



Dice Tower Theatre - Season 2 Script

By Mike Atchley

E2E1 - "The Games"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Duke of Ellington - Joseph Dobzynski

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

sounds of crowd cheering

"Boy is that loud!" The deep brown haired girl said while sitting on the barstool peering to her left out the nearby window to the city outside. She could see down the wide cobblestone streets to the market square a good mile away a huge crowd was gathering watching some acrobats perform.

"Aye Lassie. That crowd loves a good show and the good lord of this land is always happy to provide it!" the bartender grinned, the gap in his teeth where one of the ivory beads was missing was becoming more prominent as he spoke. "Always?" she questioned "are there these ... challenges often?"

The bartender guffawed and shook his head "Nay! I see what yer askin'" He winked with a kind face. "Not like Trull, Bloodwood or Wolfen's gladiator pits. Our challenges aren't bloodsports. We are civilized ya see? They truly test skill and allow the cream to float to the top."

"Unlike yer flat ale eh, Lamprey?" the stout man at the table laughed with his 2 friends.

"Ha! And if you ever want one to taste as good as that last one you best shut up and drink it Joey!" The room erupted in jovial laughter. Jessica smiled. She was new to this town and was a bit apprehensive about the invitation in her pocket that brought her here. She was a priestess of the Maiden, a healer and defender of the faith. She had taken vows to stand up for good no matter what any other power or law may dictate. Her order was known for kindness and equally important, Free-will.

While she pondered her purpose here she almost didn't notice the door open up and a tall figure walk in with an other worldly grace. Everyone stopped talking as his gentle footsteps tapped across the polished wooden floor right... "oh my..." next to her.

"A mead would do me well this day Lamprey." His silky smooth voice poured out. But she already knew him. "Mr... mr silver tongue?" he turned to her his eyes pools of the deepest

oceans. "I'm a huge fan..." He smiled. "I do hope you are here for the games, are you not?" "I am" he smiled. He downed the mead in a single gulp and stood up. "I hope you see you at the stage then when I begin playing. Though..." he tapped the paper in her hand and smiled. "Today I'm playing for you. Good luck. "

He stood and walked to the door her eyes on him as he left but everyone had their eyes on her. "You are competing today miss?" the Bartender smiled "Well hear that boys? We've found a champion to root for!" AYE!!

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It was now well into the afternoon Jessica walked closer to the raised circular stage used for an arena. The smell of the apple and mince meat pies was sweet drifting in the warm breeze from the vendors. The Cinnamon especially she noted. She was getting hungry. But there was one last combat battle she was to attend.

She had already witnessed and tended her healing skills to a few of the battles. She was called upon in between rounds to tend to their relatively superficial wounds, to which she would smile. It was a reasonable way to show off her healing skills. She was proud when she saw Lamprey applaud along with her new friends from the tavern from their elevated platform directly above and behind her. They shut down early to come and give her support, lamprey had said "ain't noone comin today anyways but the occasional sourpuss who can't stand a good time I reckon."

He was a tough man but had a certain kindness about him. The jagged scars on his forearms told of tougher times than just running a tavern from the barside. She could tell they were from someone else's blade and many different ones at that.

She prepared to see the next combatants come out. The crowd erupted in cheers and she craned her neck to see over the lip of the stage. Soon a bald head appeared followed by the stout boulder-like body of a Dwarf. His pudgy nose was broken several times in the past and when he held his axe high she could see gaps in his teeth almost as wide as those missing. His matted braids from his beard shook to both sides like writhing snakes.

The announcer broke in "A ruthless dwarven warrior like no other, his smell alone could kill an Orc! Roar with Skotmir! Berserker son of the Garnet Mountains!"

She looked back at Lamprey who was laughing and leaned over the rail to shout at her. "You will have your work cut out whoever comes out to fight that one, Jessica! Hahaha!"

The crowd quieted down as she heard the soft clanking of thick heavy plate mail. He was tall by most standards even from her position on the ground looking up. His armor was worn and tarnished to a dull tin color almost black in spots. The armor hung close like a second skin on his entire body. a red cloak flowed over his shoulders and draped to the knee, covering the dirty Tattered cream muslin of the belted tunic. He was completely armored, except his black and

grey haired head. Unlike other armored combatants he chose not to wear a helmet. A short beard hung from his chin gently his cheeks and upper lip free of any of the salt and pepper whiskers. A strong jaw tensed as he looked out to the crowd with deep blue eyes. Behind which held a secret, she was sure.

She looked back at Lamprey. He was staring with a face that was trying to place what stood before him. Intensely.

“He wouldn’t tell us more and only his name folks. Give a warm welcome to Keldor!”

Jessica joined the crowd in welcoming him with a cheer. She looked behind and saw and her friends cheering. All except Lamprey. Her cheer slowly faded along with her wide smile His face now trembled with a smile of recognition. He was standing straight his hand in a balled fist across his heart in a soldier’s salute.

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The battle had been called a draw and both winning favor to the judges. She noted that they looked back to the duke who was standing applauding. Following the battle she met both Skotmir and Keldor to tend to their wounds.

“Ouch!” the dwarf winced as she brought the warm soapy water to the grazed cut on his elbow. “Oh I’m sorry I didn’t mean to hurt you...”
“HAHA hurt?” the dwarf shook his dirty bald head, the braids of his beard whipping to a side. “Nay!” he winked at her. “Its clean now! My beautiful mud is gone! HAHAHA!”

She smiled at the awkward joke. Not the cleanest or politest of company he was at least kind.

“You should be thanking the kind lady, friend.” Keldor smiled resting his mailed hands and leaning on the great sword turned down to the ground in front of him. He looked at her, his smile widening. “Thank you.”

“Uh, yeah! Thanks.” Skotmir jumped up and walked to Keldor “that was fun. I would have won you know.”

“HAHAHA” He laughed smiling. “For sure brave Skotmir. Absolutely you would have.” He turned to Jessica. “The rogue challenge is next, come let’s see what lies in store for them!”

“Sounds good.” Jessica said looking behind her to see her friends cheering but Lamprey was now gone.

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“THIS IS AMAZING” Skotmir shoved the pie into his mouth mashing it partially on his face. Crumbs and globs of warm sweet apple filling and crust falling and sticking to the hairs across his broad chest. Jessica’s eyes were focused on eating the steak and kidney pie wrapped in

parchment without a mess. She hadn't eaten since the morning's small breakfast of a few eggs at the Inn and she was feeling quite famished.

"It really is" she responded as she hungrily took a bite while walking through the wide aisle between the stands. Keldor strode next to her with a leg of turkey in one hand and a crumpled cloth in the other mopping the grease from his cheeks periodically.

"There we should be able to see from that spot."

Keldor pointed to a spot next to an elf in a long dark robe, a single tawny colored pauldron was attached to his right shoulder.

Jessica walked in first next to the elf followed by Skotmir and Keldor.

screech "Woah!" Jessica clasped her mouth in surprise. The pauldron spun its feathered face towards her revealing itself as an owl. The elf smiled at her.

"Hello" he smiled from one corner of his mouth at her. "Uh hello"

"Yeah! Hey there!" skotmir chimed in almost dancing with excitement "your owl looks real tasty! Hahaha" the elf rolled his eyes as he sneered out "Go..."

The owl leaped from his shoulder to sail upward and above the stage.

"I am Jessica." she smiled. The elf composed himself "yes, i saw you earlier. You did well with your healing arts. I am Vix." He bowed. "Master of the arcane."

Skotmir grunted. "Why do you have an owl?" Vix looked at him "You should have one too." he leaned down "With it you can see what it sees."

As he stood back up Jessica asked "W.. what does your owl see now?"

Vix looked at her with a smile. "The same thing as you and I. Only..." he looked at Skotmir. "...Higher." Skotmir glared at the joke as Vix laughed.

A hush fell across the crowd. "Ladies and gentlemen a swashbuckler from the old world will now attempt to remove all the bells without ringing a single one." Jessica smiled. "The rogues must be very agile to perform these tests." Vix said under his breath to her. She smiled and nodded. She saw silvertongue himself walk out with a young man no more than 20 she gathered. He had a short dark beard and a burgundy tunic. Once a fine piece of clothing showed some harder wear of the road.

Silvertounge placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Zorin, if you would please."

The young man nodded. "Here we go" The crowd went deathly silent.

Silently he stepped across the tile floor. After a few steps he paused as 2 guards each poured a bucket of gravel all over the tiles. He proceeded again cautiously and still silent. He approached the 6 ft tall dummy. He methodically plucked a bell muting the tongue with his thumb. He slipped it into his tunic. He repeated this action for all 10 bells and held up his hands.

The crowd erupted in cheers.

Silvertongue walked out onto the stage. "We only test the rogue, never compete. Rogues either are or they are not... Experts. Though if you ask one they would all claim to be experts. Provided you didn't wear a badge." *CROWD LAUGHTER*

Horns blasted from the duke's platform above the stage. He looked to the duke who was now standing revealing the red and gold velvet outfit, his arms outstretched.

"Citizens of Ellington and beloved visitors to our festival... time is short and a decision must now be made. I have seen enough. I have seen our champions."

"I've seen the strength one powerful fighter has both in the skills only a seasoned veteran could have. Also the raw power of unbridled rage. Step forward both of you please. The warriors known as Keldor and Skotmir."

Keldor and Skotmir smiled at each other as they stepped forward to the edge of the balcony.

"While they fought. There was someone there to help and showed the love and care that only a true follower of the maiden could give. Please step forward. Jessica"

Her head bowed she stepped forward next to a grinning gap-toothed Skotmir. "Knew it would be you!"

"And finally a weaver of the arcane."

"Well isn't this awkward." Vix breathed out from behind his stoic and proud face.

"Please step forward, Master Vix"

Jessica knew the 3 of them were likely to win, but she hadn't seen the Wizards skill contest earlier in the day. She chuckled, "well we are all right here aren't we"

"Yes. Aren't we." Vix sighed.

"Finally. We have our rogue. Thank you Zorin." The crowd cheered and the trumpets blasted

"I must meet with our champions. Please Elias Silvertongue would you begin the celebration!"

He walked way as the crowd began to dance. "This way please." Jessica and the others were gently ushered by 2 smiling guards to the Dukes keep on the other side of the grassy park hosting the games. "Calm down robert..." "Can I get your autograph perchance? My wife will be so excited i'm sure."

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"The chamber was lined with dark musky smelling wood. The traces of a sweet pipe smoke still lingering on the walls. A small fire was in the stone hearth, surrounded by a sculpture depicting a knight bowing to a maiden on one side and a similar maiden handing a rose to the knight on the other side. Jessica smiled.

The depiction of her faith was favorable. The followers of the knight were known to be locked in good and just law where as her beloved maiden bowed to noone. Only powers of the good and righteous.

"Thank you for joining me. You are are all strangers here but not to me." He smiled cupping his hands gently around the goblet he cradled as he walked to the window. The light cascaded across his gentle face. A close cut beard of dark black hung to his cheeks. Framing the strong jaw and his dark kind eyes.

"This world is in peril. A dark force has risen under one known as Lord Pallus. Jessica noticed Zorin look downward almost guilty. The duke continued.

"In the nearby nation of Darkovnia, one of the many barons is guarding a treasure of great power somewhere beneath his mansion. One that could give us the edge we need to defend Bellz against the dark rising force. We need you brave 4 to go."

They all nodded but Jessica. She looked puzzled. "Excuse me your grace. There are 5 of us here before you." He smiled and nodded. He gracefully walked to her placing a gentle hand, the glint of rubys danced across his knuckles in the beams of the dying sun from outside.

"We are aware. " a familiar resonance rang out from beyond the open oak door. In walked Elias Silvertongue.

"Jessica, we wish to offer you a place here. Aiding this city and its people by teaching them in the ways of the maiden."

She was shocked "but the existing temple, what about them who..."

"Our temple honoring the gods has lain dormant since our civil war 50 years ago." It is time to bring the people their faith back. Would you walk this path, with me?" He smiled and knelt before her. She smiled and offered her hand.

She looked at her new friends. Skotmir grinned wide and unashamed, Keldors eyes glinted with sincere happiness as he smiled. Vix nodded in stoic agreement. Zorin smiled and shrugged. "Sounds like a pretty good ideal"

"Absolutely my lady. " Keldor bowed.

"Good luck with your church."

She nodded and smiled.

"It is decided then, Lady Jessica shall stay here to assist in our rebuilding of the faith. The rest of you will journey to Darkovnia." He paused and smiled. "But first gather the rest of your friends Zorin."

"How did you know about?"

"There's not much i don't know within the walls of Ellington. You arrived with a certain squire in training named Benedict. I assume there are more than just a righteous paladin to be and someone of your talents." Zorin and Elias chuckled.

The duke clapped his hands with a big smile. "Good luck my heroes, and may the knight and maiden watch you now."

