

Screenplay

Written by Nicholas J Pritchard

PROLOGUE

As a female voice speaks, a pictographic display unfolds showing the events she narrates, images appearing as they are drawn in ink on a parchment like surface.

ALYSSA

In the beginning, there was only darkness, and the races of our world struggled for survival in the cold depths of its grasp.

Creatures roamed the shadows, dark entities that killed and destroyed without mercy, slowly razing the world like parasites until it stood on the brink of destruction.

As a desperate last hope, those races that remained forged the Guardians, elite soldiers to combat the encroaching darkness and protect what little remained of our world. For centuries they waged war against the shadows, driving them back repeatedly, every victory bringing hope to those that remained, but in truth it was a losing battle.

As the Guardians numbers dwindled, and the fighting became more desperate, the great Elders turned to the heavens and begged for something to save them.

It was then that the Beacon appeared before them, casting its radiant light across the land and banishing the darkness. From those that would follow it it created the Church, and in it's most trusted the first Ascendants, Knights who would use its power to fight in its name.

With the darkness gone, the time of the Guardians passed, and a new era of peace and prosperity was ushered in under the church. Yet with this new found freedom came a dire warning.

Should light fade from the world, should the Beacon ever fail, then only one thing is certain. The

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ALYSSA (cont'd)
Darkness will return, and it
shall consume us all.

INT. BEACONS HOPE

The sound of footsteps echo down a long narrow corridor, resonating off the polished marble of the walls and floor. Several heavily armed soldiers, each garbed in silver amour trimmed with golden streaks, march in procession at a steady even pace. In each of their hands lies a heavy iron chain, and these chains are bound to the man they hold captive between them. He is disheveled, beaten and broken, and he often staggers as he is unable to match the guards pace with his damaged feet, falling to the floor only to be dragged roughly to his feet by the chains around his neck. As they near the end of the corridor they approach a large set of iron doors, ornately carved with intricate complex designs marked by elegant runes. These start to glow a pale golden colour as the soldiers approach, illuminating the majesty of the wrought iron tapestry that coats the door.

A man steps round from behind the procession, garbed in golden armour that radiates the same light as the door. The other guards each bow their head in respect as he walks past, his stride confident and steady, head raised high. As he draws level with the prisoner, his gaze wanders only for a moment to stare at the wretched cargo they escort and the two make eye contact, the prisoners gaze filled with hatred for the man walking past him. With a smirk the soldier breaks the momentary contact and continues towards the doorway. He raises a hand garbed in an ornate gauntlet, and places it gently against the doors before applying the slightest of nudges.

The Cathedral of Solace fills with the shrieks and groans of the heavy doors, pushed with such force that they are nearly torn from their frames. They swing wildly for a moment before coming to settle with a long grating noise as the iron drags across the somewhat harsher stone of the cathedral, a deathly silence swiftly following. The procession, led by the Golden Knight marches forward into the hall, and the prisoner takes what little time he has to gaze around him at the cavernous hall that makes up the Cathedral.

Thick stone walls composed of large blocks arc upwards to impossible heights, eventually meeting in the arches of a great dome lined with a complex mechanism that stares down upon the congregation below. Tiered seating sits in layers carved out of the walls themselves, each tier filled to the brim with various figures of multiple races and genders, whose incessant whispering and chattering fills the cavernous hall at the sight of the prisoner.

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For all its ornate beauty though, the Cathedral seems dull and basic compared to the ten seats that sit at its center, arcing from the ground as if they were trees grown directly from the stone. Each glows with a radiant aura that only serves to magnify the beauty and delicate craftsmanship of the chairs which are coated in depictions of great battles, artistic feats, and other historical moments of note. At the summit of each chair a large golden hand arcs to embrace those that sit upon them, serving as thrones. It is in these chairs that the Ten Elders of the Church sit, garbed in white robes hemmed with a golden fabric that shares the radiance found across the church.

Though of varying race, age and gender, each member of the Elders sits with an air of distinguished grace that belies both great wisdom, but also great power. At their head sits two members who's chairs sit slightly higher than the rest, an elderly man and woman, each bearing a golden medallion that drapes loosely from both their necks on a thin chain. Before them sits a marble podium, no less ornate than the rest of the church, but whereas most of the imagery is radiant, those on this podium speak only of horror and desperation. Several clawed and distorted humans coil around the base of the podium, reaching upward as if trying to ascend from some dark fate, their marbled faces trapped in constant screams of terror. Heavy iron rings hang from several of their mouths, and it is to these the mans chains are bound as he is forced to kneel upon the podium.

