be honest, I've dealt with a lot of crap in my life, but those were some intense hours. We couldn't really hurt the guy--the angel lady just called him 'demon'--without bein at serious risk of injury or death ourselves, but we could drag his attention this way or that an try to contain how much of the desert he was wreckin'. An I know what yer thinkin'; Who cares if he just smatters some sand around? Thing is, the Fabric was gettin a bit warped from all this raw power coursin over it. It was startin to cause some ripples an warps, an I soon found myself tryin to explain all this to Auriel, but magic wasn't her forte, I guess. Doesn't matter; Point is, we got organized an started spreadin the damage around. Bad for the desert, but good for reality. We were still playin pongo with demon boy when I saw a hell of a sight. Cassia Tyrael flung me through the air an I landed directly on our opponent, spear first. Blazin waves of nightmare magic erupted from the man's hands, but I was already behind, gripin shaft with both hands an upendin him, sendin him an spear-still-impaled into a nearby dune. In moments, waves of ice flung from sorceress' hands coated the dune, temporarily trappin the fiend. Isendra Some dude was summonin up a massive storm to surround the creature, an the flits of lightning already rumblin gave me an idea… Cassia The stark smell of ozone filled the air as blinding sheets of lightning thundered down through my spear an into the creature. I braced, knowin what was to come... thankfully comrade Jeffery had already moved into position. Between shield an magic the worst of the detonation was deflected, leavin us damaged but capable. The crater he left was wide, an at its very center lay a small yellow crystal in the shape of a dagger. The sorceress moved towards it, wards ready, but before I could caution her I was interrupted by the angel. Auriel Hear me, heroes. You have done a great thing today; this demon has been destroyed. Cain But... my lady, I knew this man. That was Tal Rasha, the magelord, premiere of our order... An that... that is a soulstone. Auriel A… what? Cain It was Kulle's invention, it would contain the power of a demon an imbue it into its host... though I can only imagine it did not work very well if the magelord was driven mad by it as he was. Auriel *audible pause* That was not a human, young scholar. That was a demon, Baal, one of the Usurpers. Tyrael That is because the stones never worked as intended. Forgive me, I suspected before, but this confirms beyond a doubt; Soulstones never imprisoned the demon lords within, but rather gave them a taste of immortality by lettin them seduce an control their new hosts. Auriel So Tal Rasha died years ago... But... this explains Malthael's concerns perfectly. If we can gather an destroy these Soulstones, the demons will be purged from Sanctuary forever. Cain If I may... I believe I might know where one of them might be. Natalya Things were not goin well. The forces of Sankekur had been bad enough, an only a score of my fellow Viz Jaq'Taar remained. We hadn't held ground in the city proper in over a year, but in the last few months a swarm of... bizarre, blood worshiping cultists had taken to the streets. I recall the treacherous jungle paths where my enemies employed guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run tactics. The docks were our final stronghold, with our backs to the sea, making it harder for them to utilize their preferred methods. This stalemate allowed us to regroup and reassess our situation. A letter from Elder Akara arrived, warning of a dire threat that required my expertise. I was considering abandoning the mission, but her words kept me committed. Subsequent letters detailing the horrors we faced only solidified my resolve. The arrival of promised reinforcements, accompanied by two angels, surprised me. Initially, I felt uneasy about their presence, sensing the perversion in the air. The howling in the jungle left an indelible mark on me, and I was hesitant to return. Fortunately, a Viz Jaq'Taar assassin, Natalya, was waiting for us. Her focus and competence proved invaluable as we strategized with her and Jeffrey. Isendra and I also conferred privately, discussing the possibility of elementally empowered arrows and flaming jabs. The synergy between our groups worked well, and we made progress despite the jungle's unpleasantness. The presence of angels was crucial in bolstering my resolve. Without them, I would have reconsidered our mission. Instead, we made swift gains against our harassers and skirmishers. Amidst the chaos, we discovered a magically preserved brain belonging to Khalim, a former Horadrim who opposed Sankekur. As we navigated the treacherous jungle, I realized that dealing with Sankekur meant preserving him and then breaking his spirit into pieces. This would ensure that he remained in agony for eternity. Luckily, my new friend had seen this before and came up with a plan to use Jezreth's Horadric Cube to create a magical focus that could pierce the curse's source. As we ventured deeper, I knew I had made the right choice, surrounded by people who truly understood the gravity of our quest. We finally arrived at the capitol square of Kurast, where the jungle seemed to consume everything in its path. The only inhabitants were zealots of perverted Zakarum, usurped by Sankekur. With the Horadric artifact's power, we uncovered an edifice of torture before us. I dare not speak of what became of our former home, but instead drew strength from it and vowed to see this through with my companions. Sankekur offered terms, proposing a trade for clemency: revealing his pathetic "brothers" and the artifacts empowering them in exchange for mercy. However, we would have none of it. Cassia declared that death was the only option, while Isendra added a side of ice to Sankekur's fate. The demon scorned our proposal, claiming he brought the Hells to heel and terrified the Heavens into complacency. Nevertheless, we remained steadfast in our resolve. As the violet soulstone clattered to the ground, I was grateful for Tyrael's assistance. We had a capable crew, but unfortunately, we now had no leads on the Dark Wanderer and his mysterious guest. Tyrael suggested regrouping at a fortress east of here, where we could reunite and strategize our next move. Meanwhile, Jeffery, the paladin, came over and gave me a peculiar hug, which I initially found awkward but later understood as an expression of shared sorrow. With the curse dispelled, the jungle and city could begin to recover. However, this would be a long road ahead for more capable hands than ours. We were met by an outer scouting party from Imperius's past. Among them was a young man who seemed familiar, dressed in tattered clothing. He bowed and greeted us with polite courtesy.XulPlease, venerated heroes, help me kill these demon-corrupted attendants.NatalyaThe group was taken aback by the request, both we and the attendants were surprised. Xul then drew his scythe, and I sensed the others positioning to strike. I knew we had to act quickly.IsendraThe cultists were poor sport, but Cassy advised me not to underestimate the value of a good ambush. She was right; they could have killed us if we hadn't been warned.XulA tall figure, probably an amazon, demanded my name and affiliation. I apologized for forgetting my manners and turned to raise the corpses of the cultists. Only one of them was pleased to hear of my profession, but the druid's sneer brought a smile to my face.CassiaXul had infiltrated the Fortress Pandemonium

the Priests of Rathma worked in my favor.NatalyaIt wasn't long before we reached the Fortress gates. We were welcomed warmly, but a casual glance confirmed a small group quietly maneuvering into position. If I was given to wonder such things, I'd ponder what went through their minds in the last few seconds of their life as their fellows suddenly sprang up and attacked them with suicidal vigor.IsendraThe initial counter ambush was confusing, taking 'em 30 seconds to realize what was going on. Cassy and me were able to clean up by then.CassiaBy a minute's passing, the cultists lay dead or dying, and only now did we hear the chittered cries of the demon.CainIt pained me to see... As an expert, a cornered animal can be incredibly threatening – and that proved true here. The would-be lord raged at us in an unnatural manner, shaking, screaming, hurling fire, and terrorizing our path.XulFortunately, the dead have no use for such things, so providence proved too much for the foolish demon.JefferyAs fel creatures' own dead minions blanketed his attacks, blows of purity struck true, and with swiftness most satisfying, things fell still in carved halls.AurielDiablo was no more. I confess a shudder as if a great weight lifted from me. While we suffered much, we were successful. Comrade Tyrael stayed briefly to ensure no stragglers remained before returning to the High Heavens to summon reinforcements and reclaim the Fortress for its proper host. In his passing, I turned to my mortal allies to congratulate them on their great success and inform them of the bounty they would soon receive.NatalyaI'm sorry, what?AurielI don't understand. What is there to be confused about?NatalyaI'm not so much confused as I am wondering why you were plotting behind our backs this entire time.AurielPlotting?? Okay surely now you jest. *pause* This has been the goal all along! With the demons and artifacts permanently removed, Sanctuary may now take its rightful place as a part of the High Heavens. Surely you know this?Isendra*sigh* She's right... if these really were the last demons on the plane, our alignment will gradually shift towards Heaven's over time. It'll take a while, but eventually we'll just become another part of the High Heavens on their corner of the Fabric.HakonAnd what happens to us, then?IsendraBeats me. I'm more a magical-fabric-of-reality kind of woman.JefferySpeak