S2E2 - "The Baron"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

The road before them was well traveled the stones worn smooth. The many rains spread the tan and red soil fit between the stones allowing the sun to bake it into a clay. The trees and grasses on the sides of the road allowed some shade from the late summer sun.

Cordelia walked her head looking into the trees at the light bouncing from the leaves. It had been several days since Zorin and these newest members of the party joined the rest of them. Given the urgency of the mission she was thankful there were more people there to assist in their cause.

"Hey Cordelia, What are you thinking about?"

"Something I read at the library. " This wasn't entirely untrue. She had a copy of the book with her she had been reading. The one-eyes librarian had handed it to her to read when she left claiming it reflected her theory of what the great treasure could be.

That night they setup camp in a small clearing in the trees away from the road by 50 yards. Keldor and cordelia cooked together some venison and potatoes for everyone as they all shared stories with smiles on their faces. The savory smell of the potatoes and lightly spiced meat on the fire mixed with the smoke making them all smile in anticipation.

After the dinner they setup watches for the evening. Cordelia opted to take last watch. Giving her time to review the book more thoroughly.

Illuminated in the campfire light the leather book tome creaked as it opened to her anxious hands. The arcane transcription springing to life

The War of Champions as told by Vindalas the Golden, Commander of the Veridian Dragons recorded by his squire Folas Belam

The following is as written by his bedside testimony during the First moon in Spring of the year 937.

In days that only us elves can remember and man had forgotten were times of great despair and death. Dragons, giants, dwarves, elves and men were engaged in battle slaughtering many across the landscape both good and evil alike. The western continent became a focal point for this warring, and an ancient Mesa known only as "The First Stone".

Standing hundreds of feet high with a perfectly flat top and a large smooth horn jutting from one side pointing to the east it was a sight to see. Standing in the middle of the continent upon one of the many hills of the central forest. A forest I am sad to say met its end during this time, but wait. I get ahead of myself.

This "First Stone" was black like the night itself but flaked with peacock colored flecks of multiple colors. It was impossible to break and emitted a strange power all about it. An ancient power. My lord at the time looked at it with a reverence I had never seen before. He saw something both great and terrible in this monolith.

So did the rest of the world. Some wished to use it for good or evil claiming it could do great things. Some refused to let anyone control it for fear of the good or evil it could do. It became known as the god's forge supposedly a way for a mortal to ascend into godhood. Regardless war would be waged to determine its end. And end it did.

See noone knows what truly caused it, and those that saw it are gone now. Some say there came a great flash from the heavens as a smoking flaming fist of the gods struck. Some say it looked like a great ancient giant's hammer others say it was created by man as a weapon known only as "the destroyer of worlds" and others say someone tried to ascend and lost thier challenge to the gods themselves.

The result was the same. In that flash the First Stone detonated and spread outward pushing man, giant, elf and dwarf along with rivers and mountains outward. Along with those beautiful trees. Rippling from the center to form the Great Glen valley we know today.

The remains of the First Stone ended up in 5 places. We made a truce with man and a promise. We would never let anyone gain control of the "First Stone" again. It would be guarded in its pieces by erecting 5 citidels on top of its remains. Each named for the color of its foundational stone.

The Celestine Tower in the center was the tallest so it could oversee all of the Glen all at the same time. Towering thousands of feet in the sky one of the few things taller than the ancient giants., The Ivory Library, where the worlds chronicles and science were collected and stored. The Jade Temple where ones spiritual journey could find an epicenter also guarded the way to

and from the now Shattered Lands to the north. Garnet Keep guarding the bloody lands of the south and The Obsidian Fortress guarding the wild and unknown northwest.

This ended the war and began our current calendar we know today.

Soon following this the countries of the west began forming outside the Glen. The rich aristocracy of Darkovnia formed with the baronies and being the primary trade route linking the east and the west through the port city of Bellz and Ellington respectively. The Trolls, orcs and bandits populated the south in Trull. The reserved martial artists for peace far to the west. One of the lost northern peoples only known as wolfings settled outside the gates of the Obsidian Tower naming the land after them, remaining reclusive behind that great dark bastion.

Closing the book she still felt lost. It does explain Bellz and Ellington once were a part of Darkovnia but is it the giant stone she should be thinking of finding? Should they be looking at the 5 sacred towers? "This is so frustrating." she exclaimed as she got up to take a quick pace around the campfire while her friends were fast asleep.

All but one. Vix heard her words behind his silence and closed eyes and something inside him burned like the long thought dead coals of a forgotten flame.

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They had travelled into the early afternoon despite an attempted raid by a small party of bandits was relatively uneventful. They had paused to make preparations to complete the last 3 miles posing as nobles to enter the baron's dinner party this evening. Benedict had remarked following the battle. "You truly are a master of the greatsword, Keldor. I hope to learn much from you." Keldor smiled briefly rebuckling a loose line for the vambraces on his left wrist., "there is not much more to learn from what I saw. *small grunt* *sigh* you are a skilled and promising warrior Benedict."

Benedict smiled and nodded. Despite the praise he internally vowed to ask again in time.

"Oh this is ridiculous" Zorin stepped out from behind the bush he was using for modesty to change behind. The outfit was made of alternating colors of bright pink and mint green in hard contrast.

Zane and Sophie were laughing. "I think you kind of rock that look." He stood up and modeled for Sophie "How do I look? Stunning as ever?"

Sophie laughed and squeezed his hand "Simply dashing! We shall be the toast of the night."

"Yeah ha ha ha. By toast you mean we will be burned at the stake like the fashion disasters we are, sure."

“Calm down. You look terrible but no worse than normal.” Vix chimed in sneering. “Besides we should all appear comfortable or else it will become obvious we do not belong, am I correct?”

The group sighed, Vix was curt and to the point but was right about at least one thing. They had to blend in at the ball tonight or else the entire mission could fail.

Zorin grunted and stormed off to collect and stow his pile of gear while Sophie and Zane giggled returning to gathering theirs as well.

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Zane and Sophie leaned with one shoulder to the smooth granite wall of the ballroom. From here they could see their friends and watch safely away from the crowd to not draw too much attention to their spying. They spoke to each other softly over each others shoulders.

“Seems Benedict can’t loosen up wherever he goes. He’s at my 10 oclock standing like a statue at the edge of the dance floor. If he denies the cocktail waitress one more time they may ask him to leave on general principle.”

Sophie chuckled “well we chose the wrong time to visit Darkovnia. Noone serves milk apparently. Poor guy.” Her gaze scanned to the right gently “Keldor seems to have made a friend.” She smiled as Keldor was speaking to a woman with silver streaking cutting through her jet black hair at the temples. She wore the curly trusses pulled back under the hood of a blue and black outfit. Her face was a deep rich umber with clear matching eyes that smiled warmly as she spoke to the powerful and wise old warrior. He smiled and bowed taking her hand. He led them out to the dance floor where they began a slow and gentle cadence. “Keldor is quite the gentleman. I wonder where he learned how to dance like that.”

“Like how?”

She studied their movements. They stood side by side but facing opposite directions. Thier hands were the only thing that touched gently back to back with the palms facing back towards themselves. The fingers gently arched and curled back towards their faces. Keldor’s other hand was behind his back as he smiled over his right shoulder to his partner. She smiled back as they stepped forward and back swaying together like a child’s swing in the wind.

Sophie knew this dance to be one that only those of noble birth practiced.

“They are performing a dance of the Glen.”

“The Glen?” Zane paused “I guess there is more to Benedict Senior than meets the eye.”

Sophie chuckled while Zane smiled proud of his joke. He took a sip from the tart and sour wine in his pewter cup. “Well at least Skotmir did the smart thing and not dance.” They passed Skotmir off as one of their servants, at his request. He was back at the guest room sleeping soundly after the great feast they partook in. The taste of the turkey and pies probably still lingering in his dreams like the drool from his wide mouth.

Sophie’s hand went to rest on his shoulder snapping him back to the task at hand.

“Cordelia is enjoying herself. She’s at your 8 enjoying the the fruit at the table and talking with a few scholars it appears.

“Seems we are the ones standing out.” Zane said briskly. “We should move.”

He looked over his shoulder slightly panicked.

“Not yet.” Sophie said calmly. She gently turned his bearded chin back towards her blue eyes with her fingertips. “Not yet.”

Zane sighed with a smile and nodded.

Yes not yet.

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Keldor looked down and saw their feet on the moonlit path of the garden. The crickets gently chirped and though the dance was over people still were up talking and drinking into the night. It was nice to talk to someone. Someone like Shae.

“Tell me Keldor.” She said. “Tell me of your story. I feel I do not know you as well as you know me tonight.”

He stopped and looked into her dark eyes. They reflected and amplified the dim lights of the night. She had told him she was a Baroness and a Widow. 3 Children the eldest being a Colonel in the local guard and the youngest a priest. Her lands lie to the east and she had come here to maintain the uneasy truce of herself and the others.

“Can you hear them?” Sophie whispered to Zane as they perched in the darkness from the nearby rooftop.

“Yeah, you?” He put his arm around her. She smiled and leaned into his soft embrace.

“Yeah”

Keldor sighed and smiled.

“Dear Shae. Thank you for this evening. It has been wonderful, truly.”

He sighed. Why did he feel so disarmed with her. He felt so calm, so at peace. He smiled and began their walk again she again taking his elbow and smiling.

“I was once pledged to a great lord many miles away. I served him and 4 others pledging my life to them, their lands and my faith. I cared deeply for them all, they were everything, especially one...” He grew serious “I hope at our age you did not take me to lead you on in a romantic fashion.”

She chuckled with an honest smile. “Nay, gentle Keldor. What I gained this night was a friend. That means so much more to me than another gentleman.” she squeezed his muscular arm gently “Besides it sounds like we both have our hearts pledged to another regardless of what’s considered polite or not.” They chuckled “What was she like?”

He smiled and patted her arm gently before continuing.

“She was the gentlest of breezes, yet the strongest heart I ever met. Her smile could melt the ice on a northern pond and her eyes could see through the hearts of anyone. She knew truth and valor as her siblings and she...” He stopped thinking. “...She believed in me.” He smiled.

She smiled back at him. “So tell me. Should I call you Sir Keldor?” She could feel slight tremble in his arm at the mention. “What makes you think...”

“Keldor. You can’t fool this old woman. You are a Knight of the Glen.” She stopped and looked into his eyes. “And a handsome one at that.” He blushed and looked away embarrassed from the crumbling facade. “Your secret is safe with me brave Sir Knight.” She straightened up.

“Well, may I trouble you to walk me back to the gallery. I suppose I should say hello to the old crooked nose himself.” They chuckled together. “Yes of course mi lady” Walking mostly in silence back passing by the smaller braziers and torches lining the garden path. As they approached the door they smelled the sweet elderflowers at the doorway and he smiled in memory before walking inside.

They did not notice the 2 spectators above them on the roof as they passed by. Silent now sharing a soft kiss under that same moon.

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“Hmmm”

Vix walked the hallway beneath the main floor. He had no need for the party and instead cloaked himself in the arcane shadows to get headstart on the exploration. He had only been successful in finding a few guestrooms, the servant quarters and the kitchen for most of the night while dodging the frantic servers from the kitchen or cellar and stoic guards patrolling.

He felt the air growing colder as he proceeded coming to a seemingly dead end. “No moss, or cobwebs...” He remarked. It was ancient and completely barren. The musty smell of the hall like an underground spring had faded and was replaced with a dry dusty smell.

“SHEE-FA-TEF-SHLAK” He hissed as the edges of a glowing doorframe appeared in the wall. He pushed gently and the wall responded sliding to the left to allow entry. He entered the pitchblack room. A moment that seemed like forever. before one by one Blue flames erupted from torches descending down an endless staircase.

Vix smiled. “Well hello... time for us to go.”

S2E3 - "The Underworld"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

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"Its just down this way" Vix called back softly as they made their way down the musty stone corridor looking back briefly to make sure they were all together. There was power in numbers after all. He saw Sophie in her chain and plate armor now, the jovial court attire stowed back in her guest room. She seemed a bit apprehensive when Vix had fetched her to talk of the discovery in the deep. This only grew when one by one they fetched the others. All but 3 joined them late in that evening around the witching hour. Zorin and Zane simply were too tired to have been woken from their rooms, snoring in what seemed concert with each other. Keldor little known to them had gone out to the courtyard alone to think of another time under the stars while slowly puffing on a longstem pipe.

"I don't like traveling this far from the others." Cordelia said plainly to Benedict "I agree but they may be safer where they are. Besides we shall come back to retrieve them once we ensure Vix has found it.

"So doubting." Vix sneered. "Of course i found it."

"I just wanted to find some more of that turkey honestly." Skotmir retorted.