The old man, Cain, casts his gaze across the assembled congregation before him and frowns slightly, displeased by the composure and noise of the various church members. He lets out a low polite cough for silence, but it is drowned out by the general ambiance so that all but the woman next to him are deaf to the gesture. Displeasure once again marks his otherwise placid face, and he reaches into the sleeve of his robe, producing a small wooden hammer, frayed at the edges from years of use. He raises it slightly before tapping it with some force against the finger of his chair that makes up the arm-rest, and a shock wave of sound emanates from him deafening everyone in the room causing several to fall to their knees in pain. When the ringing fades only silence remains, and Cain nods in approval. He turns his attention to the man bound before him and his guard, motioning to the Golden Knight to step forward.

As he does so, the Knight takes careful measure to bow his head before each elder in turn, his demeanor somewhat respectful yet belying some underlying passivity, as if he does not truly mean what he does. Cain waits until the Knight has finished paying his respects before clearing his throat, causing several of the audience members to flinch fearing another shock wave is imminent.

CAIN

Thank you Dalamar, for bringing this matter before us so swiftly. I speak not only for my myself but for the entire council when I say you have done our church proud.

Dalamar gives a short nod, but refrains from removing his helmet so that the majority of his face is obscured. He turns to march back towards his men who stand at attention ready to follow and is about to pass the podium when Cains voice causes him to slow,

Though next time please remember we are a Church of Light, not savages. We cannot pass judgment if those on trial die from the treatment you and your men see fit.

Dalamars head turns slightly, his mouth curling into somewhat of a concealed sneer. He pauses for a moment, before nodding once more and continuing to march onwards.

Cains gaze follows Dalamar for some time before his eyes flicker back to the prisoner. He takes a moment to asses the bedraggled man before him, before once again clearing his throat to speak.

Hieron Swallowfall, you are bought before this council on the following charges. Treason against both the Church and the Beacon, aiding and abetting those that would harm the church, and interference with the ascension ceremony.

The audience launches into an uproar of catcalls and screams for the mans death, many gaining a look of instability, insanity as they gaze down upon a man they have already judged as guilty. Cain once again raises his hammer, and the audience immediately falls silent in fear.

Is there anything you would say to defend yourself?

SAVAR

This is a waste of time, I have more important and interesting matters to attend to. Humoring any notion this heathen could put forward is just delaying the inevitable.

The outburst comes from a large overweight Elder two seats down from Cain, who lays back in his seat with the leg of meat clenched in one hand. His rolls of fat are marked with beads of sweat, and as he finishes speaking he takes

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a large bite out of the leg, tearing the meat from the bone with the ferocity of a starving animal. Drips of juice roll down from him onto his robes, vanishing as they touch the white material. He scratches his small beard with his free hand and is about to continue when the elderly woman next to Cain interrupts with a sharp bark.

HELENA

Enough!

Her gaze is one of cold fury and unquestionable power, and Savar visibly shrinks back into his chair as they make eye contact, his eyes flickering to the hunk of meat in his hands as he tries to avoid her wrath. Helena composes herself once more, flicking a strand of hair that had fallen free back into place.

Now, let us hear what the accused has to say.

The prisoner raises his head slightly, his bedraggled knotted hair hanging loosely around his shoulders and face, concealing his mask of hatred. He spits on the floor next to him, some blood flecking the otherwise clear saliva.

HIERON

I have very little to say, knowing that my sentence has already been decided.

He raises his head to look around the Cathedral at the audience, trying to make eye contact with as many as possible.

Something is not right within this Church, it hasn't been for a long time. You all sit here and look down on me in judgment, well I look back at you. I look back and I see the corruption that has been seeping amongst us for centuries, the punishment for us all being so blind in following that... that thing.

His eyes meet Cains, and he gazes definitely up at the Elder who sits staring down at him.

If you continue down this path, you will lose everything, and this world will pay the price for the decisions a bunch fools with the delusion of power made.

Cain sits back in his chair and sighs. His face is weary, marked with lines that show great age but also wisdom. He runs his hand through the long white beard that hangs heavily from his head, and stares down at the man who holds his gaze steadily. Eventually he turns his head to

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Helena, who sits with a mask of passivity on her face as she stares down at the broken man before her, her silver hair framing her face to give her an almost menacing air. She raises her gaze slightly to meet his, and he nods to her.

HELENA

Will any others speak on the
behalf on this man?

Silence.

Then there is only one course of
action for one so blinded by evil
that he would betray our light.
Hieron Swallowfall, for crimes
against the Church and Beacon,
you are sentenced to
purification.