to us then, angel. What fate befalls the fish lost in the shifting tides?AurielI do not understand this hostility. You will become a part of the great pattern, as all who currently dwell within the High Heavens already are. You will be who you should be, do what you should do, and be happy in the doing. You, assassin woman, you would be interrupted by a response.NatalyaMy name is Natalya.AurielForgive me. You, Natalya, would be a baker, and quite good at it too.NatalyaWhat?AurielI speak the truth! With such craft you would find contentment, and serve your wares to others similarly content. Can you tell me this does not sound appealing?Natalya*quiet silence* I…AurielOr you! Years spent toiling as caretaker of the dead, when instead you could have devoted yourself to your architecture!XulI... ....AurielI do not come as a hostile entity seeking to consume! I come here to bring you happiness, joy, peace! And I will not lie to you, the Burning Hells still exist and must still be fought, but that is the province of those who should fight. You were forced to fight, bound against your will. You deserve better than… than this!Natalya…no.AurielWhat?NatalyaYou said we were forced… Forced to fight? But we weren't... you've got it flipped, we chose to fight.AurielCircumstance chose you to fight.NatalyaNo! Circumstance presented us the choice, WE chose. Just because you ask a question doesn't mean we have to answer it. We may have gone through horrible things in these last few days, but magically wiping it all away is not the solution! I don't want to HAVE to be a baker. I want to CHOOSE to be one! You would be happy as a baker! Natalya explains that's her choice to decide. Jeffery says it's made clear lives would be more content under such environs... but he fears impairment ensues under angelic yoke. Auriel clarifies, saying it's not a yoke; it's what one should be and do! Cassia thinks about the dead, innocents who've suffered in a short time, and how selfishly choosing freedom over others' lives could hurt more. Auriel believes that while valid, innocent lives will always be lost during the Sin War. Xul notes that removing evil would benefit everyone, but what about chaos? Auriel thinks order provides protection, unity, and harmony, while chaotic things don't belong in society. Xul questions Auriel's ignorance, saying he's too blinded by his nature to think otherwise. Auriel doesn't care about Xul's implications; she only wants to do what's right. Xul notes that Auriel is forced upon him, not chosen. Hakon concludes it's all moot since the barrier divides Sanctuary from the Burning Hells and this is happening one way or another. Auriel agrees there's no reason to deliberate on childish notions like being free when there are more real things at stake. Cain reveals that destroying the Worldstone would cause the barrier to fall, allowing Sanctuary to return to its natural state. Auriel wonders how Cain knows about it and who sacrificed for the stone. Cain says he thinks they know what's inside the stone. Auriel doesn't care; she knows they can't reach or destroy it, and even if they tried, she'd stop them. Cassia notes that everyone does not want to hurt anyone else. Isendra agrees but will choose to if necessary. Auriel tells them to remove themselves from their lands since they stand on the side of Light and won't breach Sescheron's gates. Banrokh says as heroes, they shall not reach Mt. Arreat or claim what they seek. Jeffery asks how anything could drive them to side against an archangel of the High Heavens. Banrokh wonders if it's poison whispered by someone hiding in the back. Hakon remains part of the group, nothing more, until their mission is completed and he'll depart. As Cassia spoke, the tension was palpable. Plainsfolk spitting on the mountain, as they say, and we've got our own issues brewing. Hakon's got some unfinished business with Isendra, who's still fuming about his arrival. "Enough!" she says. "This doesn't concern any of this." Banrokh chimes in, questioning the High Heavens' motives for seeking Sanctuary's destruction. Xul tries to explain that their group just wants to stay independent and avoid getting swallowed up by some greater power. But Banrokh isn't convinced, wondering what sparked this whole ordeal. It turns out that it was Cassia's decision to let Auriel pass through the gates without a fight – and now we're all paying the price. As we climb the winding path to the summit, we face opposition from the Children of Bul'Kathos. It's a slow and bloody grind, with Nilathak proving a formidable foe. But when we finally reach the crystalline passage, most of them back off – except for one small problem: Natalya's had some experience with these tactics, and our group is coordinated enough to keep the worst at bay. By the time we make it to the summit, Hakon's got some deep thoughts about what just went down. He offered his comrade Jeffery a spare pelt from a fallen warrior – made sure not to tell him where it came from. And as they look out over the slopes, they're both thinking about the cost of their actions. In the end, we reach the summit, and Auriel's got some major reservations about what we're doing. "I don't want to do this," she says. "Don't make me do this." Hakon and Jeffery are both on edge, wondering if it was really necessary to put kin and countrymen in our path. And Cassia just wants to know – isn't the whole point of this to prevent Sanctuary from getting destroyed? As Auriel lay dying, Cain stood over her, regrettable but unavoidable circumstances having unfolded. Natalya knelt beside her, pleading with Cain to spare her life. However, Cain's seasoned compatriots were too powerful for the angelic defenders. Cain then turned his attention to the Worldstone, a human artifact imbued with powerful magics. He reflected on the sacrifices made in Pandemonium to shatter the Soulstones and realized that here, they had only themselves to rely upon. Meanwhile, Xul proposed gathering the recently dead of Bul'Kathos to fuel the ritual, but Isendra disagreed, suggesting it would be better to use their own lives instead. Cassia then stepped forward, offering to sacrifice herself for the greater good. Isendra initially refused, citing the importance of Askari's future, but eventually agreed that Cassia should take her place. As the discussion progressed, Hakon volunteered to take Cassia's role and ensure a smoother transition. As the ritual began, Cain and his companions worked together to complete it, with Jeffery expressing reservations about the morality of forcing sacrifices upon their allies. Cassia emphasized the importance of idealism over pragmatism, while Xul and Isendra acknowledged that sacrifice was necessary. In the end, Hakon took Cassia's place and completed the ritual, trusting his companions to care for him after his passing. The scene faded to black as Andariel watched on, intrigued. Later, Albrecht reflected on the state of Khanduras, lamenting the devastation wrought by the crisis. He reached out to the Sisters for aid, hoping they could spare some of their own people to help rebuild the region. Nazeebo was already in the area, responding to a plea from one of his fellow exiles regarding corruption in... Nazeebo was not looking forward to visiting this place after a long and tiring journey... He wasn't expecting to find such a mess there. While sampling some corpses near a fortress he found a deadly crossbow that poked him in the side. Valla was cautious because he didn't have any demon taint, but even without it he wouldn't have survived for 20 yards if he had spotted the person eating pieces of a corpse during a ritual. He told her about it and shared information on what happened there. Nazeebo mentioned that he was considered an outcast among outcasts because of his practices. Young Valla brought the witch doctor to him, which turned out to be beneficial as they recognized his druidic talents immediately. Valla didn't like speaking with nobility, but Albrecht wasn't so bad compared to others he had seen. He informed them about the Cathedral and its position as an artifact. Nazeebo asked who was sacrificed during its construction... which made the king flummoxed because he couldn't answer it. Nazeebo, along with Deadly Valla, braved cold stone of the Cathedral. They confirmed that something was wrong with the artifact - it was being poisoned by some tainted demonic energy. Valla enjoyed this task much more than others as he had to cut down cultists who reeked of demon filth. Maghda was not doing well with his task, which was simple - find Adria and kill her, then purify the Cathedral. However, she was not prepared for what awaited her as a druid and hunting enthusiast arrived to stop it. Nazeebo saw a woman bound by glowing chains and runes... but when he spoke instead of killing her, they found out that she was the former vizier. Adria was angry with people who thought themselves masters. Only few were faithful, and those followed in screaming footsteps of true masters. When the blood tide finally fulfills their slow gait. The streets were filled with cars and buses, creating a symphony of honks and engine noises. People hurried to their destinations, navigating through the crowded sidewalks. The city was bustling with activity. The sun cast a warm glow on everything. A young woman with dark hair walked alone in the park. She sat down on a bench to rest, taking in the beauty of nature. Birds sang in the trees, their melodies filling the air with a sense of tranquility. The sound of being gutted interrupted her peaceful moment. She got up and walked away, lost in thought. As Nazeebo settled into his chair, he let out a comfortable groan. "Ah, excuse me, handmaiden," he said, "could I trouble you for a hot brewed tea, please?" Maghda interrupted him, however, saying they didn't have time to linger. Nazeebo mentioned they'd been on the road nonstop for three days now, and Valla