"I hope you did Vix. And I agree we will need to come back for the others as soon as we can."

"They'll be fine. Something tells me they will be fine." Benedict smiled at the others. They had come to trust in his intuition and faith more over the past few months. There was a peace that followed Benedict when he prophesied that that could calm the spirit.

At the end of the hall the smell disappeared and the dry dust of time lingered in the air. Vix approached the door and drawing a wide diamond with his hand spoke "SHEE-FA-TEF-SHLAK" the door shifted to the side as it had done before. Vix looked back with a proud grin "Come. Let us press on to confirm."

Down the stairs they went for what seemed like an eternity. The 20 minute hourglass cordelia carried still dropped its dark red sand and only showed 3 quarters empty. She nodded to them that they still had time and they continued into the dark depths of the endless cavern on those stone steps. The steps hugged a rough cavern wall and were wide enough for 2 though everyone marched on in single file. Partly due to the sheer drop at the other side of each step plunging into darkness the blue green fire of the torches never revealing the end of those endless stairs. A wet and musty breeze was gently flowing around them as they descended. They could only imagine the size of this cavern as the torches disappeared far behind them in the distance as well.

Sophie had moved to the front of the group in case of any danger and now led them down into the depths driven by curiosity as much as the mission itself.

“Look at that.” She said to Benedict close behind. “By the knight’s shield, Sophie. Is.. is that a town?”

Sprawling below them the faint glow of many fires was beginning to illuminate the fog far below. “It must be. Its not unheard of to have those people of the underground build settlements of immense size. Though I never thought I would see one.”

Skotmir ran his hands on the rough cut wall. “This isn’t the work of Dwarves. Too rough, too... Hasty.” He spat on the ground in slight disgust. The stone deserved better than this he thought.

Continuing on they completed the stairs to find the ground transitioned into a polished cobblestone street. The buildings themselves flanked the sides of the street with many people walking along the side to various merchants or inside the small shops of the marketplace.

The people themselves were varied from Elves to dwarves some with Grey ashenlike skin and red eyes to the more familiar tones they themselves bore. Halflings worked some shops and occasionally humans dressed in dark robes would bring baskets of glowing fungus to various shopkeepers, who smiled back taking a share of them with a nod.

They soon came to a long building, A few barrels outside on the long deck stood stacked for additional storage to the tavern inside.

“Hello there.” The voice startled them slightly as one of the humans in the long dark robe approached them. He was followed by a female elf with long dark red hair. His eyes were like pale sapphires as they gleamed from under the hood as he spoke.

“You are the heroes of Ellington are you not?” They hesitated before Sophie spoke. “We are here seeking a...”

“Seeking a great artifact.” he smiled “yes, yes i know and we are here to help you.” He nodded at the elf to his right. “This is Jade. She will be a light in the darkness for you. She has come to know this world very well and can guide you.”

Benedict bowed as the others nodded gently. "Welcome Jade. Thank you." She nodded and walked to the rear of the group by Cordelia. Cordelia and Jade smiled courteously in greeting.

The man opened his hands and 3 flames sprung from his palms. Red, Green and Blue.

"There are 3 paths presented to you. One an old man needs help with the marauding bandits plaguing his home thus providing a slow and small impact on the world around you, A merchant holds path to great riches provided you can allow yourselves servitude to him, and the other can heal the heart of your world though it may come with great risk and sacrifice."

He smiled allowing the glow of the lights illuminating his face gently. Sophie turned to her friends.

"What should we do?" "Should we help the old man? Hes someone that needs help?" "What about the riches?" "I won't be anyones servant, no matter the prize." they paused all knowing the obvious choice. Sophie looked back at his crystal clear eyes. "The blue flame has the great risk correct?" He smiled. "Are you sure Sophie? I forsee a path few can understand let alone tread but that YOU... will have to walk yourself. Though you will all be together..." he nodded at the group, "you will feel absolutely alone."

Sophie closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. She thought of herself alone in Olan-ak-khan waiting for her sister who never came back home. Waiting for Zane for so many years. "I am no stranger to being alone. I..." She stood straight. "I.. know it better than anything else."

The man closed his eyes, nodded and smiled gently. He looked at the rest of the party. "Are your minds made up too? Will you accompany Sophie on this journey?" They smiled and nodded in agreement. "Then step into the room behind me adventurers. I wish you find that which you seek and can heal your world."

They looked at each other smiling before stepping into the door.

>>>>>

Zane sat in a meadow of white flowers as a bright midday sun shone on his face and shoulders. The sweet grass he gently chewed in the corner of his mouth was welcome mixing with the perfume of the flowers and nearby Lavender. He turned and saw Sophie in a white dress. A white bridal dress he noted. She held a small bird in her hand, gently stroking the brown and red feathers of the robin. She smiled at it before turning to zane. He smiled back. She gently brought it up to her cheek for a gentle caress before setting it free to fly. It spread its wings and gently ascended into the warm light.

She walked over to Zane the dress billowing behind her dancing in the gentle wind. She knelt down to him leaning in to kiss his cheek gently. She sat next to him and she said.

"Zane..." Zorin was gently shaking Zane to wake him up. Zane mumbled "...oh mah gaw...snickerdoodle mumble" "ZANE!" "Huh wha..." "They're gone. Everyone went down in the cellar. Vix left a note saying they were going to explore and be back but they aren't." zane shot up. "We. we gotta go. Is it just us missing?" "Yeah I think so" "ok well lets move."

Zane and Zorin peeked around the corner of the kitchen where they could hear some of the preparation for the next day beginning though the sun itself was barely peeking up. The beige and white outfits those in the kitchen wore were covered in flour as they kneaded out the dough rolling into loaves to bake. There was a sweet smell of cinnamon and cranberries floating from the room. Zane was washed in memory. Zorin smiled and nodded almost reading his mind. They knew they had no time to steal one of the breakfast pastries, plus it appeared these were made for those working in the kitchen and that didn't seem like a very nice thing to do. Stealing someone's breakfast.

They waited for the bakers to turn and load the large wood fired oven and made thier dash down the hallway. They smiled as they reached a long musty corridor. "Those rolls sure smelled good!" "Almost like the ones back home from the howling mountain inn!" "hahaha, we would have snagged them for sure 10 years ago. Mmmm I bet they taste great." "hahaha" the 2 old friends chuckled as they made their way down the long stone brick hallway.

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"Why did we come here again?" Cordelia was furious. They were sitting down on the side of a dimly lit pathway cut in the floor of a long cavern. The light of the luminescent mushrooms and lichen cast a blue green glow about the walls where they were. In front of them the path ended 30 feet in the darkness of the cave opposite themselves. Behind them benedict leaned against the cavern wall that once was the doorway they used to enter the room.

"I don't understand... It was a tavern, you saw it!" Sophie turned to cordelia "Yeah i saw it, but not as much as I saw you just trust ol blue eyes back there." Cordelia shook her arms in frustration. "He was a pretty cool fella I probably would have..." "Shut up Skotmir!" "All of you quiet!" Her voice rang out like a bell. This was the first time Jade had spoke to them since joining the party and the sudden change in her throat was surprising even to herself. There was no time for that now however. She could tell the change in the air slightly, a smell of oiled leather and cold iron. Something was coming from the darkness. Something not friendly.

"What is it?" benedict said as he cautiously stepped from the wall. Vix spread his fingers from balled fists in anticipation.

Jade drew the bow from her back and drawing the arrow back to her cheek she spoke a single command "SHIRAK" The arrow glowed like torch without heat. Radiating an amber light in the darkness. She fired into the dark hall the arrow illuminating the cavern walls before disappearing with a "UGH" "Ambush!" Sophie yelled. Cordelia and Vix began weaving their hands as Benedict and Skotmir charged into the darkness with Sophie.

The opening erupted as 6 pitch black forms sprung out as if made of the darkness itself. "CALLAY" one hissed as a web sprung around thier feet anchoring them to the rough floor. Cordelia let a bolt of fire fly before she lost balance falling backwards into the sticky web. "AKTAY" Vix flung his arms in an arc an wave of superheated fire drifting at 2 of the assailants. They shrieked in pain one of them dropping to a knee to clutch a smoldering cheek. The other caught Vix across the face with one gauntleted hand dropping him into the web as well.

His vision blurred as he saw Sophie skotmir and benedict all fall into the web. He could feel himself being rolled up in the threads and found himself unable to move. His vision was darkening now some tranquilizing effect of the webs he imagined. They rolled him face up a hazy green blue illuminating the ceiling. Stepping into view he saw one of the onyx colored assassins take off thier hood. Silver hair bounced across thier shoulders, red eyes reflecting in the light. "A surface elf. *chuckle* what a rare treat to meet you my cousin." another shape stepped into view. This one a huge monstrosity, Vix recoiled internally in horror, his eyes paralysed and frozen open. "Shall I take them back Mistress?" "Yes. We shall get them ready for the slave market I think. There should be a nice price for this lot." She turned and walked away as the large muscular arms of the other shadow reached down to pick him up. His fears were realised as the monstrosity revealed the lower half of a spider.

S2E4 - "Chains of Darkness"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

Drip. Drip... "groan" Benedict groaned rolling from his right side to the left no longer facing the rough and jagged edge of the wall. The wall was smooth like glass and in parts dangerously so. Skotmir was disturbed how foreign it felt to him remarking "its almost unholy. Its not like any stone I've seen." it was opaque and when light would grace itself in the 20 foot chamber of the cell it showed blue and grey streaks. From some ancient flame no doubt. Benedict noted it was like a smelters slag, the runoff from smelting raw iron ore.

He opened his right eye. Even that motion sent waves of pain in his over worked back and legs. For days they had been loading carts with various crates of supplies. The dark soldiers always watching thier work and driving them to perform at a pace slightly faster than possible with a load slightly heavier. Benedict tried to resist and found it easier to just submit to thier wishes and load the carts. Sophie and himself being the strongest and tallest they were the ones driven the hardest. Skotmir was kicked around cruelly by thier pointed black boots. He didn't seem to care though. At least he wouldn't show them. He never changed his pace.

He saw Vix sitting staring at the floor with his hands clasped in his lap. His head hung low. Though they were all quiet the past few days noone was more reclusive than Vix. The deep elves had Vix and cordelia gathering various local flora for thier supplies. Cordelias hands looked blackened the first day and began to blister the next from some reaction to a local plant. She had ripped fabric from the base of her dirty white dress and made some hand wraps for herself. She never let the pain show on her face. "We need to get out. There must be a way." A smile tried to crack his chapped lips, his cousin was tough for sure. "Hey Cordelia are you up?"

"Yeah. Wish I wasn't but yeah." He sat up on the glassy floor. She sat on the long rock bench along thier side of the wall. Sophie sat next to her, with unfocused eyes staring at the ground. Jade as well was ever quiet, just sitting there in thought. "SNOOOOORE" on the floor spread eagle lying on his back was Skotmir. "Nothing bothers that guy."

Sophie blurted "I feel so stupid! This wouldn't have happened if I hadn't... OOOh its all my fault." "Wait Sophie i didn't mean.." "no you did and you were right. I shouldn't have trusted that man." "We all had a choice." Vix raised his head. "Didn't we squire." "I..." Benedict hesitated "I'm not a squire. Not yet anyways." Vix chuckled "Great. Not much else for us to do now. We're all doomed." "Don't say that you.." "Oh I do know little mage." Vix's eyes grew cold as he continued. "These are the forgotten ones. Those of my people that were banished long ago. Doomed to lurk beneath the earth further than our cellars... or graves." He looked back to the doorway. "They were the poisoners of The Skull. The god the young knight to be knows as the Ferryman." He sneered as much to himself as his companions leaning back towards them, "I tell you we now walk with death close behind." Sophie stood up "Stop. I see you quake as you talk of such thing... as if you know them. But I am not stupid Vix. I will not be fooled by your facade." She stood in the center of the floor glaring at him her eyes ablaze with her blond hair falling in several dirty matted locks laying across her shoulders. Vix was shaken. If one was astute enough or had the tools they could see the granitelike ego split as if a great sledge had struck it. "You are scared."

He stood enraged "FATAH-BAH" he shrieked with hands outstretched as he leaped at her. She used the attack's momentum to put him firmly but helplessly on the ground with a grunt. "Please. Stop. We need all of us to get out of this."

She stood up and glanced back at a wide eyed Benedict and Cordelia. *clapclapclap* "HAHAHA" A very awake Skotmir was standing now. "Thats right Sophie! Together!" He strode over to Vix who lay defeated and broken on the ground. "Comon Vix gather yerself." He helped him sit up on the ground. "Regardless of who they are in this godforsaken place we need to get out and we gotta be together in it."

"PSST" A shock came across everyones face as they looked at each other frozen like statues rooted in place. "Who..." "Hey!" It came from the doorway. Silhouetted against the light from outside the cells bars was a familiar face. One they hadn't seen in days.