Hierons head drops once more and he lets out a small chuckle of conceit. Both Helena and Cain reach for their medallions, and hold them cupped in their hands as if in prayer. Above them, the mechanism in the ceiling begins to stir, the roof shifting and reforming as a great steel gateway behind the rock begins to grind open in a spiral. The crowd begins to cheer and writhe in elation at the sentence, and even Savar leans forward in his seat, chewing on the leg in glee as he awaits the spectacle.

HIERON

Good luck kid...

With a final click, the Gateway in the ceiling opens fully, radiant light pouring forth from within. The crowd lets out a final cheer before it is drowned out by a deafening roar as a stream of condensed golden flame arcs down from the opening onto the podium incinerating Hieron in seconds, his screams lost to the bellowing of the flames. Many in the chamber turn away, shielding their eyes from the bright light, but not Cain and Helena. They sit staring into the fire, their eyes glowing the same colour as the flame, and whilst Cain watches with something resembling sadness, Helena watches with glee, a warped smile cracking the otherwise passive face.

EXT. SELION MARKET MID-AFTERNOON

A hooded figure slips through the streets of Selion, a small rogue town on the outskirts of a large jungle. The woman clenches the hood around her face, eyes darting nervously as she moves carefully through the large crowds that swarm the market, narrowly avoiding several of the more boisterous and large individuals that engage in aggressive marketing strategies. Dressed in a simple brown robe she fades easily into the background of the bustling crowd, her form unnoticed against some of the more garish and exotic individuals that roam the streets nearby.

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As she moves through the busy streets, she occasionally stops at some of the more hospitable stalls to ask their vendors for directions, and many of them happily point her to the right area, though some are less friendly, a tooth filled maw snapping dangerously close to her face as she approaches the wrong stall.

After a short while she arrives at her destination, a run-down inn with a wooden sign hanging from a single chain above the door, the name and symbol of the inn long lost to constant weathering and damage caused by both the tropical environment. She takes a final cursory glance over her shoulder, before darting into the inn through a warped wooden door. Across the street in a small dark alley, the silhouette of something less than humanoid slowly emerges from the shadows, a long tongue flickering out in her direction before the creature darts back into the darkness.

INT. SHATTER RANK INN

As she passes through the doorway, Alyssa finds the inside of the inn to be even less pleasant than its exterior implied. Warped floor boards jut like rocks from various points in the floor, a collage of broken tables and stools leaning awkwardly around them amongst shards of broken glass and pools of wasted ale. Several patrons sits at the few tables still intact, and as Alyssa takes her first step into the Inn all eyes turn to her, each judging and assessing the newcomer for their own personal means. Alyssa nervously looks around, before clutching her hood closer to her head and walking quietly forward towards the bar, the patrons eyes trailing her with every step she takes.

As she nears the bar, a large woman with an eye patch that poorly conceals a past injury turns to stare down at her, taking large swigs from a wooden flagon. Alyssa nods in greeting to the fearsome woman, only to have her spit at her feet, lazily wiping the trail of drool that now hangs from her face and flicking it across the room. The saliva hits a short bearded man who sits quietly reading from a map, and with a roar he upturns his table and leaps upon the woman who has turned to depart. A struggle ensues that quickly moves outside the inn, the two brawlers surrounded by a small crowd of revelers to cheer and goad them on.

Alyssa backs up against the bar trying to stay as far away from the fight as possible, deftly dodging a couple of wild blows before the fight moves outside. She exhales a sigh of relief and takes a seat upon one of the worn bar stools, taking care not to impale herself on a loose splinter. The bartender, a gruff looking man with a large belly walks up to her and they have a small conversation in secret, only muffled whispers audible, before he eventually shrugs at Alyssa, his face masked with

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displeasure. He turns and walks away leaving her to look defeated at the bar.

With another sigh she dismounts the stool and leaves the inn, taking care to avoid the man and woman who's brawl has once again moved inside much to the fury of the bartender.

EXT. SELION MARKET

The bright light of the late afternoon sun momentarily blinds Alyssa as she leaves the dark and dreary bar, and she raises a pale arm to shield her eyes, the robe falling back somewhat to reveal an ornate golden bracelet with a complex seal adorned at the center, clasped around her right wrist. She takes a few steps blindly forward before she collides with an enormous figure before her, staggering back a few steps. A loose cobblestone takes her feet from under her, but a rough large hand grabs hers before she can fall. As it draws her nearer, the figure is revealed to be a Booldar, a race of humanoids composed entirely from the same hard unyielding rock as the mountains they call home. A large split runs down the Booldars face, carving his features in two and only adding to the imposing amount of visible fractures and shards that coat what little of his body is visible through the rough leather armour he wears.