agreed. Maghda left to find her contact, promising to return shortly. Later, Nazeebo wondered if she was trustworthy, but Valla assured him she wasn't a demon worshiper. Johanna interrupted them, asking about demons. Nazeebo mentioned they were heading out to deal with some issues. Johanna explained that she and her comrades had been dispatched to the area three weeks prior but hadn't heard from their commander since. Nazeebo offered to help, revealing that things had been busy in the past couple of weeks. Kharazim filled in Johanna on what had happened, saying they'd encountered some unpleasantness. The group decided to go with Nazeebo, knowing it wouldn't be an easy journey. Maghda arrived with an associate of hers, who could help them find their way. As they transitioned into the desert sands, Li Ming reflected on the timing and circumstances that had brought them together. She'd been looking forward to a comfortable rest, but given the situation, it was understandable that they needed to hurry. As I followed the crusader and huntress deeper into the facility, I realized we were no longer on sandy terrain, but within a laboratory - one that rivaled some of the most advanced ones I'd seen. The Zann Esu would kill for such a setup, and I knew at least one who had already acquired similar facilities. While others examined the equipment, I felt uneasy, sensing something alive within these walls, though it felt off. My concerns were dismissed as a side effect of the devastation above, but I knew better. I slipped away from my companions, following my instincts down long hallways lined with arcane instruments, until we encountered our first defenders. Fortunately, they proved no match for the huntress and myself, although I did narrowly avoid taking a bolt to the eye. We moved stealthily past further guards, unspeaking, and eventually arrived at the source of our concern. Though uncertain what I would find, my companion seemed to sense my unease, and together we navigated the situation. Zoltun Kulle's plans had been unfolding over several years, beginning with his discovery of a flaw in the Soulstones. However, it was only recently that he discovered another path - one capable of absorbing and channeling the primal essences for dispersal rather than concentration. His ambition lay not in ruling but in standing alongside equals, claiming their place on the Fabric. Upon completion, Kulle had begun seeking interested parties to understand how and where to gather the necessary souls. To his surprise, the device had absorbed several souls on its own, drawing them from beyond Sanctuary's barrier. He realized he'd underestimated his own genius, though this newfound power came with instability and no simple solution to rebalance it. Faced with no allies or resources, Kulle chose to bind himself to the device in a desperate attempt at stability, hoping that those who released him would do so with due cause. Valla, however, thought the mage spoke too much. The Horadrim, demanding answers from Valla and her companion, created quite a scene before the rest of their party found them. Li Ming and I were able to calm down the Horadrim, learning his tale as we worked alongside Nazeebo and others to stabilize his Black Soulstone for transport. Despite his insistence that the artifact was not responsible for the destabilization above, our team decided it was best to leave. The more learned among us were eager to discuss the cause of the destabilization, but I preferred to remain silent, taking in the cold desert air instead - though it sucked, it provided a moment of clarity. When I returned to town after our adventure, I swore to take some time off at that nice lady's tavern. However, if Kharazim ever found out, heaven help me! I respected my friend's silence, but the huntress was left for company. VallaThe Crusader spoke up after about an hour, asking me questions about my past and why I wield chaotic power. Despite considering keeping it a secret, the conversation flowed naturally, and before I knew it, I'd shared most of my story. The huntress listened attentively and surprised me with her sympathy. She shared some of her own story, revealing that she was skilled in combat but struggled with social interactions. I made an effort to keep her company for the rest of our journey. As we returned, Dawn had already broken, and the guards insisted we meet Lord Jerhyn immediately. When we arrived, it wasn't hard to guess why. Tyrael greeted us, bearing dire news: the great mountain of Arreat needed heroes, and we must go there right away. My companions held the line for almost two days, sleeping in shifts to keep watch over the Fabric Rift. However, I felt more pressure on myself... One would think closing a simple tear in the weave would be easy, but this was no ordinary problem. The Worldstone's connection to all corners of the Fabric ensured its link to various denizens that periodically stumbled through. Isendra The real issue was stabilizing the rift. We had people from various walks, but lacked anchors to really secure the fabric. Imagine a piece of cloth billowing in the wind, and then picture random portals popping up all over the place. We were lucky to get as few visitors as we did... some confused angels, some demons, and a few others I didn't recognize. We couldn't even send them back! Cassia When Tyrael arrived with his unusual crew, there were a few odd moments, but it soon became apparent that this second party was similar to our own, and Tyrael had sought them out specifically to join us. Isendra seemed to immediately connect with the wizard, and shortly after, the mage-types were all stirred up, debating how to handle the blasted rift. Zoltun KulleIt was strange seeing another Horadrim again, especially one not bent on killing me. Cain was initially curt, and I didn't blame him... my soul matrix was responsible for many of the horrors he'd endured this past month. I felt particularly bad about Jezreth's loss… The world was worse off without him.JohannaUncertain what to do, I drifted over to the two Horadrim. After listening to the younger man's stories, I realized he was one of the uncles the innkeeper had spoken of. I didn't mean to blurt it out so abruptly, but...CainHearing young Leah was pursuing her dream with some success was... I don't know. Some dark part of me kept waiting for word of her passing, or worse, considering recent events… To know she was alright, that she was doing well? *pause, choking back tears* No words. *pause* No words…AndarielNow seems a good time as any.IsendraBe careful everyone! We've got a big one coming!*fwoosh*Cain…Leah?VallaBack, Cain!NazeeboOh, impersonating family members. Oldest trick in the book. You got nothing else?Belial*slow, horrible laughter* What can I say? I'm a fan of the classics. Oh do put those away before you get hurt. Do you not know who I am?MaghdaBelial, one of the Four Lords of Hell.BelialAh, so good to know that some of your simpering kind are aware of their betters. Fear not... I'm a reasonable sort. I have big plans for this... conduit. And I see gathered before me capability and competence. Submit… you will be offered much.JefferyReturn hence, demon! Thou shalt find thyself in like company if thou seeketh!BelialAhhh… Forgive me, I didn't realize morons spoke for you.IsendraHa! Well, I can't speak to his intellect, but I can stand on his principle. Now I don't know you personally... but I know you think you're hot stuff. But right here? You got nothing.BelialYou... ...DARE. I am a LORD. I am MASTER of Hell! Bow! *pause* BOW!Li MingNow this may surprise you, but no one present was particularly inclined towards obedience. Though I would be lying if I said the fight was easy. This was no usurper or non-combatant angel, this was a Lord of Hell. In private... I will say that, if not for our combined strength, I do not think we would have bested the foe. It was... difficult to describe. Layers of imagery shattering as his concentration waned, illusions of sound and sight enveloping the whole of the peak. I made a quiet vow to magically remove my memories of that battle sometime later when I had a moment.XulThe Black Soulstone reacted instantly to the death of the fiend, taking his essence in and quickly destabilizing even further than it already was.Zoltun KulleThe… what?! Blast it. You, you, and you, help me stabilize this damned thing. I swear if it has to absorb one more demon soul before I can balance out the refractive matrix then this is going to go pretty badly pretty fast.Azmodan*deep, bellowing laughter*JohannaOh COME ON!AzmodanA truly gifted tactician pushes his pawns forward first... letting them absorb the blows, that the noble elite might sweep what remains of their foes.NazeeboActually that's a pretty piss poor way to play chess.AzmodanI… what?NazeeboAny moron knows pawns are useful in chess. They're some You've played chess before, right? Azmodan claims to be a Lord of Hell, but Valla points out that as a demon, he doesn't breathe or live. Maghda agrees, saying he's not alive either. Azmodan is furious and demands respect. Tyrael intervenes, revealing Izual has been holding the line without aid for years. Izual explains he followed Duriel to Sanctuary, feeling good about killing two Lords. Cain tries to understand, but Izual reveals his plan to widen the Rift, control it, and strike at the Burning Hells. Zoltun Kulle warns that this would turn Sanctuary into another battlefield, making the Sin War permanent. Isendra and Cassia agree, stating that this would make their homes and families casualties of war. Natalya interrupts Izual's monologue, saying she would have made a good baker. Tyrael tries to stop Izual, but he refuses to listen. Johanna reveals they could have stopped him, and his soul was absorbed by the Black Soulstone. The group starts discussing options, including war with Heaven, which is considered off the table. The learned ones consider