"Zorin?" Benedict ran to the bars. "How did you.." "I was told by an old man in the town to come find you here. Zane and I made our way in and separated after ..." "Zane? Is.. he is he "he's fine." Sophie took a deep breath. Zorin turned back to benedict "stand back I'll see if i can get it open."

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" Vix shrieked out. "WE CANT JUST LEAVE!" Benedict ran at him "So help me I will do what i must to make sure you stay quiet!" But it was too late "shhhh everyone down they are coming" Everyone scrambled to a normal position in thier cell while Zorin panicked looking around. Behind him was the walkway up the cliff face to the cells location. Off the walkway was a sheer drop. "GULP ...oh boy"

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Sophie noted minutes seemed like hours as they heard the approach of the Deep Elven Guard. She sighed it was worse when she saw who accompanied them. She stood slightly shorter than

the rest of them but it mattered not given the power that radiated off her and her station. Her red eyes were almond shaped and peered into the cell as she leered at them. "And what seems to be the matter? What bothers my dear pets this evening?" They all sat silent staring at the floor. Vix shook his head freeing himself from the panic. "Mistress Valya," The dark guard pointed to the edge behind her. She turned slowly like a snake coiling to strike, the blue black velvet of her cloak cascading from her shoulders to ride at her calf. She stroked his cheek. "Move Janick you fool!!" she shoved the man stumbling out of the way "Thank you my lady." he mumbled bowing while stepping back quickly allowing her past to look down over the rocky edge into the dark abyss below.

Suspended there was Zorin dangling from the cliff face his teeth clenched in silence, his fingers locked like iron to the edge. His arms screaming from fatigue he clung to the edge with all he could muster. He saw her dark red lips peel back in a sneer across the ashen grey face revealing set of perfect ivory teeth. "Hello. And who might you be?" she gently stroked his knuckles with a pointed boot. "Oh no." She shifted her weight slowly crushing his hand "AAAUGH" Both holding it in place and disabling him at the same time. "I... I..." He sneered "I am the prince of the world you dumb ox!" Her eyes flared from the insult as she swung her foot to kick out his grip. Vix mumbled and gently waved the fingers of one hand.

Valyas foot suddenly felt heavier than normal throwing weight off center. "AAAUGH!" she shrieked as she flung herself over the side.

Vix smiled. But it vanished quickly. "Hmmm. How clumsy of me" She appeared over the stone edge with her arms outstretched, levitating. Gently she floated up and out returning to the edge peering down at Zorin.

"Sieve the outsider. And put him in with the others." The guards nodded. 2 of them pulled up Zorin and held him with his arms behind his back. She smiled like a cat with its prey as she ran a single black fingernail across his cheek. "I so look forward to our discussion in the morning. See you soon." She turned and strode back up the trail to the building illuminated in the darkness with the fire of blue torches.

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Hours passed it seemed. But to be honest Zorin had no idea how much time had passed. The past few days he had simply slept when he was tired. Zane would be looking for him soon he supposed. They had agreed to meet about 4 miles away at the edge of a huge underground lake before they had to sleep. Zorin was beginning to feel tired. A sign time was running short.

He walked silently to the gate. And peered down both directions. All seemed quiet. He walked back to Vix. "Time to go. Are you ready?" Vix nodded. They all looked at him "How, they took all our gear?" "I have no spellbook." Skotmir shrugged "or my Axe" "I believe it would be foolish to retrieve them. First we should escape. We have survived with less." Benedict said putting his hand on Sophies shoulder. Zorin smiled nodding reaching into his boot he produced a

single lockpick. Sophie smiled "let's get to it then!" Zorin slid the pick into the tumbler and felt the cold iron reluctantly move into place and the gate slid slowly on its rail. "SHHHH" zorin hissed back to everyone as a reminder as he slipped onto the pathway.

Sophie sighed thinking of her sword, especially but looked at Cordelia. She and Vix were helpless without their spellbooks except for the handful of less powerful spells they had memorized.

They made their way down the path to the small guard house. Zorin motioned for them to stop and lower themselves to the floor a moment. He quietly approached and noticed two figures in the darkness playing a familiar game. "Axes. Axes again huh Dode." He recognized the voice of the one she called Janick. "Heh, yes. Yes another Axe." "hmm tell me Janick, how do you feel about our dear mistress? " Why? She's a strong.." "...yes very strong" "and.. Cruel" "heh indeed very cruel isn't she?" He saw the other figure lean in. "the way she treats us all, especially the way she treats you?" "I.. I suppose." "There I lay down the Skull. And lets pause a moment. " Janick sighed. "We won't always have to listen to her gloat will we?" "No I have a feeling we won't." the figure pointed at the table in front of him look here there's something i wish to show you." Janick looked at the table.

Zorin froze. The other guard looked directly at him with two icy blue eyes. The ash colored face nodded at him. "Go."

Zorin ducked down and waved for everyone to follow him as they crept in the darkness out of the prison they had known as an unwelcome home these past few days.

"Dear Janick, do you see now?"

"I.., I understand. Truly I do but must it be..."

"Must it be you? Yes. As I told someone very dear to me... all things must end sometime."

>>>>>

Keldor woke in his room and put on his things to walk to the breakfast hall. He could smell the sweet pastries glazed in honey and berries, and the familiar favorite, cinnamon rolls. He smiled rubbing the beard on his sleep worn chin.

He exited shutting the door gently behind himself. Walking down the hall he heard a small voice "Heya" He turned to see a halfling no taller than a young child waving at him. She carried a small lute strapped to her back that looked more like a mandolin he thought to himself. She was dressed in dark greens and browns of the forest. Deep burgundy hair came to her shoulders. Around her neck was a small corked glass vial.

"You goin to breakfast? Me too can i join you?" "Absolutely but I get ahead of myself" He knelt down on one knee and bowed to her. "I am Keldor. And who might you be my new friend?"

She smiled standing straight taking his hand to shake it happily. “Lorvana Birdsong. Traveling minstrel.” She nodded quickly adding “Well lets get moving! Those goodies aren’t gonna just eat themselves.” They chuckled together as they walked down the hall following the welcome smells and pleasant conversation.

A conversation that noone seemed to notice was missing several honored guests.

[CAST]

| THE STRANGER - Phill Usher - Aethuran Dark Saga Podcast -
<https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/aethuran-dark-saga-634354>

| VIX - Daniel Nichols - The Happy Go Lucky Podcast - <https://happygolucky.com/>

| MISTRESS VALYA and JANICK - Bridgett and Stephan Farruggia -
<https://www.seraphimtheatricalentertainment.com/>

| LORVANA BIRDSONG - Kara Danvers

| SKOTMIR - Colten Jannssen

| SOPHIE - Sarah Jenkins

| CORDELIA - Joleen Fresquez

| BENEDICT - Brian Dowling

| ZORIN - Cody Miller

| NARRATOR - Mike Atchley

S2E5 - "City of the Great Forge"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

"Its good im sure... just" Zorin turned the mushroom over in his hand. It was the size of a softball toasted a chestnut brown from the small campfire they had made. It smelled like an aged cheddar and probably was just as sharp and creamy Zorin told himself with a smile. Cordelia had pointed these out as non poisonous ones but was relying off of knowledge from the memory of a book she had read. "It will suffice." Vix chimed in as he peeled a chunk of the flesh of his mushroom and carefully placed it in his mouth. He chewed with his eyes closed, trying to place the flavor. His eyes opened and he saw the group staring at him intensely.

"What?" "do you feel... strange?" "no should I?" "sick?" "like you are gonna shrink to the size of a mouse?" Everyone looked at Skotmir. "I heard that happened to some girl a long time ago and..." "shut up Skotmir, and all of you for that matter. I am fine." Vix snorted going back his meal. "Despite what you may have heard Elves are not all weak. We have a very strong constitution in fact."

Jade cocked an eyebrow at the needless brag and laughed rolling her eyes.

As they ate the gentle lapping of the underground lake water on the shore was rhythmic and soft. The campfire was made of small twigs and a broken board they had found. Wood was a scarce commodity here in the dark underbelly of the world. The meal was pleasant but there was the nagging of the last few days. When zorin had returned to the waterfront of the lake they had found evidence of a fight that someone was dragged away from. Jade could track 6 smaller bodies the size of Skotmir and noted they were similar in weight. The tracks were made by the steel heels of their heavy boots in the loose dirt. "There was oil from a lantern that spilled some here on the ground probably half a day prior." "Zane had a lantern." their hearts gripped in worry.

She noted chains bound the taller most likely human at the ankles before he was drug into a 4 wheel cart. And finally away down the coastline of the lake.

“Zane” He looked up. “Jade you are positive they came this way around the lakeside?” “Yes. “ The lake was immense with no sign of change in the coast’s direction in the last day’s worth of travel. “See the tracks still travel that way.” there was one set of tracks with set of large wheel ruts she was pointing at. She then pointed at another set 20 feet away. The feet were turned opposite but similar. “The wagon ruts are more shallow. Not as weighted down and going the other way. Thats where they most likely came from.” Zorin smiled “great. Thanks, just...” “We will find your friend Zorin I promise.” She sat down. She didn’t understand how she knew but she did.

The next day yielded a welcome change of scenery when they came across an old pier. The carts tracks ended here where the wooden cart itself sat as well. The pier had 3 small wooden rowboats moored along the left side. Skotmir noted these were dwarven in make, well crafted but plain. “I’m used to seeing the shipwrights mark or some strong dwarven design... these are so perfect but ... empty.”

He was disturbed by this. “Dwarves are proud and function as well as beauty are important. Its so ... soulless.”

Benedict put a hand on his shoulder. “Skotmir, do you see that light in the distance?” He pointed across the lake where a faint orange glow was on the horizon. Skotmir smiled. “Aye. Jade is that a city?” “Jade was already nodding as she inspected the dark wood of the boats for any leaks before their next journey.

The glow of the city became brighter as they made their journey over the next few hours. Soon they could see 4 giant pillars of stone ablaze with fires that ebbed and flowed from within. Towering hundreds of feet towards a ceiling that still was lost thousands of feet in the darkness above. Sprawled at their base were comparatively tiny houses. Easily 50 of these houses sitting end to end would be the width of just one of these great pillars.

They heard a large crowd bustling around in the distance the occasional muffled shout carrying across the water to their ear cloaked in darkness. They were rowing towards a large harbour filled with various ships and sizes, with one thing in common. “No sails... well I suppose that makes sense actually.” Zorin saw the largest ships had easily 40-50 oars per side. Far to the left of the city was a dock not in use cast in shadow of one of the large ships. “There. Lets dock there and we won’t be too obvious coming in.” “Maybe we can blend into the crowd!” “speak for yourself.” Vix was wrapped in his long robe staring at the approaching harbor, trying to anticipate what they would encounter,. in this glowing city of fire.

>>>>>>

“Excuse me!” Cordelia grunted as a thick bodied sailor pushed past. They had soon noticed all different shapes and sizes on inhabitants were here in this lively port city. “I’ve seen easily 10 or

distance. "Be back in a bit. I'm.." "SNOOOOOORE" he turned around to see everyone else was fast asleep.

>>>>>>>

sounds of darkness dripping

"A promise." The voice whispered in his mind. He sat in the dark alone. He could feel the cold smooth stone beneath him. It felt like an eternity since he had seen the light outside the cell. The musty smell of stagnant water no longer burned his nose and he almost feared any light that would come in at this point. The chains around his wrists bit as he rubbed a cheek. "2 souls for the price of one." 2 icy blue eyes seemed to glow in the darkness before him. "Yes, 2... for one."

[CAST]

| THE STRANGER - Phill Usher - Aethuran Dark Saga Podcast -
<https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/aethuran-dark-saga-634354>

| VIX - Daniel Nichols - The Happy Go Lukky Podcast - <https://happygolukky.com/>

| KEGOG - Corbin Miller - Paudeville Podcast - <https://paudeville.com/>

| LORVANA BIRDSONG - Kara Danvers

| SKOTMIR - Colten Jannssen

| SOPHIE - Sarah Jenkins

| CORDELIA - Joleen Fresquez

| BENEDICT - Brian Dowling

| ZORIN - Cody Miller

| NARRATOR - Mike Atchley

Music/Production by Mike Atchley

S2E6 - "The Prisoner in Ruby"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

The market bustled with the sounds of the people selling from the various carts opened to oneside revealing their contents. They all had similar designs, made of a dark gray wood that seemed to mimic stone. A small street barrier was made of a similar material as they entered the square. "What is this wood? Its stronger than any I've seen yet not brittle." "Stone Birch" Skotmir replied Benedict looked at him questioningly as the name was unknown to him. "HAHAHA. Never heard of it eh? It grows under the hills. See it has what you would think of as roots growing into the earth but its actually upside down. Its bottom actually looks like a huge boulder on the surface, you would never know it was actually a tree."