CRAGGAR

Well well well, what do we have here...

With two fingers the size of Alyssa's forearm he reaches over and pulls back her hood, revealing her face. She is a woman of relative beauty, neither stunning nor ugly, with a crop of short black hair that sits fairly close to her scalp. She wears no make-up, and sweat and grime line her features, a sign of the journey she has traveled.

Alyssa tries desperately to pull away from Craggar, pulling at the fingers around her fore-arm in a desperate bid for freedom.

Whad'ya think boys? She a keeper?

Alyssa sees that behind the Booldar stands a pack of what seem to be mercenaries, various men and women garbed in similar armour to Craggar wielding various weapons. They cheer at his words, several wolf whistles and cat-calls carrying over the ruckus. The spectacle begins to draw quite a crowd, and several passers-by stop to stare at the events as they unfold.

ALYSSA

Please, let me go, I've done nothing..

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CRAGGAR

Oh you've done nothing? As far as I recall it was you that walked into me.. that's rude if nothing else missy.

ALYSSA

I don't have much money or anything of value... please just let me pass.

CRAGGAR

Nothing of value? Whats this then eh?

He holds up the fore-arm with the golden bracelet, one of his fingers carefully tracing the seal embedded in it.

Seems this might be worth a pretty penny to the right buyers.

Alyssa starts to panic as his gaze wanders to the bracelet, and she struggles violently in his grip causing Craggar to laugh mockingly.

ALYSSA

I said, let me go!

He lets go of her hand, and she flies backwards from the built up force, landing in a heap on the ground. Alyssa stares up defiantly at Craggar who smirks as he pulls a small roll of parchment from a pouch around his waist. He makes a great show of unrolling it, pursing and slapping the two rocky edges that pass as his lips, gesturing dramatically to his men much to their amusement.

ALYSSA

I'm not worth anything to you.. just leave me alone.

CRAGGAR

Oh on the contrary.. Priestess. I think you'll find you're of great worth to me.

He leans in with a wicked grin, and reveals the parchment to be a wanted poster, embroidered in golden ink and several sigils, that clearly shows a picture of her face.

You see, I'm a fan of the church's gold, helps me and my boys stay... well you might say comfortable. And the church, they're offering a hefty sum for the return of their sweet, innocent priestess.

He runs a finger through a curl of her hair, drawing his face close to hers. As he does so she grabs a loose stone

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from the floor beneath her and smashes it into the side of his face the grinding of the stone leaving a visible white streak across Craggars face. As he recoils she turns and scrabbles to get to her feet only to be dragged back by her robe, receiving a sharp crack to the face from Craggar who stands over her, sending her sprawling to the floor below him.

Hmmpph... got some fight in ye.
We'll soon take care of that.
After all, it's a long journey to
Beacon's Hope, we've got time to
have our fun.

He motions to two men stood behind him and they start to move round to pick Alyssa up, but before the first step is taken a resonating clang shock waves out from Craggar as a metal helmet collides squarely with his face. For a moment time slows down before the force of the impact throws Craggar clean from his feet, across the street and through the walls of the next several buildings in his path. The figure attached to the helmet rolls past the collision with ease, spinning to stab two men with what seem like long black blades attached to a spinning gyroscope. He then twists out of this, the weapons shifting in his hands to form pistols before he fires two shots into the men adjacent to him. Alyssa stares up at her savior, a man garbed in heavy yet well-fitted armour lined with gears and various other mechanisms that work furiously with every movement, seeming to flow and react to the man. His head is concealed by a helmet comprised in a similar way that is directly connected to the suit of armour, only the lower half of his face clearly visible. In his hands the spinning weapons shift rapidly between both blades and pistols, and it is with these that he engages the large crowd of mercenaries in front of him. He glides effortlessly through the men dispatching them one by one with ease as he either shoots or slices anyone that gets in his way, his movement so fluid and graceful that it seems as if he walks on the air itself.

At one point during the fight, the woman from the inn, a broadsword in her hand, manages to get behind him and leaps into the air, ready to strike down with a two handed swipe designed to remove heads from shoulders. She barely reaches the peak of her jump however before a ball of incandescent green light slams into her, ripping a hole through her chest before bouncing off into the melee, dispatching several other mercenaries with similar ease. It bounces around the armored man, aiding him in his fight before coming to rest at his feet revealing its true form as an ethereal wolf, leaping back into the fray with a snarl.