alternatives, such as guerrilla warfare against the Hells or exploring other options that nobody wants to say out loud. Even if all our forces were combined, we'd still be outmatched by the remaining nations, which are struggling anyway. Kulle's right; if we fell hundreds of angels or demons, they could replace them with thousands, while we're stuck trying to keep up. It makes more sense to go quiet for now. That butterfly witch asked about the Black Soulstone to level the playing field, but I explained it was just a prototype for testing purposes. We weren't ready; we needed time. As allies debated, Xul seemed to lose faith in our plan, and if he turned against us, others might too. An old colleague arrived, giving me some breathing space. Meanwhile, Malthael had been studying Sanctuary and its progress intensely. The sudden removal of the anchors threw him off, but it made his theories make more sense. He realized that the demonic human artifacts were connected to the Fabric's weave. A Horadric sage and I agreed that the Rift needed to be closed before things got worse. But my companion seemed preoccupied, and Johanna's tale of Leah sparked a realization: we don't need to close the Rift permanently; just get it under control for now. I asked our comrades to gather representatives from all aspects of Sanctuary's weave, each connecting to a point on the Fabric. With Jezreth's Cube, I was able to produce the focus needed. The Rift stabilized, and Malthael was impressed. But then Tyrael arrived, and things took a turn for the worse. I'm not even sure what happened next; Xul is shocked and confused by my actions. The unexpected twist was that tracking down two arch angels was almost as effortless as finding the Black Soulstone. While this presented a multitude of options to locate him, it also meant none of us were confident about operating the stabilized Rift. Isendra and the wizard felt capable of handling that aspect. However, MaghdaThis wasn't part of the original plan. The others were occupied with tracking down the rogue angel and rescuing Cain, and I couldn't blame them. Losing my sister to this chaos had already shaken me, and privately, I was questioning my faith... Zoltun KulleI didn't know Cain well, but professionally, he was one of the few sages who earned my respect. His work on the Worldstone was impressive. Losing him would be a significant loss for humanity.VallaI should have seen it coming. Angels can be predictable, but this one caught me off guard. Even Izual made sense, but Tyrael? The purpose might be to focus humanity's resistance in one centralized spot to crush... but what would be the point of that? The older sage was right; humanity cannot stand against Hell's defenses yet.NazeeboThis is a mess. I got a bad feeling about how it will go down. What I'm not sure about is why. Why bother with the charade? It smacks of improv, last-minute thinking. Maybe Angels aren't good at thinking on their feet? One thing I do know is that if anything happens to Deckard, I won't look forward to telling his niece.JohannaNone of this makes sense. Why would an archangel of the High Heavens attack unprovoked? And why do it in such a face-palming way? If he wanted us dead, he could have just waited until after the party we were already planning! I was going to... make a good bee sting cake and share it with my new friends.KharazimMy friend was taking this hard, so I gave her shoulder a squeeze to remind her I was still there. It's funny; I'm fairly certain I've only ever said one word to her in our time together – my name. But she knew I had her back. I suppose there isn't much more I can ask for than that.Li MingIt was less trouble than I thought it would be to control the Rift, but once through, we'd be stranded at the other end... leaving the Rift completely undefended in our absence. I thought to mention this to my allies, but I doubt it would have changed anything, so I kept my silence. What really worried me was the Black Soulstone. An unproven artifact prototype is already problematic enough. Though I wonder what souls Zoltun Kulle had planned to sacrifice for his intended future projects. I'll be keeping an eye on him from now on.NatalyaI... *slumped sigh* I'm tired. I'm so, so tired. I don't know if I did the right thing or not. And I don't know if I ever will. Guess that's part of the bargain.IsendraWith Li Ming's help, we were able to get the Rift going pretty easily. The real question is whether we should wait and recoup or head straight out? Everyone seemed contemplative like... I never got that, really. Life happens; you do. If you don't do, life still happens. No sense in sitting and pondering.Hakon I saw it coming; if I had the power, I would've stopped Sir Cain's capture. All I could do was stare and flail in futility. It was time for whatever comes next, and that's okay. We'll have to figure out the details later. We stepped into the Rift and found ourselves somewhere unexpected. Reality remained distorted here; it was still bad. Whatever Tyrael's plan was, he clearly wanted it to affect as much of the Fabric as possible. He'd altered the artifact, I could sense even from a distance, but before we could do more than take in our surroundings, he killed the bound Malthael and poured his essence into the Black Soulstone. Zoltun Kulle: You idiot! You have no idea what you're tampering with! Tyrael: I know exactly what I'm doing. And if you seek to stop me, I suggest you prove it. *pause* The rest is up to us now. Cain was unsure of the why, but he knew what he saw. The archangel had altered the Black Soulstone using the Horadric Cube, and once it did its thing, it shuddered violently before shattering. Anyone with the skill to see could sense the patterns of the four primal magics spreading across the Fabric... I couldn't see how far they reached, but I'd be surprised if it didn't encompass all of Sanctuary at least. *hesitance* In the next few weeks, things seemed to settle, and we found that the realm now had a permanent connection to both the Burning Hells and the High Heavens. And people were... different. We weren't sure how, yet. We weren't sure about much of anything. Lilith: Oh, it couldn't have been long ago when I first discovered this New Realm. While not exactly according to plan, my beloved's ideals bore fruit. The Black Soulstone did as intended, spreading across the rich tapestry of cultures and disparate lands... A delight to savor, but bittersweet. And now... we had a lot of work ahead of us. Thank you kindly for your custom, m'lord. FRESH fish!Sir Revairus WilliamsHm. I suppose just past here…?Lord Bahamut*low yawn* Hrrrmmmm. Not quite yet.Sir Revairus WilliamsThe… *frowns* Did you hear that?PasserbyHear what?Sir Revairus WilliamsBahamut, he… said something.PasserbyAhahaha, good one! I needed that. *laughing, walks off*Sir Revairus WilliamsNo, I… *irritated sound* Whatever. This looks like the place… *breath* Okay, decision time. Quiet or loud. *long pause* Argh alright, quiet it is. Just for you.GarlandAnd you're quite decided? *pause* What if I were to repatriate you?Princess Sarah CorneliaDo you seriously think that's the sort of thing that would work on me?GarlandYou do not want territory, you do not want home, the hell do you want?Princess Sarah CorneliaI was home you infectious hog. And at the moment a few minutes reprieve from foolish questions would suffice.Sir Revairus WilliamsAlright, Commander.GarlandAh…Williams? That you?Sir Revairus WilliamsNow, I'm going to be totally honest with you sir. I'd really rather this not be a thing. *gesture* None of this is public record, save a small charge of drunken indecency on the eastern bridge. Hey, hey… my hands are up here, we're all friends here.GarlandRight. And you will just let me go home… to my swill and my swine and a trough of PIG SHIT to wallow in.Princess Sarah Cornelia'Tis better than you deserve.GarlandI am of no mood!Princess Sarah CorneliaDo you presume I am?!Sir Revairus WilliamsYour Majesty, Lord Commander, please. Enough. Now this doesn't have to escalate any further.GarlandI appreciate what you are trying to do, Williams. But you of all people understand. All we need is our warrior spirit! And with it I am taking the throne, and I am doing it in spite of this ineffectual hag.Princess Sarah CorneliaKeep his attention off me. I'll show him how ineffectual I can be.GarlandEnough. I, Garland, will knock you all down!2: Castle CorneliaKing Jolaerth Cornelia*relief* I'm… thank you, sir Williams.Sir Revairus WilliamsHasn't been 'sir' in about a year now.King Jolaerth CorneliaYes. Well. Daughter, I am pleased to see you again. People reported four lights entering the Shrine of Bahamut, I… feared the worst. But rest assured, no word released about this incident, so there will be no international concerns with the elves.Princess Sarah Cornelia*interrupting* I'm going to take Ser Williams on the expedition to Pravoka.Sir Revairus WilliamsYou are?Princess Sarah CorneliaYou'll be paid.Sir Revairus WilliamsThat wasn't quite where my mind was at.King Jolaerth CorneliaI'm… wouldn't you rather take a few days off? Send someone else in your stead?Princess Sarah CorneliaWould you rather word slipped of my recent incident?King Jolaerth Cornelia*visibly recoiling* No… of course not.Princess Sarah Cornelia*pause* I'm sorry. *another pause* I apologize, father. I shouldn't do that to you, I know you act of caring and not conceit. But I really am going to go myself. I feel the conference will require my personal touch. Fear not, Ser Williams will be ample protection.3: Port of Pravoka*BikkeAhhh… That one… didn't taste any better than the last three. *heurgh* It's gettin' t'be a mite ridiculous! Surely there's at least one decent swath of swill in this sw… sworgy… swolt? Sw… sw something! Bah, whatever.Sir Revairus WilliamsYou have got to Given article text here --- **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** Lookin forward to seein