Benedict thought briefly of his craft as a blacksmith, and what a great wood to grace a sword's pommel or maybe a hammer. He smiled for a moment before remembering their purpose today. The large podium at one end of the market was where individuals would be put on sale for purchase apparently. He shuddered slightly thinking of his brother Zane, again in chains. He looked at Zorin, who looked a bit pale, "Zorin how are you?" "I feel like garbage honestly but i'm sure it will pass. I think its the air of this city." cordelia nodded "Yes, this air is foul, thought the market seems to be helping a bit. Come lets look at that fruit vendors wares." she turned to the others. "We will catch up in a moment." They nodded as they continued towards the podium, while cordelia and Zorin walked towards a cart where a halfling stood proud on a large crate talking to a shorthaired deep elf.

The smells of exotic fruits and spices lifted through the air a welcome change from the hazy smoke from the giant furnaces. Zorin took a shaky breath filling his nose with the identifiable cinnamon, oranges and cloves. There were other savory scents similar to rosemary and basil, and sharp cooling tones of mint. "ahhhh.." He smiled. This was much better. "Hey there, can i help you?" The Halfling turned to the two of them with a smile on his round and ruddy face. A gesture they hadn't seen in a long time. "How much for the Mint?" "gimme a gold and you can have it my friend." He winked at zorin. He looked pleadingly at Cordelia who smiled and nodded. "Ok, its a deal" he placed the Gold piece in the small childlike hand of the merchant

who grinned before rubbing the coin against a gold tooth in his mouth. grabbed the fistfull of mint and placed it in a burlap pouch. "SNNNNIIIIFFFF" He squeezed the pouch gently as he brought it to his bearded face. The soft cool vapors eased into his nose cooling the burning from the foul sulphuric and smoky air.

Sophie walked stoically through the crowd her eyes trained on the worn dark grey podium. The crowd was gathering around the foot of it. She saw many grey dwarves and dark elves talking amongst themselves and pointing at the stage. "Please be here. Please. Please don't leave us again." Her heart rate was fast, she hoped upon all hope to see his face again after all these weeks. Her hands were balled into fists. She realised it and quickly wiped her palms together and across the armor on her thighs briefly.

Vix and Skotmir looked on as well but Benedict looked very anxious as well. The crowd grew louder as the auctioneer walked out a white wiry beard laid across the round belly of his armor his heavy iron shanked boots fell heavily on the planks calling attention from everyone.

Zorin walked up to Sophie leaning in without drawing too much attraction "listen i'm going over to the other side where they can see me better. If he's there we don't give up until he's free sound good?" she smiled "yes." he turned to walk back into the crowd. "Hey, Zorin? Thanks." he smiled and winked at her disappearing into the sea of people gathering she imagined in disgust to purchase the people soon to be displayed like a simple iron kettle or chipped vase.

The ashen grey dwarf announcer walked out on the stage, the heavy fall of his boots thundered from the wooden planks. He tugged at his beard before pulling out a scroll and barking at the crowd. "Starting off we have a prisoner who has served his sentence and looking to atone for his wrong doings with servitude. Servitude brings humility. Humility brings purpose. Purpose is life." The crowd murmured at these last words. Sophie saw the grey dwarves in the crowd nod and and beat their chests in agreement. The prisoner was another grey dwarf. Standing proud in a muslin tunic belted with a rope cord at the waist his red eyes glowed with a fire. "Lets start the bidding at 5 gold pieces." The crowd erupted with hands "theres 5 do we have 10?" Thus the auction began. Sophie bowed her head "Zane, please be here...please."

The auction proceeded with several dwarves, an orc, and even a deep elf craftsman going to the various bidders. A hush fell across the crowd as they heard the shuffle of chains across the steps behind the stage. "Oh!" Sophies heart burst as she saw the bearded face of Zane appear. His golden hair hanging in matted locks about his shoulders. He was clad in the same dirty muslin tunic as the others. His face was dirty and his eyes were still adjusting to the light of the marketplace. Sophie felt something squeeze her hand. Looking down she saw Benedict's face crack a hopeful smile "Zorin has this. I know it."

"Now here's a rare treat. A surface dweller. Lets start the bidding at 20 gold pieces" The crowd hesitated and Zorin's hand shot up. "Theres 20, is there 25?" The crowd was silent, there was no need for the novelty of a surface dweller. He didn't look like he could do the work of the others and this brought no purpose for the purchase. "I have 25." The voice rang out from a

cloaked dwarven figure standing on a stack of crates. The wiry white beard flowed from the blue black hood obscuring his face. Zorin looked back at his competition. “30 he shot back before the engineer could respond. This was all they had left in their purse that was given them at the inn that they bought supplies with. The man looked at him. His icy blue eyes locked on zorin. “40” Zorin’s heart sank. Then he thought for a moment, he could sell his new dagger and Benedict could sell his sword, they did say it was magical. This could work. “It’s all we have... It has to work.” he shot his hand up “50” he said. He saw the look on Sophie’s face she nodded.

“50 going once...” Zorin looked back at his competition standing on the stack of crates and saw the dwarf was gone

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Skotmir rung his hands together while they waited in the cold stone lobby of the auction house. The granite benches were perfect in everyway he noted, running his hand on its side. Not one pit or rough spot. He sighed. But devoid of any makers mark or decoration. “This place is awful.” he muttered. “Sooner we can get out of here the better.” Vix nodded. “Indeed.”

The door behind them opened and Zane walked out smiling with a grinning Zorin. “Zane!” Sophie threw her arms around him. “Sophie.” he smiled over her strong shoulder as he breathed in the honey and lavender smell of her freshly washed hair. “I... I couldn’t bear to lose you again.” He pulled back and smiled. “Never again, Sophie. I swear on the sky and moon itself. I will never leave you again.” He was shaking as he pulled her back to his embrace. “Never.” “Thank you”

Vix turned to Zorin “So what deal did you make? Our new equipment still lies with us.”

Everyone turned to Zorin who smiled an awkward grin trying his best to mask his guilt “I have offered our help to the marshall to aid them in clearing out the sewers”

Skotmir stood up angrily “I am no plumber or thief. Find someone else to get dirty with...” “Stand down Son of the Garnet Mountains.” Her voice was strong and carried from behind zorin as she stepped out. She was a female dwarf clad in dark iron armor that consisted of hard angles around her short muscular frame. Snow white hair was pulled back in a single ponytail from her ashen grey face and eyes with deep blood red irises. “I am known as Ferra, Ferra Ironstone Marshall of the King’s Guard.” Over one shoulder was a warhammer, blackened grey like her armor the large rectangular head was simple and rounded from years of use. It was attached to a thick wooden handle studded with brass to enhance the grip in battle. She set it end down on the ground in front of her, leaning on it with her hands crossed. “I offered to pay for your friends freedom after Zorin and I spoke about your ability to help us with a rather... worrisome issue.” Benedict stepped forward. “What troubles this city?”

“There is a foul magic creeping into our hearts. Many of us have left the forges and become complacent.” She looked at the ground contemplating. “Even our king is sick. He refuses to

see anyone and keeps to himself all day. He has not sent out his tasks in months and many of our people looked forward to his mighty commands. It gave us..." "Purpose" Cordelia interrupted gently. The red eyes flared. "Yes." she hissed "Our purpose... outsider." she sighed. "As I was saying we are all falling slowly victim to this... apathy." "What do you need us to do?" Benedict bowed slightly in respect of the Marshall's station.

She sneered and shook her head at the unneeded formalities. "Heh... We believe the source is somewhere deep in the sewers below the city. Clean it out." She stared at benedict who nodded. "Thank you for freeing our friend. We shall do this immediately." She nodded. And casting a final glance at Skotmir spun on her heel and walked back into the auction house.

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"Well the smell isn't so bad now at least." Hours had passed as they made their way by torchlight. Led by Zorin at the front he periodically paused to inspect the smooth stone wall. They had found an entrance to another set of tunnels from the main sewer shortly after entering the system. The entrance was trapped magically and was triggered recently by the dead guard lying on the floor. Benedict leaned down clutching at his chest where once his silver pendant was. "Knight lord please welcome this weary soul to the anvils of your realm." "We have no time for the dead." Vix brushed his hands on his robes briskly freeing them of the chalky dust that clung to them. "*big sigh* We must do this deed and get on our way." Jade looked at them with purpose. "I agree, we must continue. Zorin let's go." They had ducked into the dark hallway then Zorin noted. Again that was hours ago.

Faint voices could be heard down the hall also the faint glow of fire light was becoming more apparent.

"Hold up." Zorin forced a whisper at the top of his breath to reach everyone. Benedict motioned to stop Cordelia and Jade both nodding at the rear of the group.

There was a charcoal taste in the air as something was being burned down the hall but in a well ventilated room apparently. It seemed there were multiple voices in the distance all gravelly male voices. "I'll scout ahead" "A grand Idea. don't take too long." Skotmir shook his head at Vix. "Be safe" Zorin nodded and handing his torch back to Skotmir faded into the shadows.

"What the..." Zorin peered around the corner and had to blink several times to adjust to the light of the room. The room was immense not unlike the inside of a tall chapel. tall pillars towered into the air supporting the ceiling 100's of feet high at 6 points around the room. Where they pressed into the floor with their 15 foot bases showed a 6 pointed star connecting them in the center was a platform raised 8 feet from the ground surrounded by steps leading up to the backs of 4 chanting grey dwarves dressed in dark robes. He looked back at his friends and motioned for them to come up quietly to his position. He then ducked into the room sticking to the left wall to work his way around the perimeter for a better view. The stone was smooth and unlike above there were carvings in it depicting scenes. He ran his hand along the side of a

cow being led by a young maiden to a nearby stream. He shook his head, no time for sight seeing even if it was being done by his hands.

“We beseech you. You the true queen of the void please answer our call and grant us your blessing! Dark Queen hold this unbeliever in your stony gaze! May he taste the poison air from your breath! The elements at your command! My beautiful Queen!” Zorin snuck closer bracing behind a pillar. He spied a chest at the top of the stairs he could stay within the shadows of. He made his way crawling up the stairs. Peering around the side of the chest he could see the 5 headed dragon on their robes. He froze. He thought of a night very long ago. “Come child and let me show you the power of my queen.” The dark cleric standing by his hated father’s side. “We shall free you our Queen! You will rule the air again! You will take your rightful place alongside the dark prince together ruling this world and above! HAHAHA!” The dwarf cackled maniacally. His red eyes wide and arms outstretched towards the fire hiding a crooked staff of ash. The altar at the center had a dark black tapestry covering it but something glowed red faintly from beneath the dusty shroud.

A creaking groan came from across the room sounding like a giant steel and stone sliding against each other. Zorin noticed across from him leaning against a pillar was a huge humanoid form. Standing 12 Feet tall and holding a large mace in one hand the 2 heads of the giant turned to each other and snarled out of boredom. Zorin’s heart was racing. He looked back, and could see Benedict at the entrance, slowly sneaking in with Jade and Skotmir. He waved a hand careful to keep it out of sight for them to stop when “KERCHUNK” “AHH!” the trap sprung sending a large metal claw into Benedict’s calf.

“Intruders! Kill them!” “Greta will kill for Dark Queen!” Cordelia paused for a moment as Vix stepped forward “TY-SAH!” 3 spiked balls of energy shot from his hands knocking one of the dwarves back in the air to land lifeless on his back. His experience with the arcane was apparent she smiled glad he was on her side. She pulled a familiar bolt of fire into her palms before releasing it into another cultist. Zorin watched in horror as Greta the Giantess slammed the spiked mace into a pillar barely missing the dodge of Benedict. Benedict spun up and drove his sword into the ground releasing a blast of magical energy slamming into Greta’s exposed flank. “GRAGGH!” Zane and Sophie charged into the fray. Zane had his two daggers drawn while Sophie’s new long sword was over one shoulder with two hands preparing to strike as they met the group of cultists. Sophie dropped the blade into the first dwarven cultist at the shoulder while Zane leapt from the side of the pillar driving one blade into his neck finishing the job. Skotmir roared his battle ax gleamed as he drove it into another cultist sending him on his back in a heap. Zorin ran up to the last cultist as he prepared a spell in a dark language “AK-STAH-FO-NES-TAH!” A bolt of lightning shot out and struck Skotmir hard in the chest. “GARGH!” he yelled shaking his head wildly to clear the biting sparks in his mind. The smell of singed hair snapped him out of it as it burned his nostrils. He saw Zorin drive his rapier into his back dropping him dead almost immediately. “You can’t stop me little man!” Skotmir saw Greta swing wildly at Benedict. “Skotmir send me up!” he turned behind him to see Sophie dashing at him. Without thinking he crouched down offering his hands at the floor. Sophie stepped into them “GRAGGGHHH!!!” and with one huge effort he sent her into the air with her sword raised

aiming to strike the back of the large giantess. “BGRAGH!” Greta roared as the blade cut deep into her back, passing easily beyond the moldy loose leather armor. She dropped to the ground dropping her mace to the floor. Benedict struck with his great sword one of her heads rending it silent. Sophie roared as she picked up the huge mace with both arms bringing it down on the other head in one final stroke.