Though no one man presents a problem to either combatant, a chameleonic creature leaps from the alleyway it earlier lurked in and engages the man with a pair of sharp blades that hook back along its arms. Constantly shifting between

colour states so that it is invisible, the man clashes violently with the creature and the combat is vicious and furious and both try to get the upper hand, the man trying to block the invisible blows aimed at him. Eventually he manages to kick the creature back a fair distance, and slamming his two weapons together creates a long bow which the wolf leaps in-to, allowing him to fire a volley of green bolts that seek the chameleon as it flees, eventually striking their target and detonating, killing the creature.

The explosion wakes Craggar, who clutches for his head only to realise that half of his face has been blown clean off, shattered down the split. He looks about in a frenzy and sees the man continuing the fight through the holes in the several buildings he was knocked through. With a roar he grabs a great axe the size of a normal man from his back and charges towards the combat.

The armored man, manages to leap away from the fray, and stands steady taking a deep breath whilst the wolf holds away the remaining mercenaries. Through vibrations that pulse through the ground he senses Craggars onslaught, each footstep sending a ripple of vibrations towards him. The man bolts towards him and they meet in a furious clash of blades and the man glides under a heavy swing of Craggars great axe. He darts all around the Booldar, dodging every blow whilst simultaneously dealing damage to the giant. After dodging a swing that nearly cleaves him in half, the man crouches to the ground and the gears in his armour go into overdrive, glowing red from the heat produced.

With a single punch, the man knocks Craggar into the air, before slamming him back into the ground a few meters ahead with a bone crunching crash that creates a small impact crater with Craggars body. Craggar staggers to his feet and swings his axe, only to have it knocked into the air by the man who follows up with a volley of blows with his blades that tear the Booldar apart. With a final groan Craggar reaches for the man, who catches the great-axe as it falls to the ground again, swinging it to behead the Booldar who falls to the floor alongside his weapon.

The man only pauses for a second before he runs back towards Alyssa, who now stands at the side of the battle-field staring wide-eyed at the carnage before her. As the wolf dispatches a final mercenarie, knocking him backwards into a well, he runs to join his master just as the man grabs Alyssa by the arm, but is separated by the swarming crowd causing it to let out a low whine. Alyssa tries to utter..

ALYSSA
Thank... Thank yo...

But it is lost as the man pulls her after him, and both run into an alley just off the main street. He swiftly leads her down the dimly lit narrow passageway, deftly dodging any debris that litters the floor whilst dragging Alyssa with him. Before she can gain her wits enough to try to speak again, he flings open a sewer grate in the side of one of the buildings and jumps down, landing with a sickening squelching noise as he makes contact with the grime below. Alyssa hesitates, looking back in the direction they ran from, weighing up whether she could escape back onto the streets, but the sound of approaching armour clanging and guardsmen shouting quickly persuades her otherwise. With a deep breath she jumps down into the sewer, the grate swinging shut behind her with a clang.

INT. SELION SEWER

Something small, furry and slimy runs across Alyssa's leg as she lands, causing her to let out a small scream of fright which is quickly muffled as the man places his gauntlet over her mouth. He motions with one finger for her to be silent, and looks back up at the grate. They stand like this for a few minutes, straining to hear the surface activity over the rushing of the sewer water, but when there is no sound of pursuit the man lets out a sigh of relief and releases Alyssa's mouth.

He looks up and down the sewer line for a moment, before letting out a short sharp whistle that causes Alyssa to flinch, the sound echoing down the small cavernous tunnels. For a moment nothing happens, and then with a bark the wolf leaps through the sewer wall next to Alyssa causing her to start. It bounds around playfully before trying to jump up at its master, falling through him in confusion as it fails to solidify in time. It rolls through the dirty water carried by its momentum before coming to a stop a few feet on, sitting with a glazed look on its face, tongue hanging out as it happily pants. Alyssa lets out a small sincere chuckle at the spectacle, and the man smirks before motion to Alyssa to follow him.

They walk in silence for what seems like an hour, Alyssa carefully trying to avoid the waste and strange formations of sludge in the sewer for the first few minutes, before giving up entirely and just wading like the man. The wolf bounds in and out of walls playfully, coming up to Alyssa and sniffing her warily, walking beside her at a distance as if judging her. Eventually she manages to pet him on the head, finding it surprisingly solid to the touch, and it happily wags its tail in approval, giving her a slimy lick before running to catch up with its master.