everyone at the meeting tomorow and discussin our strategies. **Bikke:** *gesturing* Wha! What's so belabored about besmirching my beloved… bottle? No that don't make no sense… Boon? Birth? **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** I think 'vocation' would have worked. Bikke: But it don't start with a b! Princess Sarah Cornelia: Neither does 'about.' **Bikke:** *laughter dissolving into a coughing fit* Okay... ya got me there. Eourghfv. **Sir Revairus Williams:** It's not Sir anymore. Bikke: Right! Right. And I'm no Lord Captain neither, but I kept me ship, me cargo, me crew. **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** Crown confers and all that jazz. Surely there were a pretty prize purchased for you service weighed. **Sir Revairus Williams:** ...have you really just been sitting here getting drunk? Bikke: T'hells else'm I supposed to do! War's over, yee and haw, but with nary a villain to seek nor course to chart, all there is for me is drink and doldrums. **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** Your... crew has been causing issues in the area sufficient that we've received complaints about it back home. Bikke: Aye a rowdy bunch they be. Whatd'ya expect of me? Reprimands won't mend a scoundrel's malcontent. **Sir Revairus Williams:** Tell them to come here. Bikke: Here, right here. **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** You... you know the hotelier will be a mite perturbed if'n my crew's innards become the evening's decor? **Bikke:** Alright, fine, whatever, no hair off me back... not that I really have any. Hair off me legs? No I wouldn't mind that much… hair off me chin? No that don't work neither. **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** You're... not going to kill them, right? **Sir Revairus Williams:** I've worked with most of these people before. We're just going to help them let off a little steam before you spin your big new trading preference thing. **Princess Sarah Cornelia:** Preferential Trade Agreement. It's a way to establish closer economic ties to Elfheim and try to create a cooperative atmosphere that encourages free flow of goods and services to try and help bolster national recuperation for both kingdoms. **Sir Revairus Williams:** Yeah I... I didn't ask. Princess Sarah Cornelia: It wouldn't hurt you to be more cognizant of the world around you. **Sir Revairus Williams:** I'm plenty familiar with the world around me Princess Sarah Cornelia: More a hobby, really. *gesture* You want an assist on this? **Bikke:** Alright me fellow farers, we have a slight concern that requires a bit of consideration. Gentlemen... ladies...4: City of Pravoka **Sir Revairus Williams:** Normally one would call what you did 'leaping into it.' Bikke: It looked fun! **Sir Revairus Williams:** Heh... *pause* Well. While her majesty is busy lecturing the battered crew, I wanted to pay a visit to old Tola's house. You want to join me? **Bikke:** Of course I would. Actually I think I need to apologize to her about... something to do with a pumpkin and a shark. **Sir Revairus Williams:** Do I want to know? Bikke: I don't think I want to know. **Sir Revairus Williams:** *knocking* Matoya! It's Williams! --- Revairus Williams: What's going on here? Tola Matoya's gotten herself into some trouble. Tola Matoya: I'm fine, Revairus. Just a bit of... unpleasantness. A certain someone tried to steal my Eye, and they succeeded. Now my abilities are limited. Bikke: And you're not thinking this is a big deal? Elven soldiers, Tola! They're not exactly known for their kindness to humans. Tola Matoya: I know what I saw, Bikke. They were disguised, but I could tell they were elven. Revairus Williams: Elves attacking a former court mage? That's huge news! We should take action! Bikke: Not so fast, Revairus. Let's not jump into this without thinking it through. Maybe we can handle it officially, through the proper channels. Tola Matoya: (interrupting) Remove that look, Revairus. This is serious business. Revairus Williams: What do you mean? You're saying I shouldn't take action because of my past? Bikke: (calmly) Yeah, exactly. Let's not stir up old rivalries or make things worse than they have to be. Tola Matoya: (to Bikke) Return mine pumpkin then. Revairus Williams: Your majesty! Princess Sarah Cornelia is here and wants to speak with us about this matter. Princess Sarah Cornelia: So formal... What trouble did you two get up to? Bikke: I'm not saying we shouldn't do anything. Just that we should be smart about it. Let's go investigate quietly, using the ship in the harbor as a base of operations. Revairus Williams: You want me to back down from this? After what they did to Tola? Bikke: No, I'm just saying let's think before we act. We don't want things to escalate further. Princess Sarah Cornelia: Yes, we would hate for them to do more harm than they already have. We shouldn't risk harm to our citizens, wouldn't we?Sir Revairus WilliamsOh, come on, your highness! I wasn't referring to you, of course. Princess Sarah CorneliaThat's not what I meant; aren't you referring to me because I'm one of the good ones? *exhale* That's not what I meant, and you know it. I don't care if they're elves or dwarves or mermaids or mages. They hurt my friend. *pause* I'm sorry. Princess Sarah Cornelia*long pause* Apology accepted. As it happens, I do agree with Captain Williams; we've already proven a good team in combat, and we carry a great deal of official weight. If we can jointly investigate, maybe we can avoid an international incident in this worthwhile pursuit. BikkeVair…Sir Revairus Williams*sigh* Yeah, alright. I'm cool, we're cool. How soon can we set sail? BikkeWell, most of my crew are recovering from a little incident earlier, so… Princess Sarah CorneliaAt your earliest available opportunity, Lord Captain. The sooner we reach Elfheim, the greater opportunity we retain for optimal outcome. 5: On Board The Naval Ship Princess Sarah CorneliaSer Williams?...do you have a moment? Sir Revairus WilliamsI was just… practicing. *pause* What can I do for you, your majesty? Princess Sarah CorneliaMay I dispense with formalities? Sir Revairus WilliamsThat's usually my line. Princess Sarah CorneliaYou have as much claim to noble title as I. Sir Revairus WilliamsNot anymore, I don't. Princess Sarah CorneliaYes yes, claims rescinded, don't give me that. I've seen how Cornelia operates; the power of nobility does not fade so quickly at one word from its king. Sir Revairus Williams*exasperated sigh*…yes. You may dispense with formalities, princess. Princess Sarah CorneliaThank you. *pause* Have you… considered making a claim on the throne? Sir Revairus Williams*spits out his drink* Okay, I'll give you that one. That is not what I was expecting. Princess Sarah CorneliaIt's a serious question. Sir Revairus WilliamsWell, in deference I will give you a serious answer; No. No offense to your majesty, of course, but… throne? Court? That's not why I became a knight. Princess Sarah CorneliaSo why did you? Sir Revairus WilliamsWell normally this is where I'd talk about fighting the good fight and helping the people, but... if you want to hear a speech, you'll have to head down to the captain's quarters. I hear she's quite good at them. Princess Sarah CorneliaDo you doubt her intentions? Sir Revairus WilliamsQuite the contrary, she's the most noble soul I know. Princess Sarah CorneliaSo I should consider her, instead? Sir Revairus Williams*gesturing, bemused* What is this, your high—..miss Cornelia. Princess Sarah CorneliaI am doing my job. And I take that job very seriously. Sir Revairus WilliamsCoincidentally, so do I. Princess Sarah CorneliaYour job being to kill, I presume? Sir Revairus Williams*slamming sound* Do you have a point to all this, ma'am? Princess Sarah Cornelia*very calmly* There is no judgment in my tone. You claim post and nobility, wealth and authority, and yet wield none of it. I'm aware of your finances, Revairus; you are still well off, more than enough to retire or live life how you choose. Sir Revairus WilliamsYou think I didn't? Princess Sarah CorneliaI think it curious a man of such means chooses crude tent and dirt path to comfortable bed and fawning adoration. And don't Sir Revairus Williams stood before Princess Sarah Cornelia, his words cautious. "You want me to kill the King? He's treated you well, and you've grown fond of him." Princess Sarah Cornelia's expression remained serene. "That's my motivation, Sir Revairus. But I don't wish for his death. His treatment of me has been better than expected, and I feel welcome in his home." Sir Revairus Williams nodded, though a hint of frustration showed in his eyes. "I'm good at what I do, ma'am. You saw that when we killed Garland. That doesn't mean I enjoy it." Princess Sarah Cornelia's gaze held a deep understanding. "I think you do, Sir Revairus." A pause followed before Sir Revairus Williams spoke again. "Pardon?" Princess Sarah Cornelia's voice was even. "Honesty can do wonders, Revairus. For others and for one's self." Sir Revairus Williams turned to leave but was halted by Princess Sarah Cornelia's words. "If you seek to pursue your chosen craft upon my people whilst we are on this errand, you will find yourself in more dire straits than you sought." A pause followed before Sir Revairus Williams spoke again. "Your majesty." The scene shifted to Elfheim City where an Elven Citizen stood facing Sir Revairus Williams. "I'm afraid I don't know too much about...criminals," the citizen said. Sir Revairus Williams offered reassurance. "Even if you did it, wouldn't be any of my business. I'm not here in any official capacity. I just know a friend who gave us a lead on some malcontents who fled this way." The Elven Citizen's expression turned firm. "I have other business to attend to. Good day, ser." Bikke approached Sir Revairus Williams and the Elven Citizen. "Your courtly mannerisms nearly match mine own," Bikke