They panted in that silent room surveying the scene. Sophie smiled and nodded at benedict who smiled back both pleased in how well and fast they worked together.

“Hey everyone, you aren’t going to believe this.”

He was standing next to the altar but had thrown the dusty shroud from it. He had revealed there were bars of a cage under it, made of solid ruby. They pulsed with a deep red light revealing a tall silverhaired elf sitting inside.

“My name is Eralin.”

S2E7 - "A Song in the Dream"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

The monkey chirped from a shoulder both happy for their freedom and in worried anticipation of the liberators. Not completely trusting it shrieked at Cordeliia when she tried to come near.

"Abu doesn't like you. I'm sorry." the cold voice of the tall elf was quiet and hushed. He looked like the rest of the Viridian Elves Vix noted. Though he was much taller standing almost 7 feet, and most elfe and his white hair made him look more like the drow except for his plum colored eyes. "You are taller than most and your hair and eyes are not common to our people. Are you from this place?" The elf known as Eralin turned to Vix and coolly regarded his question. "Noone is truly from here. I've found in my time imprisoned here though many come to visit eventually. Thank you again. I have no idea how many years have passed that I've been trapped in that cage." "Where are you from?" Benedict asked. Eralin paused. "... I was a sailor. My ship was The Nautilus our beloved Captain Dorito fell to a band of pirates to which I myself was imprisoned... Tortured." He paused in silence looking away to the distant hallways darkness. "... bound and ended up here. I know not much else."

Nearby Zorin opened the chest he had hid behind. He easily picked the ancient lock and the large ornate brass clasp easily creaked from its post freeing the lid. It was heavy and dense but free of age and rot despite the layer of dust. He peered inside.

He saw an ornate Rapier. Green and purple gems graced the sterling silver guard and scabbard glinting in the light. He smiled as he lifted it out of its resting place. "That's a gorgeous weapon Zorin." "Thank you." Zorin stared at Benedict for a moment wondering where the voice came from. "...Uh" "Well don't be stupid tell him thank you silly!" "he looked down at the sword. The voice was coming from the sword. He quickly looked at Benedict "Yes.. YES! It is, it is isn't it." "Yeah... well it suits you." "See? We were meant to be together your friend even thinks so! Tee-hehehe!" "did you hear that?" "hear what?" Zorin raised an eyebrow testing the waters. "A voice?" "Just us." "He can't hear me silly! Hehehe!" "I uh..." "you sure you are ok?" Benedict approached him "maybe the air is getting to you I could..." "I'M FINE!" Benedict

paused his eyes raised in mock surprise at his friends outburst. Zane smiled finding humor in the situation. "Thank you. I'm fine... just a bit weary. Uh ...Thanks." He stumbled off to sit on the steps with his new blade.

Benedict shook his head with a chuckle. "Heh, ok old friend. Its ok."

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Skotmir sat at his bedside thinking, looking out the window at the large underground city. The flames rumbled periodically from the towering furnaces sending plumes of fire and smoke rolling into the air. He thought of the Marshalls face when they told her they had completed the journey and what they had found. She looked very disturbed by the news though her voice carried the same stone borne strength he had come to expect of her. "Get some rest. We will meet here in the morning to discuss our King." She had turned away he noted and brushed a cheek. "I fear this has had no effect on his condition."

He yawned noticing the rest of his friends were asleep and flopping back onto the bed he closed his eyes.

>>>>>

Skotmir saw his father in front of the great forgehammer of thier people. To his right was Thotmir his brother. They were identical save for Thotmir's dark blue armor and dirty blonde beard he wore in a single braid. Skotmir never liked the feel of thier traditional armor. Too restrictive. He was a Boar's Head fighter. A berserker who did better without being trapped in armor and was known for the ferocity of the wild boar in battle. They were outcasts. He shouldn't be in this room.

"Thotmir." "My brother why are you here?" Thotmir's eyes studied him uncomfortably. "You left us why do you return?" before Skotmir could reply thotmir raised a hand to silence him. "It matters not... for" he looked away and back at thier father on the huge podium. "We need you not." Thier father stood with his back turned to them. His long white beard braided in the center pulled neatly from the golden crown on his head. He set the Jeweled hammer down on the anvil and turned.

"Yes, Skotmir. Do you know why you are here?" "Father, no I..." "You are here because you need to collect and bring back the last of the 6 winds, and an artifact that has been forgotten in time. You have found 1 of these."

She sat in the chair mending a seam on a white tunic.. "Zane is so hard on his clothes." She chuckled to herself rocking back and forth. "Mama, tell me about the dragons." Lorahana looked at her with a slightly tired expression. She paused then smiled succumbing to the

pleading voice of her child. "Oh all right. What do you want to know?" "Thier magic." Her voice changed she felt control over this dream now, over this memory. "Remember dragon magic is powerful magic. A magic that can pass through time and over great distances. Magic weapons in many ways are forged from dragon magic, whether actually touched by the dragon's spirit or ...just mimicked. At its core Dragon magic can work wonders and even may upon its destruction or freeing... I've heard grant wishes." She stopped rocking and thought for a moment. "It's probably best dragons haven't been seen for so many years, my sweet Cordelia."

He could smell the hot coals before he felt its warm familiar heat. His hand was resting on a rough oak table where a 4 inch red eyed Dragon Turtle carved of pure silver sat. CLANG the great arm brought down the hammer to the red hot iron sending sparks scattering away. The deep voice resonated "What are you looking for benedict?"

"An artifact of power. But thats all we know. "

Erebus laughs as he thrusts the iron back into fire

"I suppose the real question is what do you really need?" Benedict thought for a moment.

Erebus taught him a solution wouldn't be found looking directly for it. Instead he was to find the path or tool and work towards it.

"A light. A light for this terrible darkness."

Erebus nodded as he pulls out a raw jagged iron rod from the table.

"You have always gone through life yearning for something bigger, but you've never found what you had within first... and then find what you are without." He walked towards the work bench

"Take this iron, by itself it seems strong" he thrusts it into a crook of the wooden plank at the end of the bench, "and can do the job in most cases i suppose" he shrugs. In one swift stroke he comes down on it with the hammer shattering the iron. "but under a different force its actually brittle"

"But if you work it in the smoke and fire it becomes steel" he points at the hammer. He then walks over to Benedict who then realises realise how young and small he is, and how big he seems.

"Smoke and Fire are simple things. But they need to get... inside the iron. You are this Iron but now you've found the Fire of the Knightlord have you not?" Benedict nodded a little embarrassed at himself. Erebus patted his shoulder smiling. "Then Benedict, maybe, you have already found what you came for."

In the morning the group all had been sharing the majority of these stories with each other. Each of them in turn were entertained if nothing more by eachother's company. All save for Vix

“Humph, you all never cease to amaze me with your silly stories.” He stated picking up a towel leaving for the bathhouse. “I’ll return shortly then we best get moving to Marshall Ironstone. She doesn’t seem to be one who likes to wait.”

The group sat there in silence for a moment. “I dreamt of my family too.” He sighed knowing he couldn’t keep it from them any longer. “Though not as pleasant...”

I saw a boy about 10 years old sneaking in a room he should not be in. It was a room of oddities surrounding a desk. Brains in jars, small hideous creatures in jars with labels and unpronounceable names. It was me but as if I was out of my body. On the central oak table is a basketball shaped object covered with an embroidered cloth. The object seemed to slightly pulse in size as I approached mesmerised.

“Pooooor motherless Chiiiiild...Coooooommmmeeee heeeerrrrreeeee Child...” it hissed at me. Like steam from ice in boiling oil... and just as dangerous *“..liii Caaaan heIIllp yooooouuu. liiii wiiiiiiii love yooooouuu. Come to my arrrrrms, let me whisper sweetness in your ears and coveeerrr you in kisssses you nevvvver haaaad...”*

As I raised the edge of the fabric I saw a faint green light fading in and out, in and out like the waves on the sea. I had never seen the sea back then... anyways Bands of script appeared in a bright gold contrasted against the green fog within. I wanted to reach in so badly, tears streaming down my face as that voice became sweeter, motherly, familiar. *“Please son, won’t you let me hold you?”*

Footsteps in the hall broke my trance. I gasped and looked around sharply for an escape. None could be found readily as the only way in or out was the hall which the footsteps are coming from. This was my fathers office I was never allowed in my father’s office. I saw a small table next to the cushioned bench used for reading or guests he never had. I dove under hoping it was enough. “With this I can control dragons for you, as you do, my love... The boy? He is weak, nothing like his mother.” The boy begins to sneak out of the room but bumps the table leg causing a small candle to rattle in its mooring. The giant man turns around and as he spins, he notices the boy under the table. With a mighty arm he flips the table up and out of the way, exposing him to the wrath of the much larger man.

His voice may be eerily cool but it rings like thunder, “Ariakan, what have I told you about being in my study?!”

He kicks the child into the bookcase with a single strike, a small cloud of dust from the neglected tomes rising from the impact. He hastily covers the orb with a cloth as he bears down on him with more blows. A call from outside is heard, “hey there! Can Ariakan come out and play?” The knocking at the door causes him to pause. “Go away, Zane!” he booms towards the front door, then turns slowly with a maniacal grin towards the boy, “Ariakan, can’t play today.” Ariakan knows if he even whimpers he will just get more of the same if not worse. He grits his teeth and vows he will never carry his father’s name as a huge fist crashes across his brow. And all fades to black.

Zane was staring at his friend. "I.. I remember that day." he wrapped his arms around him "I'm sorry." "I'm not. He will be the sorry one." Zorin brushed his eye then looked at his best friend. His eyes were gentle and calm as usual. "Thanks buddy. Did you dream of anything?" "Naw, I was out. What about you Jade?"

Jade thought for a moment while restringing her bow. "Yes I had a dream..." she thought looking outside, "But I assure you it was of no importance. It was of another time. Another life."

Cordelia raised an eyebrow but quickly smiled "well lets get moving the Marshall's waiting for us." As they all gathered their things Jade remembered more of her dream. A dream of dear friends from a long time ago.

They are all poised on the ridge astride 6 warhorses overlooking a huge Barbarian army in the green valley below. Their shouts and jeers are muffled at this distance by the gentle breeze. It was spring she remembers.

She sees the village in flames behind the raiders, her keen nose filling with the iron and smoke of the slaughter below. She notices the Raven haired mage at her right turn away as they see a few knights bodies are being paraded around by them. They are celebrating the slaughter they all came to atone for.

"It is just us then?" A knight states plainly turning her head to the black haired leader. Her dirty blonde hair hung gently to the shoulder cut in a short style to ensure mobility in the heavy plate of her torso. A style all but Jade and the Mage were wearing. The knight carried a polearm with a swooping blade at on end. It was.. a glaive Jade remembered, but couldn't remember her name. Or any of their names for that matter. Just that this was her tribe, her family. Next to the mage a tall honey haired man drew his longsword. A sword that looked like the emblem of Crown and Sword they all were wearing on their tunics. On her left the short hickory colored hair of another man blew gently as he prayed. Her heart leapt slightly when his blue eyes fell on her and smiled.

|CAST|

| FERRA IRONSTONE- Nikki Richardson - Top of the Round Podcast - <https://www.totrpodcast.com/>

| LARAHANA SHIELDHEART - Laura Jerdak - <https://www.facebook.com/JessoLaurusRex/>

| EREBUS SHIELDHEART - Jesse Phillips - <https://www.facebook.com/JessoLaurusRex/>

| VIX - Daniel Nichols - The Happy Go Lukky Podcast - <https://happygolukky.com/>

| LORD PALLUS - Ian Wilkinson

| JADE - Kara Danvers

| SKOTMIR - Colten Jannssen

| SOPHIE - Sarah Jenkins

| CORDELIA - Joleen Fresquez

| BENEDICT - Brian Dowling

| ZORIN - Cody Miller

| ZANE - Storm S Cone

| NARRATOR - Mike Atchley

All Music/Production by Mike Atchley

S2E8 - "The Deep King"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

Vix heard the gentle crunch of the autumn leaves beneath his feet, drifting across the smooth white marble of the stairs to the large pillared gazebo. The trees bent of their own accord towards the center almost in their own reverence to the man sitting on the throne. He rises his yellow robes cascading to the floor gently revealing delicate golden embroidery that shrouds him in gentle sunlight.

There is no roof to this structure only the cool autumn sky far above those tall tree tops.