Eventually they emerge at an exit to the line on the outskirts of the city, the sewage pouring into a foul smelling pool at the base of one of the city walls. The two take care to climb down the large vines that cover the

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surrounding walls, avoiding having to wade through the pool as much as possible. When they finally set foot on the floor both are exhausted, sweat pouring from them both though Alyssa attempts to conceal it somewhat. When she has caught her breath, she takes a moment to take in her surroundings, a dense, vast jungle teeming with plant and animal life stretching before her, small bugs glowing as they lazily drift from tree to tree. The man sets off into the undergrowth, his blades carving a path through the plant life, and Alyssa hesitates, unsure if she should follow until the wolf bounds back and forth as if waiting for her, refusing to move until she follows.

EXT. SHADOWVINE JUNGLE - EVENING

The man walks a short distance ahead of Alyssa, cutting his way through the dense undergrowth with relative ease, only a few thicker vines or full trees providing any obstacle. Occasionally he stops to listen for something as if hearing some unknown animal walking nearby, but shrugs it off and continues walking. Wolf happily pads along between the two, occasionally stopping to glance back at Alyssa who struggles to make it over some of the more challenging terrain, her weak physique denying her the raw pushing power the man possesses. They eventually come to a small clearing in the jungle, a large fallen tree having taken out a lot of the surrounding foliage in its descent, and the man signals for them to stop. Alyssa, exhaustion having caught up with her, collapses with little grace onto a large rock that juts from a corner of the clearing. She takes a moment to catch her breath, wiping the sweat from her brow, before she looks up at the man who had begun building a fire, gathering tinder and larger logs from the fallen tree to feed what is already a small yet struggling flame.

ALYSSA

I can't thank you enough for what you did. You saved my life.

The man shrugs, only sparing a brief glance to Alyssa before turning back to his fire and continuing to build it. The fire splutters at the dampness of some of the tinder, the flame refusing to build any higher. There is an awkward silence for a moment as Alyssa thinks of what to say next, if anything. Eventually she musters up the courage to try again, but in her hubris the words are blurted out in a rush.

ALYSSA

Whats your name? Where are you from? How did you learn to fight like that?

She covers her mouth in embarrassment, staring at the man expecting him to react badly to her sudden inquisition, but he merely continues to try to build the fire. Silence falls again for several minutes, and the priestess looks up at the sky, night having fallen during their journey.

There are no stars, only a large white moon that stares down upon the two, as if personally spectating the awkward conversation. Alyssa sighs, and the wolf pads over to her, nuzzling against one of her hands. She pats him on the head, ruffling the green luminescent fur much to his pleasure and he rolls over onto his back, waving his legs in the air in such a strange fashion that it causes Alyssa to snort with laughter. She looks up from wolf and see the man staring at them both, a smirk on his face. When he catches her staring at him he quickly turns back to his work, and after a few seconds the fire lights successfully, quickly feeding off the fuel to become a reasonably sized roaring flame.

GAEN

My name is Gaen.

He sits back against the stump of the fallen tree, his armour creaking as he adjusts himself to a comfortable position.

And that's Wolf.

He points to the wolf who flips round onto his paws again, looking quizzically at its master. He pads over to him and starts to slobber on his face, to which Gaen objects greatly but is unable to do anything about as his hands pass through the wolf. Eventually Wolf pads off leaving Gaen to wipe the slobber from his face and helmet, flinging the remains into the fire where it evaporates with a hiss. Alyssa stifles another laugh, covering her mouth with her hand and proceeding into a poorly concealed cough when she is noticed.

She reaches into her robe and pulls out a small worn looking pouch tied by a simple drawstring, which she opens over the stone revealing a small amount of food, some dried meat, bread, and several stale looking and possibly hazardous vegetables. She looks uncomfortable and awkward as she picks up the small offering, holding it out to Gaen.

ALYSSA

Please, take it. I know it's not much but..

He raises his hand silencing her.

GAEN

I'm not hungry, but thank you.
It's... very nice of you to offer.

Just as he finishes speaking, a loud rumble echoes from his gut as his stomach protests his assertion. Embarrassed, he lets out a small chuckle, that proceeds into full blown laughter that Alyssa soon joins in with, and the two sit in the warmth of the fire laughing comfortably before sharing out the little food between themselves, Wolf walking happily back into the campsite to beg for scraps which seem to vanish as they enter his mouth, much to Alyssa's fascination. There is a comfortable silence as they eat, neither starting a conversation, but neither feeling like one is needed, and time passes as they sit and stare into the fire. Alyssa occasionally glances over at Gaen, curiosity getting the better of her as she studies him, unable to gauge the nature of the man that saved her.

As the fire begins to die down and the night gets a little darker a more terse silence falls over the clearing, the tension only broken occasionally by the crackling of the fire. Gaen shifts himself into a more upright position, scratching wolf who lays beside him, and turns himself to face Alyssa.