said. Sir Revairus Williams responded dryly. "I didn't see you offering to help." Bikke nodded understanding. "Clearly t'weren't needed! Could ye at least stop pacin' a while whilst our fair friend finds information on foe's whereabouts?" Sir Revairus Williams let out a long sigh before speaking again. "Do you just... spend your spare time with your nose in a dictionary or something?" Bikke chuckled. "Thesaurus." The scene shifted to Princess Sarah Cornelia, Sir Revairus Williams, and Bikke. The princess spoke of her findings. "Lord Astos has recently been making ready for a formal expedition into the Marsh Cave, an armed expedition no less which is quite curious." Sir Revairus Williams's expression turned serious. "General Astos is after the crown? You don't think...?" Bikke nodded in agreement. "Could be. The orb we seek t'was similarly of Lufein make." Princess Sarah Cornelia proposed a plan. "We can cut him off at the cave, procure the crown for our own purposes, and proffer trade rather than conflict." Sir Revairus Williams's teeth clenched in agreement. "Of course. We'd best be off then." As we proceed, the ominous sounds of burning and destruction grow louder. We find ourselves within The Marsh Cave, a site where ferocity and chaos reign supreme. Princess Sarah Cornelia leads the group, her voice steady amidst the turmoil. Sir Revairus Williams stands beside her, his concerns for strategy and caution evident in his words. Bikke, ever the wit, interjects with an idiom, "foot in the door," highlighting the complexities of diplomacy. The princess and ser Williams engage in a discussion about approaching the situation with tact, rather than aggression, while Astos' Officer shares his concerns for the beast problem within the cave. As they navigate deeper into the cave, the air thickens with tension. Sir Revairus Williams swings his sword at an enemy, illustrating the urgency of their mission. Princess Sarah Cornelia remains steadfast, her focus on resolving the situation peacefully. Bikke and Astos' Officer offer their insights, reflecting the diverse perspectives within the group. The environment itself begins to transform, vines twisting into snarls as if in response to their presence. The sounds of burning grow louder still, a ser Liam's eerie chanting adding to the disquieting atmosphere. Amidst this chaos, Princess Sarah Cornelia remains resolute, her determination to find peace and resolution a beacon of hope amidst the darkness that surrounds them. OfficerWhat's the meaning of OfficerWho?Ser Liam, is that you?Sir Revairus WilliamsBack off! This isn't an ally! What's the situation?Ser LiamI deserve better treatment! I did my part! That crown should be on MY head, not yours!Sir Revairus Williams*grunts* Forget it. It seems like it's for us now!*lunges*Astos' OfficerProtect the princess!Ser LiamI want more! I need MORE! *stabbed*...I'll show them...Lord General AstosWhy is this happening?BikkeLet's leave, can we?Princess Sarah CorneliaShe's right. This feels wrong.Astos' SoldierI found the crown!Astor OfficerWhat a strange occurrence.Princess Sarah CorneliaI agree with my companion. We should go.Astos' OfficerYou're welcome to join us on our return to Westrest Keep.

set of challenges. But I believe that together, we can find a way to rebuild and move forward, to create a better future for ourselves and those who come after us. We may not have all the answers, but we can work towards finding them together. And as we walk towards the Shrine of Bahamut, surrounded by the hustle and bustle of everyday life – merchants hawking their wares, people going about their business – I'm struck by the sense that despite our differences, we're not so different after all. We all have our own struggles, our own hopes and fears. And as I look out at the horizon, watching the world go by, I'm reminded of the importance of taking a step back, breathing in the present moment, and finding peace in the midst of chaos. 200 years ago in the Elemental Shrine, Lord Bahamut and Princess Sarah Cornelia from a different time met under mysterious circumstances. A group of adventurers stumbled upon an ancient task that they were supposed to accomplish together with Lord Bahamut, but the princess had no recollection of their previous meeting. Lord Bahamut revealed to them that he was ready to begin the task, which required cleansing crystals and convincing him of their purpose. However, his intentions seemed unclear, and he drew energy directly from the Leylines, leaving the group puzzled. The adventurers soon found themselves in a precarious situation, struggling to comprehend their surroundings and Lord Bahamut's true nature. Bikke tried to focus on the present moment, while High Sage Envelress Caroline attempted to communicate with any death in the area, only for Lord Bahamut to interrupt her, seemingly unaware of the group's presence. As they navigated this enigmatic scenario, Sir Revairus Williams revealed that he had previously interacted with Lord Bahamut, who seemed to know more than he was letting on. The group began to suspect that their actions were part of a larger, unseen plan, and that they might be connected to a mysterious figure from the future. Their conversation was interrupted by Princess Sarah Cornelia's sudden realization that she was in a different time period, with Lord Bahamut's words sparking her memories. Bikke pressed for answers about the date, and eventually, Lord General Astos intervened, revealing that this would take place 200 years hence, leaving the group with more questions than answers. High Sage Envelress Caroline concluded that they must be careful not to disrupt the timeline, while Bikke urged caution due to the presence of a potentially dangerous figure. As the conversation unfolded, it became clear that their actions in the past were intertwined with the events unfolding around them, and that their understanding was still incomplete. Sending elemental constructs into the future to cause chaos and break down the balance of power in the elemental crystals has been a goal of ours for three months now. We've been trying to undo the damage that's been done, but it seems like Lord General Astos' presence was always part of the plan, even if we didn't know about it at the time. Now, with hindsight, his successes and our failures make more sense. We can't let one person's dark past dictate our future, though - Princess Sarah Cornelia reminds us that our people are entering a new era of prosperity and cooperation, and we need to stay on track. Bikke agrees, saying that Lord Garland was just the tip of the iceberg, and that there may be more to deal with. Sir Revairus Williams is ready to get things done, though - he's eager to wrap up this mission and go home. He's not worried about the consequences of our actions, but Lord Bahamut cautions us to hurry, because the connection between past and present won't last forever. In the past, Garland was a powerful force who used his mastery of magic to further his own goals - and now he's back, more powerful than ever. But Sir Revairus Williams isn't intimidated, saying that even when he was just a fresh lieutenant, Garland was still the same arrogant and self-centered individual he is today. Lord General Astos wonders why Garland waited so long before making his move, but Bikke thinks it's clear - Garland only had power because someone else had given it to him. And now that we know this, we may not be able to stop what's been set in motion. Sage Jackson asks if it even matters anymore, but Princess Sarah Cornelia points out that we still have a chance to change the course of history and make things right. And so, with newfound determination, we set our sights on completing the mission and making sure that Lord Garland doesn't get his way. As I reflect on my journey, it has been long and winding, with many milestones passed. I have had the privilege of gazing upon these isles from afar, and in doing so, I have derived a sense of comfort from knowing that future endeavors will be met with success. Princess Sarah Cornelia: Ah, well said, m'lord! We are deeply grateful for your crucial aid in our endeavors. Sir Revairus Williams: If you don't mind, where do you plan to head? Do you have a particular destination in mind? Lord Bahamut: Indeed, my mind drifts towards the south. Some companions rest in the bosom of mountains, and I aspire once more to build crystal architecture. Of course, we wish you well on your journey, but please, do not forget to visit us from time to time. --- Leon is preparing for a crucial test with his tutor, Maria. He's an accomplished mage in a small pond about to jump into the ocean. It seems that "Lord Borghen" takes shortcuts with magic, implying it may be evil. Maria: You don't see why this is necessary? You barely qualify for basic entry exams! Leon, you exaggerate. Leon: That's not what Lord Borghen says. Maria: Lord Borghen wouldn't know a spell from a waste receptacle. Trust me, time and experience are the greater teachers. --- Firion is attempting to fire an arrow vertically at the Fynn Firing Range with the help of a soldier named Fynn. Firion instructs him to keep the string taut but not pull it back too far. --- At the Fynn Lumber Camp, Guy and a lumberjack notice some smoke in the distance that looks like Eidolons moving towards the city. The lumberjack decides to try to warn the city while telling Guy to stay put. --- The city of Fynn is under assault. Civilians are trying to escape while others are calling for surrender. A group is trying to make their way to Altair, and Borghen's gates are mysteriously open. --- At the Altair Refugee Camp, Maria is looking for someone in charge. She finds a wild rose captain who is busy distributing food and blankets. Maria tries to help but gets frustrated when she realizes no one is in charge. Maria: Guy, have you found anyone yet? Have you moved at all? Guy: What? Sorry, uh... no. Maria: (slaps Guy) Wake