"You are an abomination to our people." he states through clenched teeth. "You practice the magical arts but at your heart are only footsteps from the dark path. For all intents i should have you exiled." He smiles as he remembers his manners. Politely pouring 2 goblets of sweet white wine he smiles passing one to vix. "But.." Regaining his composure he continues.

"Vix, there is a war coming and I believe despite all your faults you can still be a great asset to your people. I charge you to seek out a way to control their dragons. Do this and report back to me. Only then will I allow you to undergo your... Telling at the Ivory Library. I have heard of a competition taking place in a small barony to the north of here in a few days. Possibly this will put you and your cunning on the right path."

His gaze and tone gets eerily serious.

"Those librarians are their own people, but I have kept my place among their council. They will not allow you through their gates unless I allow it." Vix's eyes narrowed and in a shaky tone stated "Yes, Lord Hyro" Hyro turned away looking out into the red and gold forest. "Do not fail me or be discovered for I cannot help you." He stands up and motions for the guards to lead him away.

"Vix." "Uh.. Yes?" Vix looked around. The dream from last night was still haunting him.

"Wewere..." "your friends were just saying space case that you may be familiar with this... symbol." The kings marshall held up a scrap of parchment burned at one end with a dark red S shaped symbol was painted. He scanned the room, embarrassed at his drifting off. They stood

in a granite chamber with a large map of the city on a dark wooden table. Torches lit the walls and the smell of a sweet oil was burning in the large ironwork brazier hanging by thick chains above their heads. Light shone through the iron framework in panes of thick glass that held the clear oil itself.

He looked back at the symbol "It seems as it is just a stylized S shape but what concerns me is the 5 parallel lines cut downward ending in arrowheads." He pointed them out on the paper. "That's a glyph of summoning." they all looked at each other uneasily. "Where did you get this?" "It was found in the King's throne room. The paper style seems to predate my time as Marshall." Cordelia stepped forward with a hand outstretched "May I?" The Marshall handed her the parchment. Cordelia passed a hand gently over it the edges of the parchment glowed with a blue light. "This is blood. But from about a quarter century ago." "Has it been that long?" "What is that Marshall?" "Many years ago the King took a bride. She's different than most of us as she's a wizard. Keeps to herself. But I bet she knows what this means." She spun on her heel snapping her fingers. "That's it. Go to the keep. Find out from her what she knows." They all nodded. "The guards are told to attack anyone crossing the bridge. They will move for you if you carry this emblem." She handed Zane a small 18" square of dark gray fabric with a pair of silver hammers embroidered with hair thin steel thread. She turned on her heel to leave them. She paused at the door, looking over her armored shoulder. "Please... Bring us back our king."

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The smoke billowed up from the molten iron pouring 200 feet below the 60 foot long 10 foot wide stone bridge they stood on. Skotmir knew without looking it was being funnelled partially into the huge furnaces in the city behind them. Similar methods were used in the garnet mountains he called home but nothing this grandiose. Their mines were geared more towards the rich gemstone deposits and riddled with gold and the occasional platinum veins. His people relied on trade for most of their raw iron.

"Seems we have a welcome committee." Benedict gestured cautiously towards the 5 rows of Dwarf Infantry standing at attention on the other side of the bridge. An intimidating sight, the helmets only allowed the white beards and red eyes to show across all 50 soldiers. Short fighting spears with broad bladed heads were held in one hand and tall square shields were secured to the other.

"Here goes nothing." Zane mumbled taking out the cloth almost wincing behind it as it was displayed with 2 hands in front of him.

The officer in the front rank stepped hard to the right standing 90 degrees from their path. "Make way for the Marshall's envoy!"

Zane looked back at Cordelia with a chuckle now a cocky swagger in his step. As they crossed the stony courtyard the soldiers parted allowing the group to enter. Jade looked behind her and saw the ranks close behind them as they walked. They were in perfect form like the flow of a slow moving rockslide.

Upon reaching the 20ft tall twin doors two guards worked a hand wheel on either side which swung them open allowing the group entry into the receiving hall of the keep.

The hall was lit with large iron braziers similar to the ones in the marshalls office hanging from the sides of the 50' tall pillars holding up the domed stone ceiling. The main floor was wide easily spanning the same space as it was tall the burgandy and gold floor runner led up to a raised platform on which was 2 stone thrones side by side. Next to them was a podium draped in a red velvet cloth, something round hidden beneath it.

Eralin saw the guards scattered in the hall look at each other with a look of concern. Their nervous shuffling in the thick plate reverberated in the hall dully. One of them pointed at the Zane, more importantly the small banner he carried. The smell of charcoal in the braziers reminded Skotmir of his home far away. A similar hall he noted, just not as dark. The pillars of his home were encrusted with red gemstones and gilded with gold embellishments.

The figures on the throne became more visible. The dark midnight blue hues of the kings robes cloaked his frail body. His cheeks sunken and the white whiskers of his chin sparse and wiry. The other figure sat in a black and red cloak her hand on a bronze staff cresting in a At the foot of the stairs the 4 kings guards, identifiable by a helmet adorned with 3 deep iron ridges sweeping back came together as a single wall, their spears together in unison.

"Who approaches his royal majesty?" the woman stood up and hissed.

Sophie looked at the guards, "You know you don't want to be here for this." "Zane held up the banner. They lowered their spears and looked at each other. They turned to the king and bowed before marching away in unison.

"Cowards! Come back!" She looked at the imposters.

"You! You worms have no idea who you are playing with!" An unfamiliar pit churned in Benedict's stomach as he noticed the king was trembling in his throne staring at the woman wide eyed.

Her hair was spun platinum, gracing her beautiful ash grey face. Her red eyes began to glow and they noticed her canines began to lengthen as she held her hands outstretched.

"Please Shar. Let us reason with them. Please don't do this..." "Stay down your highness, this is my fight now. They..." Black leathery wings sprouted from her back "GYAHH!...hahahaha! They cannot have you."

"Wield me."

The voice came to Zorin's mind directly but he knew it was the gleaming sword at his side. He took a deep breath and drew the blade from the scabbard. "Yesss. She is deeply evil and not of this world my love, but I can protect you. Keep me close."

Zorin dropped into a defensive stance. The group noticing followed suit drawing their weapons or readying their spells.

"GYAHHH!" she shrieked and lightning forked from her hands at Sophie, Benedict, Zorin and Skotmir. The smell of ozone ran into Zorin's nose as he stood bracing for the impact of the blast. Which never came. He looked and saw Skotmir drop to a knee as Benedict and Sophie were blown backward."GYAHH!" "NOO!" sliding on the stone floor.

Vix and Cordelia both fired off 6 blue fire bolts that slammed into Shar's body "GYAHHHH!" Followed by a volley of well placed arrows from Jade and Eralin's bowstrings "You Dare to oppose me mortals!?"

"FESS-TAH-GOH!" Clapping her hands together a thunderwave rocked out knocking everyone to the ground their ears ringing. Zorin saw Zane braced against the podium's wall below Shar, and out of sight in the shadows. He nodded at Zorin his 2 daggers drawn. Zorin knelt there for a moment. "Get up. Go to her my love."

Zorin began to stand only to be greeted by a blast of blue fire "HEEHAAAAAAAAAAAA!" Shar shrieked as the torrent hit Zorin only to be split around his body by the sword in his hands.

"What?! It can't be!" The king was at the shrouded podium clutching the velvet drape "We must call Beryl!" "Yes! Do it!"

Throwing off the cover revealed a black stone the size of a large melon. It seemed to rotate with a greenish blue glow from deep within.

Zorin froze. The king placed both hands on the stone throwing his head back as the blast of energy filled his being. "BERYL! COME TO OUR AID!"

Eralin felt his heart clutch freezing him in place. He couldn't take his eyes off the glowing stone.

A deep thunderous reverb of giant wings thundered in the hall deafening. A roar rolled through the hall as they all froze in place. A huge serpentine form burst through the doors behind them. Its deep green scales in contrast to the mustard yellow underbelly and webbing of its wings. "No. The green dragons are gone." "Yes, driven from the forests they once ruled by their Silver brothers and sisters." Shar leaned over the railing at Cordelia. "But they are with us the sunless now. HAAAAAAAA" The great dragon Crawled towards the podium. "You called me to your side King of the Iron City?" the King trembled as he raised a single finger at the adventurers "Beryl... Kill them. Kill them all!" "YES GLADLY!" He slammed a claw into the stone leaving a 5 foot indentation where Benedict once was rolling out of its path.

“GYAHHHHH!!” Beryl hissed swinging its tail in a sweep “DOWN!” Vix yelling throwing both himself and Cordelia down feeling the air move as it sailed barely overhead.

Arrows flew from Jade as she deftly dodged another slam of a claw. Sophie struck out at its underbelly driving the sword deep into its flesh. “GYAAH!” the dragon swung to a side wrenching the blade free sending both it and its owner sliding on the floor.

“You cannot leave! You will die here together! HaHaha!” Shar raised her hands summoning a galeforce wind from her slamming into the party who held onto the ground for all the strength they could muster. Behind the Dragon a rift opened up showing a night sky swirling as it was framed in fire. “My love. Look at the King.” Zorin saw a shape appear behind the king with two gleaming daggers out of the shadows. “GYAHH!” Zane struck the king down in a single blow pushing him to the side. “YOU DECIEVER!”

Zane drove the orcish blades into the stone. “GYAHHH!” Sparks flew from the impact sending Zane reeling back. The stone was completely unharmed. Zorin was shocked. “My love send me to your friend.” “YOU! CANNOT STOP US!” Shar shrieked as she stopped the gale. “BERYL NOW!”

Beryl drew in a deep breath. “Now! Let me free you of this world.” Zorin winced slightly before casting the blade in a gleaming arc to his best friend. “ZANE! USE THIS!” Zane gasped the hilt of the sword out of the air and brought it down on the stone. “NOOOOOO!!” “Live well... My love...” “GYAHHHHH!”

A explosion of green light erupted in the room. Sophie felt herself tumbling end over end in the growing darkness as everything went black.

S2E9 - "The Promise"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

Zane coughed as he brought himself to his hands and knees in the room. At least he thought it was a room. Now as he looked it was outside. But felt like he was inside. Inside something. Looking around he saw his friends lying side by side in a covered cart. They all seemed to be sleeping.

There was a campfire. Sitting on a log at the campfire was an armorclad friend he hadn't seen in months. "Keldor. Oh Keldor." he went to him and realised his legs wouldn't obey him. "Ugh, what the..." Zane was anchored to something.

"Oh come on I need to go I have to..."

"Hello Zane." He looked up and saw a man in a black robe the folds held together by a dark grey hempen rope. His face was pale a gaunt but his eyes were familiar. The blazed like two lit sapphires. Zane remembered "I. I haven't forgotton." "I know. I know you haven't." The man stood there staring at him coldly. "Two for one. Was our deal." He walked to the sleeping friends. Brother Benedict and his best friend Zorin. Sweet cousin Cordelia and their new comrades Vix and Skotmir. His heart warmed a little when his eyes fell on Sophie.

"I can't choose 2 of them...just for my selfish life. Please don't make me." The man looked back at him with those blazing eyes. "Zane, it is not their lives we trade." He opened his left hand and in it was 2 coins. "These 2 come from my domain. One was meant to be there as it was her time. The other was imprisoned there by those that wish to change the order of things."

He walked to the clearing of trees and gently placed them on the ground. Sprouting there were the bodies of Eralin and Jade. Lying in the tall soft grass.

"A week Benedict, a long week we thought you were all gone." Benedict was stunned a week?
"The day after the festival we found you all in your rooms in some sort of deep dreamstate.
Nonresponsive. We snuck you all out in this cart to avoid raising any suspicions."

"Wait we? Who's we?"

"That would be me!" A halfling peered from behind Keldor with a big grin on her ruddy cheeks.
"Lorvana Birdsong, minstrel to the stars at your service!" She took a deep energetic bow but
Benedict was still swimming in his head.

"A Week how... we were gone for at least a month captured by the dark elves alone."

"Dark elves?"

"yes, they captured us. Keldor the dark was menacing we found our way to a city of iron with
dark dwarfs that had Zane enslaved and..." Keldor became very quiet his formerly excited face
paled "...Benedict... I have to tell you something about your brother. "

"What... what Keldor?" Benedict jumped up the blood in head rushing to his feet sending his
balance reeling. He grabbed the edge of the cart steadying himself and looked in, to his relief
he saw his friends all beginning to stir. Cordelia, Sophie, Zorin, Vix and Skotmir. But..."where's
Zane?"

"He took ill my boy, one morning I heard him gasp slightly and he was gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes. We buried him by a tree at the Darkovnia country line on the way back to Bemil. His
things are in that pack over there."

"Can. Can I see them...?"