GAEN

Why were those men after you?
More importantly why is the
Church so interested in finding
you?

Alyssa is silent for a moment, and she stares at the ground as she contemplates his question. Turmoil crosses her face as she debates whether or not she can trust Gaen, but with an eventual sigh she concedes, turning away so as not to make eye contact.

ALYSSA

I never knew my parents... not really. When I was little the Priestesses would tell us that our parents gave us to the light so that we could grow up in its glory.

(She pauses)

They stole us from our families, forced them to give us up. And those that resisted... the Church will always get its way. I grew up being taught to love and respect the Church, to follow its teachings and worship the Beacon, that was our one and only goal, to please the Beacon. And you know, it wasn't so bad.

I had friends, a family in the Church, I had a life that I made out of the one they stole from me.

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GAEN

Then why leave?

Alyssa smiles sadly, her eyes turning to stare at the flame.

ALYSSA

Two months ago, two of the Elders came to visit me in our Church. It was nothing special, a small building on the edge of a town, and for them to take the time to come and visit us, the Elders of all people, was a great honour. Everyone was so happy, except me, because whilst everyone else saw their visit as a divine blessing, to me it was the end of my life as I knew it.

She looks up at Gaen, a single tear falling from her eyes as the emotions built up within her begin to overflow. They wanted to take everything I had from me, to force me to leave everything behind and follow them to my "destiny". Well I refused, and at the first chance I got I ran, ran as far away as I could from them.

Alyssa wipes another tear from her eye, hanging her head as the emotions burn themselves out into withered defeat. And now I'm here and I have no idea what I'm doing. Truth is I wouldn't have even made it this far without help. One of my friends, a priest a few years older than me, snuck me out of the church on one of his trips to the local village... but we were caught and... he gave himself up to let me get away.

There's a moment of silence as the two sit opposite each other, Alyssa with her head hung in shame, Gaen watching her closely from across the fire. Wolf gets up and pads over to the Priestess, staring up into her eyes before placing his head on her lap solely. She strokes his ears, but the deep sadness is still etched on her face and she seems more drawn, tired than she was before. After a moment she perks up slightly, turning her gaze back to Gaen.

Before I ran, he gave me this.

She reaches into another pouch in the robe and pulls out a small ornately carved wooden tube with a gold seal at each end, one of which she pulls open. Out of the small tube

she pulls a roll of parchment which she unfolds carefully upon a rock between herself and Gaen, revealing an ornate map. She studies it carefully before pointing to a location marked in the center of a desert.

There, this is where I'm trying to get to. He said that this is the one place in the world that can save me, that there's a way to stop the Church there.

GAEN

Why? What is it?

ALYSSA

According to the Church, nothing, just a desert. But I did some digging in the archives we had available, and there was reference to a "Shadows Precipice", a city in the desert, a city that once belonged to the "Guardians".

A tremor runs over Gaens mouth as she mentions the Guardians, but he calmly nods at what she has said, and seems to mull it over in his head for a few moments. He eventually leans back against the tree stump, and stares up at the sky in thought.

He gave me this as well, but I haven't been able to work out what its for.

She shakes the robe down on her right wrist, revealing the bracelet that sparkles in the dim firelight, but Gaen seems pre-occupied, lost in thought. Eventually, he turns back to her, chewing his words before he says them as if he is carefully contemplating how to approach the subject.

GAEN

You said the church wanted to take you to your destiny, but you never told me what that destiny was.

For a moment Alyssa sits as if incredibly uncomfortable, unable to meet his gaze. She shuffles and twitches, as if struggling with a decision, before steeling herself and turning to meet Gaens gaze.

ALYSSA

My destiny is to die for the Church so that its dream for the world can be realised. My destiny is to bring them closer to their God, by becoming the vessel for the Beacon. My destiny, is to give up my life, and bring a God to this plane.

EXT. SHADOWVINE JUNGLE - MORNING

As the sun reaches its zenith, Alyssa and Gaen finish packing up their campsite. An awkward silence hangs in the air between the two, and Wolf sits anxiously between them as they go about jobs on opposite sides of the clearing. It doesn't take long for the various tasks to be complete, and soon the fire pit and other signs of habitation have been concealed leaving the opening as inconspicuous as possible. Alyssa fastens the last of her pouches back inside her robe, and turns to Gaen who sits checking over his weapons on a stump.

ALYSSA

I guess it's time for me to move on. There's a small fishing village a short walk from here, I think I'll head there and try to find some form of transport to the desert.

She pauses a moment, watching him for some reaction, but when none is given she nods.