up! We need to find people - the Lords, the Prince, Firion... my parents. Now, wake up! Looking back, moping isn't helping anyone, and now someone taller than me needs my help! I'm looking for Firion, but it's Maria who finds him. She tells me they're both okay, but we need to get involved. We've got a plan to secure the Semitt Falls Cavern Network, which could be a safe route up the eastern shore and give us access to Paloom, Poft, and Bafsk. But there are risks involved – we can't trust Palamecia's control over the roads. As we journey through the outskirts near FynnBorghen, I meet Leon again and see that he's been taken prisoner by Lord Borghen. He's not happy about it, but we manage to rescue him. It seems like Leon is being used as leverage for loyalty tests. Later at Altair Headquarters, Minwu tells Maria she did something foolish and stupid, but it succeeded. Now they've got a new assignment that requires quick action – splitting their attention would be ideal. The princess is waiting to see what's next. Hilda: An Eidolon appeared and torched Fynn's place, but I know the Wild Rose wasn't involved yet. Firion confirmed it was a neutral target, which makes Mateus' actions even more puzzling. They decided to head north to Salamand to investigate a possible connection with a missing friend of Princess Hilda. Minwu added that securing the Mythril lines was also crucial for their mission, and Maria suggested taking the airship Endeavor from Bafsk to move swiftly and unite their forces. Guy expressed concerns about getting involved, but Maria reassured him that they need his strength. They set off towards Bafsk, discussing the urgency of their situation and the potential dangers ahead. Upon arriving in Bafsk, Guy wondered where everyone was, fearing more casualties. Firion explained that there were plenty of tracks, but many people left town heading southeast towards Kashuan or possibly further. Minwu wondered if this might be connected to Mateus' plans, making it seem like they're racing against time to stop him. Firion and his companions are discussing their plan of action when they stumble upon an airship drydock near Bafsk. They notice that Airmaster Cid is making significant modifications to one of his airships, including adding a large cannon. The group decides to infiltrate the ship and gather more information. As they sneak onto the airship, they overhear conversations about using the Eidolons on board to keep slave labor in check. They also learn that the ship's captain, Gottos, is planning to fire the cannon at a target, but his intentions are unclear. When the ship takes off and begins firing its cannon, the group rushes to investigate. They find out that the target is a rat infestation on board the ship, but tensions rise as the crew becomes increasingly erratic. As things escalate, Minwu discovers that Gottos has been using the life essence of people in chains to fuel the airship's operations. The group quickly springs into action to free the captives and put an end to Gottos' cruel practices. Meanwhile, Airmaster Cid reveals that he was unaware of Gottos' true intentions and is horrified by his actions. Thairee, a noble, reports back to Emperor Mateus about the destruction caused by the airship's cannon fire on the port of Poft, highlighting the devastating consequences of their actions. Throughout this scene, the characters' emotions and motivations are revealed through their dialogue and actions, showcasing the complexity of their relationships and the gravity of the situation. Captain Thairee suspected that the recovering Eidolons could regain their lost essence with time and proper care. Emperor Mateus gave permission for Captain Thairee to speak his thoughts, but then abruptly cut himself off. The Emperor later agreed to begin setting up necessary preparations. Meanwhile, Firion expressed concern about using tainted resources, but Minwu explained that the airship was fueled and they needed to take advantage of it to secure the mythril line. Cid and Minwu planned to take the Endeavor to Mysidia to help the Eidolons. Firion struggled with his conscience, feeling uneasy about using tainted resources. Minwu acknowledged Firion's concerns but explained that he had to think about a lot more than himself or how he felt about something. Minwu secured the Half Moon and told Firion that after this mission, he wouldn't be with him, so Firion would need to garner local support. Captain Leila offered her assistance and was available immediately. Minwu asked Captain Leila if she'd be available in a few days' time for securing the mythril line, but she offered to help right away. Firion tried to comfort Guy, who was struggling with guilt and regret over leaving him behind during the Fynn attack. Firion reminded Guy that he was scared and that it's okay to feel that way. He encouraged Guy to talk about his feelings and emotions with him. The group then discussed their plan to free the miners from the Palamecian taskmasters at the Mythril Mines near Salamand. They would lead a revolt, arm the miners, and then find Borghen to kill him and free Nelly. Maria expressed confidence that the miners would follow them if they offered what they wanted in both the short and long terms. Josef agreed to show them the way through the mines, and Firion confirmed that they had a plan. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discussing our strategies. !!! (I apologize, sir Firion.) I have seen things recently that I had not even imagined. It's hard for me to cope with these feelings. Please don't call me sir Firion. I understand what you're saying; we all have to deal with this in our own way. How is Guy? Firion He's... well. It's a process, and it's not like he can reach a finish line. We need to be patient and understanding. Maria says that we should fear not, that she has a good feeling about this. Honestly, I think things will work out. Further in the Mythril Mines near Salamandia Maria says that Guy used to be her apprentice. She can't believe we didn't attack him because he had helped us before. Firion and Maria talk about how they're not here to settle old grudges. Emperor Mateus, Thairee reports that Borghen fled the scene and is now hiding in Fynn, Emperor Mateus says that it's disappointing that he would have died by now. The Magelord has likely escaped to Mysidia. Thairee explains why Emperor Mateus disgusts him so much, it's because they're knowledgeable but don't do anything with their power. They count the stars and debate riddles while half of their number is enslaved. Thairee spits on them, saying that he even managed to do more than they could despite being a scribe in exile. Emperor Mateus asks if there's any news from Deist, Thairee says only what was expected. Emperor Mateus asks about the Eidolons' recovery and Thairee reports that some have regained basic speech and motor functions, but the rest are recovering faster than expected outside of a month. Firion tells Maria he's listening if she wants to talk; Maria is on edge and apologizes for her outburst earlier. taken Minwu up on his offer? Maria said no way, her place was on the front lines where she could make a real difference. Firion reminded her that quartermasters and bureaucrats were just as important, but Maria wasn't having it. She didn't want to deal with paperwork or think about Borghen. Later, Captain Leila was relieved they hadn't given up on them, and Maria confirmed that they had been delayed but were now focused on checking in with the Eidolons. Princess Hilda revealed she had been learning about their purpose and had joined them physically to ensure everything went smoothly. The group headed towards Deist to check in with the Eidolons, but when they arrived, Leon was conducting an experiment, using the Palamecian soldiers to round up more Eidolons. However, things took a dark turn as the soldier who spoke out against the experiment was brutally killed by Leon. Finally, Princess Hilda and Ricard reunited at the front lines, bringing some much-needed hope and relief to the situation. It's wonderful to be back home again, and I'm glad to see you too. I apologize for my absence, but let's not dwell on it. Ricard, you've been busy, haven't you? The battle ground has turned into a quagmire since I left, with the Palamecians holding superior position but unwilling to take advantage. So, you grew cautious in response, and we tried to divine their strategy without success. They seem stuck, losing good soldiers for no gain. Our scouts report they're imprisoning their own soldiers now, trying to capture rather than kill. We were waiting for a ransom or bargain, but none came, and... what's next? Firion: You haven't heard about the Palamecians' actions with the Eidolons, have you? Ricard: No, I hadn't. They cut off the harbor first thing. If not for your efforts earlier today, we'd still be out of touch with the outside world. Princess Hilda: We'll discuss specifics later. Firion: Er, yes, we will? Princess Hilda: *glares* Yes, we will. Now. *returns attention to Ricard* We have a plan of action, but we need support. Ricard: Speak your mind, Your Majesty. Princess Hilda: *softens, smiles* It's good to work with you again, Ricard. These three and myself will sally into Palamecian lines... Ricard: Unescorted?! Absolutely not! Princess Hilda: ...and we'll recruit the disenfranchised Palamecian soldiers to our cause. If it bothers you so, then join us on the field. Ricard: My wyvern is still recovering from an attempted poisoning, but they will find my spear capable on the ground. Princess Hilda: Excellent. Let's away immediately. 