They looked back at the cart. Standing there was Sophie one hand on the cart and the other
on her forehead. Cordelia was getting out of the cart too. "Sophie?" Sophie ignored her friend
walking to the gear. Steadfast in her resolution. "Keldor is it true, Zane is gone?" Cordelia
began to well up. Keldor took in a deep breath "yes, lass he's..."

"He's not... gone."

Sophie held the 2 orcish daggers of Zane's in her hands. Deftly she juggled them across her
knuckles before letting them fly into tree together with expert precision. Precision only Zane had
ever demonstrated. Zorin stumbled to Sophie. "What..." "Zorin do you remember the day we
stole the entire tray of biscuits and fed the dogs behind old man Teller's farm?" Zorin was
stunned "We...We swore to never tell anyone. It..." He walked to Sophie who smiled that
crooked grin of Zane's. "It really is you." "yes. Kind of. I can't explain it. We are one person.
Zane is here with me always... I can hear him.. I feel his..." she paused looking at Keldor "...his
memories. " Sophie felt her arms somewhat surprised Zane's burns from so long ago weren't
there anymore. "Of course" "Keldor you were a knight weren't you?" "I..." "don't lie to me you
were weren't you?" Keldor stood straight. "First of all I wouldn't lie to you. There's no reason to.
Yes for what its worth I was a knight." Benedict looked at him with a look of compassion.
Something terrible lay behind Keldor's kind eyes.. "I...I know you." "Many knew of me. What
does it matter!" Keldor walked away towards where the 2 coins had been placed in Zane's mind.

"Served a Lord once. A kind and just lord and I failed in my duties." Keldor was interrupted by a
groan from the trees.

From behind a tree came a tall elven ranger with pale skin and a monkey on his shoulder stumbling past Keldor "Eralin!" Cordelia shouted running to him. "Jade is right behind me." The name struck through Keldor's core. "What?" He knew someone with a nickname of Jade but that was long ago. His heart was tight gripped in his chest half hoping for the impossible on a day where the impossible became reality. He suddenly smelled Elderflowers and Honey. he turned to see another elf scout. Her leather armor had thin silver work cascading in gentle knotwork around the Sword and Crown emblem at the center of her chest. His hand went to the tattered shroud at his own chest. Her fire red hair was ablaze in the sunlight illuminating her face. A cuff of a horse's head on one pointed ear as she looked at him with a blend of confusion and genuine recognition.

His face white and his hands trembling he reached towards her with tears streaming down his face.

"My love is it really you?"

"I... I know you.

Benedict's eyes grew wide as Sophie threw her arms around an open mouthed Zorin. Cordelia covered her face gasping as they realized who it was.

"Is it you? Elloveve?"

S2E10 - "The 6 Winds"

-Zane - Storm

-Sophie - Sarah Jenkins

-Zorin - Cody

-Cordelia - Joleen

-Benedict - Brian

-Captain- Daniel

Bartender Lamprey - Cyan

Elias Silvertounge -

Bar Fly - 1

Player 2 - Sam weigel

Player 3 - piper

Jessica - Maddy Searle - Prickwillow

Elloveve could smell the battlefield smoke over 2 decades ago. The scorched grass, wood and peat held a smell that hung in the air and clung to her memories.

They are all poised on the ridge astride 6 warhorses overlooking a huge Barbarian army in the green valley below. Their shouts and jeers are muffled at this distance by the gentle breeze. It was spring she remembers.

This was her tribe, her family. All wearing armor or tunics emblazed with the same Sword and Crown. The symbol of the Knights of the Glen.

She looks at her leather tunic and the bow in her hand. "I was a scout archer." "You were one of the best." She saw the jade bracelet on her left hand "hmm. You called me jade. Because of my bracelet." Keldor nodded. She closed her eyes and in her memory looked next to her at the young man in shining silver armor gilded with gold, a deep blue emblem on his chest matching his eyes. "You were our Paladin, our beacon of the faith." "Yes. I... I was." she chuckled at something "What?" "Hehehe you were clean shaven back then." " Heh, yes I was that too." he said stroking his bearded chin.

There's a village in flames behind the raiders, her keen nose filling with the iron and smoke of the slaughter below. She notices the Raven haired mage at her right turn away as she sees a few knights bodies are being paraded around by them. They are celebrating the slaughter they all came to atone for. She is wearing white robes embroidered with flames at the cuff and a red and orange crown and sword wreathed in flames on her chest. "She was an evoker. A fire mage." "Yes, can you remember her name?" She opened her eyes and looked at Cordelia. She looked so much like her. A smile crept across her face "Lora. Lora-hana Shieldheart." Keldor smiled next to her holding her hand in his. They were sitting next to the stream by

themselves. Everyone was giving them time to reunite Keldor helping her with her memories before everyone else tried sharing stories to jog her memory. He nodded. "Yes. She wasn't a Shieldheart yet but she might as well have been. Do you see our brother next to her? He had a moustache. Can you tell me his name?" She closed her eyes to focus

On the other side of Lorahana was a strong man. His blonde hair hung to the shoulder and a long moustache was beginning to form on his upper lip swooping down from the corners of his mouth to his chin. His armor was intricately carved and stamped with symbols of the order. He was a decorated warrior for being so young. He drew his longsword at his side. "They will pay this day. I swear it" His unmistakable booming voice rang out from his huge chest. "Erebus. Erebus Shieldheart." "yes." "my memory is hazy, i can't seem to remember the others." "no, no i'm sure you can, close your eyes Elloveve. Hear them. Hear them and remember."

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"It is just us then?" A knight states plainly turning her head to the black haired leader. Her dirty blonde hair hung gently to the shoulder cut in a short style to ensure mobility in the heavy plate of her torso. A style all but Jade and Lorahana were wearing. The knight carried a polearm with a swooping blade at one end. "It was.. a glaive" Elloveve remembered, a glaive of the winds. "Her name was...Elona" "Elona you... are correct." A black haired man at the front surveyed the battleground carefully. "Lucilius. Lucilius was his name."

Lucilius turns to Elona to answer, the venom in his voice barely hidden behind his stoic stance "Yes, Bemil refuses to acknowledge this threat to our people. It is now up to us."

"Good I like it that way" she responds gripping her glaive tightly with a smile.

"As do I my sister," the raven haired mage touches the tattoo of the sword on her arm, a blade of pure orange flame leaping to her hand.

"I agree, less bureaucracy to deal with" Erebus states, "Keldor, what say you old friend?"

"Truly the Knight Lord is with us this day." Keldor says smiling at Elloveve

"May we ride like the wind." Elloveve answers

"We shall." Lucilius smiles before gripping the reins tightly in his left hand drawing a longsword with his right. Holding it aloft he cries "To Glory!"

As one force the 6 winds rode not only into battle that day but into songs and legends. They liberated that town and led the army to push back the bandits from the nation of Trull away from the former stronghold of Garnet Keep.

"I remembered!" Elloveve threw her arms around Keldor who squeezed her tight in his arms. Happy she remembered herself, though hesitant and worried about her remembering too much. Would he be ready to walk that path with her again. "Yes yes you did sweet Elloveve." he groaned slightly standing from sitting on the log for so long. The blood rushing to his armored legs and feet. His armor was blackened with soot and dirt she thought. Nothing like her memory of him and the gleaming shine back then. "Come lets join the group I'm sure they have tales to spin as well." He smelled the air "mmm not to mention i am getting a bit hungry" He said

smiling leading her back to the savory smell of the venison, carrots, parsnips and potatoes slow cooking in the iron pot on the fire.

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Zorin was taking his turn talking about growing up in port L For Elloveve laughing as she remembered their good times. “So then she throws the spoon at me knocking over the glass vase she was telling me to stay away from!” Everyone was laughing. It was so good to see everyone together. Cordelia sat next to her Elloveve’s arms wrapped around her long lost friend.

Elloveve chuckled before a wave of memory hit her. “Oh.. Wait.” Everyone went silent “What is it?” “I remember being on the roof surrounded by fire.” Sophie tensed up remembering the escape from Port L’For. “I remember you all escaped and I was so relieved.” They all nodded and Benedict rose to put a hand of comfort on her shoulder when he saw a familiar glint of metal around Eralin’s neck. He stopped and stared wide eyed. It was a Dragon turtle. The same exact design as the one adorning the sword of Lord Pallus only this one had icy blue eyes.

“Where did you get that?” He stood trembling “This i’ve had as long as i can remember why?” eralin clutched it as he coolly responded. Keldor rose “What is it Benedict?” he paused “this... is an interesting design.” He gestured for permission to examine it further. Eralin stood his huge 7 foot frame dwarfing even the tall Keldor. Keldor passed it in his hand. “Mithril Silver. Impressive.” he turned it and saw the forge mark a reversed E and S entwined. His eyes grew wide. “Thats my father’s mark.” Keldor shocked stared at Benedict “Wait, your father had a mark like this. Tell me, and tell me true was his mark like this only reversed as if in a mirror?” Keldor was shaking his hands gripped benedicts tunic like a vice the young man feeling a bit threatened.

“Yes. W...Why?”

Keldor froze. His brow furrowed his gentle eyes welling with tears. “My...” he fell to his knees in racking sobs. 20 years of torment hitting him all at once. He wiped a hand across his eyes quickly “SNIFF, I... I Should have known you.” Benedict was stunned. Keldor rose and turned his back to Benedict staring at Elloveve. “Elloveve do you remember that night?”

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For his expert leadership over the next months campaign Lucilius was named the Lord Protector of Garnet Keep. They soon settled behind the ancient granite walls. All 6 of us together continuing to work in harmony with each other. While Lucilius governed wisely and justly from the meeting halls Elona the Fair helped to build the gardens and tend to the great tree in the center courtyard. Erebus set up a blacksmith shop with his now wife Lorahana who was a wonderful seamstress. Elloveve, you were teaching the people how to hunt the forests and fish

the lake behind the keep. I... I taught the word of the Knightlord and his righteous justice from the chapel.

Soon Lucilius and Elona married and had a first boy. He was blonde, and a thrill seeker. Rather reckless as I remember. Like his mother. A few years went by and Elloveve became fond of each other. But my vows would never allow me to love or take a wife. But I tell you all I loved her. Lucilius and Elona had another Son. Dark haired like his father. Quiet, reserved. Never cried really. Shortly thereafter Lorahana gave Erebus the light of his life. A daughter.

I became jealous. Angry. I was cursed with this feeling in my soul. It was a longing, like none I had felt before or ...since.

One night I left my post and went to the stables to ponder and pray. I prayed for guidance, or deliverance. I soon cursed myself and all around me when challenged the law of my order saying these feelings were natural, I shouldn't have to run from them, why... Why couldn't we be happy too?

That night bandit raided the keep sneaking in past my abandoned post. Humans and Orcs set fire to the gardens screams rang out in the night people terrified ran from the keep that no longer protected them. The walls were ablaze. I saw Elona fighting them with her great glaive spinning. Soon she dove into the building's fire disappearing in the blaze.. Lucilius was on the ground clutching his side. A mortal wound's blood pouring between his fingers. "Keldor... my old friend." "I.. I have failed you my lord I..." "Shhh... not now dear friend. Whatever you did, I forgive you. May the Knight and Maiden watch you now..." "My Lord? Lucilious? I... Don't leave me... please..." I lost everything at that moment, My lord, my faith and my mind. I drew my sword and dove into the battle with a vengeance. I cut everything down I could find that wasn't one of our people.

Their cries fueled my hatred and anger. After what seemed an eternity we were overrun and even in my state I knew it was time to flee. I lost my Elloveve, my friends and my home. I mounted my horse's back and rode into the night down the high stone bridge and the mountain path never to return to Garnet keep again. My shame knew... No bounds. I left the knighthood and spend the last 20 years as a mercenary and sword for hire.

Until now.

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Keldor stood in front of a stunned Benedict. Drawing his great sword he kneeled to Benedict.

"I pledge to you Benedict, son of Lucilius and Steward of Garnet Keep you will regain your birthright."

EPILOGUE

His black and red boots echoed as he ascended the cold black stone steps. His hands unconsciously flexed his forearms pulsing under the strain. He pulled his bright orange hair back from his dark face red eyes glowing like embers. "You called me?" he almost spat it out. He was no servant. "Yes... Make the troops ready we begin our march tomorrow. In 2 weeks time we should reach the Celestine Tower in the center of the great glenn valley." Lord Pallus stood up claspng his hand around the dragon turtle pommel of his great sword its red eyes twinkling.

"Yes. I will do as you wish." he turned to walk away.

"One more thing." he sneered, "The blue dragons will lead the first sorties." Pallus took some delight in seeing the look of disappointment on his servants face.

"Fine."

"We will be victorious! Won't we... Fury."

Fury growled deeply as he turned on his heel to descend the stairs the dragon's blood in his veins pulsing with rage.