24: Deist, Palamecian Front Lines Leon: Hmm... So that's how Ramuh died... Eidolon 2... *shaking with pain* Yes... now... please... heal... me... Palamecian Soldier 2: Sir? The Deist forces are inside the encampment! We don't have time for this kind of nonsense! Leon: Ready the ship. We're withdrawing for now. Palamecian Soldier 2: Withdrawing? Yes, sir... What shall I do with the prisoners? Leon: I doubt we have time for anything but leaving them, wouldn't you think? Come now, or the ship will leave without you too. 25: Castle Deist Princess Hilda: Assembled soldiery. The court has heard your case and provisions, and has deliberated with the military tribunal. Palamecian Officer: We await our sentencing, Your Majesty. Princess Hilda: *coldly* So formal... *exhales* It is the judgment of this court that these soldiers be immediately conscripted into the Wild Rose Rebellion, to serve the people they have so harmed by their actions. Palamecian Officer: ...your majesty? Princess Hilda: Did I mis-speak? Palamecian Officer: N... no ma'am! Princess Hilda: Further, as the ranking representative of the Wild Rose present, it is my judgment that you immediately make sail with all due haste with Commander Maria and her troop to help in the recovery of Fynn. I trust that is sufficient? Maria: Yes, Your Majesty. We will set sail without delay. Princess Hilda: Then this court is adjourned... *shuffle shuffle* Firion: Well, that actually went better than expected. Guy: I'm a bit surprised... The tribunal was open-minded towards our proposal, but Ricard needed convincing. Despite the current tensions, they believed it was still the best course of action. He commended the rebels for standing up to their officers and refusing orders; it took a lot of courage. Princess Hilda noted that by the time they returned, the first batch of Mythril should be processed, and hopefully Gordon would return from Kashuan. They were ready to retake Fynn. Emperor Mateus inquired about the number of citizens resisting, and Thairee replied that it was too many, with virtually no converts even under pain and death. The Emperor found this fascinating but stated they would suffice for their other purpose. He then asked if anyone had a question, allowing Thairee to ask about the young prince. Emperor Mateus decided to re-educate the prince personally and ensure the survivors were well taken care of, along with their captors. Altair's Captain Leila joined the conversation, mentioning she was from Salamand, overseeing a shipment, but heard about the crew planning a rebellion against Fynn. She noted the interesting alliance formed by various groups. Josef mentioned that only Mysidia and Kashuan were missing from this coalition. Captain Leila agreed and expressed her desire to redirect the fight to the Emperor once Fynn was liberated. Josef also voiced his agreement with this plan. Later, in the Altair Command Room, Princess Hilda reassured Firion that she believed they had a chance of success. Maria mentioned the Eidolons they rescued near Deist were connected to the Endeavor and their magical essence might have been permanently drained. They hoped to connect with them on some level and pacify them. Firion preferred this option over the alternatives, and Princess Hilda agreed. Maria then suggested they finish preparations for the march north before dawn. In a side room, Firion couldn't sleep due to his worries about Maria, while Guy expressed his appreciation for Firion's support in processing his emotions. we all make fun of him but you can't just think he's gonna throw in the towel when we retake Fynn right? We've already pushed him off the peninsula and a man like that backed into a corner is... dangerous. You're right, smarter minds than us have thought this through before. Maria's smart, the princess too. Nothing we come up with they haven't figured out yet. Listen, if something happens to me tomorrow you gotta keep talking, every night. I don't care if it's to the pillow or a pet or... someone else. You have to keep talking alright? Guy promises Firion just for him. Alright, let's try to get some rest. Borghen freaks out because he can't find his adjustable and guards everywhere is missing. This is getting interesting! Guy points out that Borghen is in the room with them. Borghen gets mad at Guy saying he has no right to be in Fynn and tells him to go back to Mysidia where he belongs, the luxurious Eidolon lover! Maria gets fed up with Borghen's nonsense and threatens to beat him to death with a dictionary so he can learn proper speech before his last moments. Borghen tries to use magic but ends up failing miserably. Firion asks what's going on and Maria tells everyone to stop him. Borghen lets out an incoherent scream as he dies, still trying to cast spells. Maria is furious saying she wants every remaining ounce of his mind to hear her voice tormenting him in his final moments and wants him to rot and burn and suffer forever for the nightmare he visited upon them. Guy tries to intervene but Firion tells him not to let Maria have this because there's no loss in it and she needs this. Guy is still concerned but eventually lets Maria have her way. She collapses exhausted, sobbing, and Firion comforts her telling her it's okay to cry it all out. Leon from Mysidia reads a book and realizes that shortcuts aren't an option anymore since Borghen had already been dealt with. He figures he'll need to find another plan of action and realizes that Maria was right in saying he needs to be more prepared for the next step. Leon decides to go after bigger targets now that Borghen is out of the way. The scene ends with Firion and Maria having a heart-to-heart conversation, both trying to process their emotions about the whole ordeal. Looking back at everything, I think about my parents and how they've wronged me for so long. But now, I see the bigger picture and realize we need to focus on removing the real villain from power - the prince. We have Minwu's leadership to consider, but his whereabouts are a mystery. Maria thinks it's better if she goes alone to Mysidia, as they're not a hostile place this time. Minwu is honest about needing more help, especially with mages and magic users like Mateus who can be game-changers in the right situation. He explains that Mateus has skills on par with some elders and would be devastating if used against Palamecia's magical forces. The main concern is avoiding the magekiller spell, Ultima, which could bring down even the strongest mages. Maria seems unaware of this power and its significance. Letting a powerful mage killer spell slip from one's grasp is not the only concern; last time they meddled with another nation, their leader was brutally murdered and war engulfed the entire peninsula. Maria suggests that Sir Minwu's Palamecian heritage also plays a role in shaping their perceptions. The group decides to meet with them. Firion questions who they should speak to, as there is no clear head of the mages. Minwu reveals that Ramuh was once the de facto leader, but his absence has left a power vacuum. Maria proposes convincing a sufficient number of mages, rather than relying on a single individual. Maria expresses her unease about the prolonged silence from the Mateus Loyalists and the lack of response to their operations. Firion agrees that something seems off, and they decide to proceed with caution. On board The Endeavor, Minwu is surprised by Maria's ability to secure Palamecian support. Firion attributes it to her effective leadership and experience in recruiting allies. The group discusses the recent events involving Gordon and Kashuan, but their conversation is interrupted by an unusual cloud formation that seems to be moving against the wind. The crew becomes aware of a massive cyclone heading towards Altair, and they realize it's actually a powerful entity from Kashuan controlling the storm. Maria orders Airmaster Cid to take them to Fynn, where they can devise a plan to stop the chaos. In the midst of this crisis, Firion spots something within the storm – what appears to be Kashuan Castle. Minwu suggests that Emperor Mateus is behind the cyclone's creation and is now in control. Maria orders Cid to take them down to Fynn immediately, and they set out on a perilous journey. The group faces incredible danger as they navigate through the treacherous cyclone. Firion expresses his concerns about the situation, but Ricard encourages him to press on, stating that they have "but to do or die." The crew manages to reach Fynn, but the true extent of their challenges remains uncertain. People gathered in the courtyard, held captive by Emperor Mateus. Maria asked Thairee why they were being held there, and he explained that it was the Emperor's wish to use them as a threat to command their obedience. He also revealed that many of these captives were actually Eidolons, meant to be used as fuel for rituals. The group decided to take Thairee with them as their guide, planning to move forward with caution and determination. Given article text here ... The mage towns of the west beckoned those who wandered instead of others, drawing them in with their advanced magical prowess. Eidolons, beings that embodied magic, were a natural fit for these establishments. Thus, Mysidia was born. A discordant note arose when an upstart individual challenged the status quo, setting events in motion that would change everything. The journey to Pandemonium was fraught with peril, and its inhabitants, including the legendary Bahamut, soon found themselves on the precipice of disaster. In the aftermath, a group of heroes converged on the peak, determined to put an end to the trauma that had beset them. Lord Bahamut's anguish was palpable as he recounted his ordeal, but he ultimately found solace in the assistance provided by Maria and her companions. As they departed Pandemonium, Firion and Guy shared a moment of levity on the outskirts of Fynn, their spirits buoyed by the prospect of healing and rebuilding. The road ahead would be long and arduous, but with the help of Eidolons, a glimmer of hope emerged, and Maria's conviction that all would work out was unwavering. The journey to tomorrow had begun, and with it, the promise of a brighter future for the people of Fynn.