Thank you again for everything
Gaen, I mean that sincerely.

With a light bow, she turns and begins to stride out of the clearing taking care to walk as straight and confidently as possible, not wanting him to see the fear on her face.

Wolf sits near Gaen and whines, motioning towards Alyssa as she walks towards the edge of the clearing. He glances up at her slightly, then to wolf who shuffles back and forth on his front paws.

GAEN

Wait.

Gaen's voice echoes strongly through the clearing, and Alyssa stops in her tracks as she hears him. She turns back just as he rises off of the stump, sheathing his weapons in the armour at his side.

GAEN

This city of Guardians, you're
sure it exists?

ALYSSA

There's only one way to find out,
and I don't have any other
choices.

He sighs, before motioning Wolf forward and beginning to stride after Alyssa.

(CONTINUED)

GAEN

Let's go then, you're gonna need protecting and if someones gotta do it, it might as well be me.

He strides past her, not making eye contact and she gives him a polite courteous nod as he passes by, her face remaining passive. As soon as he has passed though, a bright wide smile cracks across her face and she follows hurriedly after him, Wolf bounding between them.

EXT. ECHO LAKE

What was supposed to be a short trip turns into a lengthy trek through humid jungle, and by the time Alyssa and Gaen emerge at the fishing village of Echo Lake, both are on the brink of exhaustion and suffering from dehydration.

The sun is beginning to set, and light is fading fast creating a strange palette of oranges and reds in the sky that contrast the inky blackness of the night, and it is these colours that Alyssa first sees reflected across the waters of the Echo Lake. She dashes to the edge of the water and falls to her knees, cupping the cool liquid into her hands and splashing it across her face, the water swiftly drenching her. Gaen looks down the shore and sees a small village half a mile away, torches and other lights being lit in preparation for night fall. He walks over to join Alyssa, filling up a small flask that folds out of his belt with water, draining the contents in seconds. He repeats the process a few times as she splashes herself until both are satisfied and no longer thirsty.

Alyssa falls back, sitting on the shore, and watches as the sun dips further beyond the horizon. She hears a whine from behind and turns to see Wolf waiting gingerly by the tree line. He attempts to take a step forward towards them, but Gaen growls at him and tail between his legs Wolf retreats into the Jungle, waiting on the outskirts for them both.

GAEN

It's safer for us all if he stays out of sight, we don't need anything attracting attention to us, even here.

Alyssa nods in agreement, but goes back to grab a large leaf from the jungle which she fills with water for Wolf, placing it carefully in front of him. He begins to lap it up gratefully, and Alyssa walks back to Gaen who smirks as she draws close.

GAEN

You know he doesn't need to eat, or drink. He's just a greedy bastard.

(CONTINUED)

Wolf whines in protest as if greatly offended, before returning to the water. Alyssa smiles at the notion, then turns to Gaen who is in the middle of drawing a large cloak out of a small pack concealed on his back. He draws it around himself, making sure as much of his armour is covered, and motions to the priestess to follow him to the village.

GAEN

You'll have to do most of the talking, one look at me and we'll have the Guard swarming us.

ALYSSA

I can do that.

GAEN

Just remember, don't take any chances, get the rations we need and leave. The sooner we get back to the jungle the safer we'll be.

As they near the outskirts of the village they aim for a small market stall set up outside one of the taller buildings where a stout elderly man is still packing away his wares for the night. Gaen splits off from Alyssa as she walks over to the merchant and begins to trade with him for some goods, the old man appearing slightly irritated by the intrusion into his packing until a gold coin is produced, his face lighting up with glee.

Gaen walks towards the center of the village, a small square with several benches and stalls scattered around. Most people walk by oblivious to the stranger in their midst, but Gaen catches several staring at him from where they think they cannot be seen, though these are mostly children who run off screaming with mirth as they are caught. He begins to relax when a loud chiming sound resonates from a building at the back of the village, the ringing sending a ripple across the water of the lake. It is both melodic and sweet, yet commanding and baritone, and Gaen's face twists with displeasure at the loud noise. Several people walk past him towards the sound, and he follows them for a short distance before he comes across the source of the ringing.

On the outskirts of the village, near to the jungle, lies an ornate church carved from white stone that stands watch over the rest of the village, the building being of much greater magnitude and beauty than any other nearby. Two great stone doors lay at the center of its face, and as people begin to near the Church they swing open with their own melodic groan, soft golden light pouring from within to illuminate the faces of those closest to the door.

Gaen hurries to avoid the spread of the light that arcs out of the church doors, moving swiftly into the shadows

(CONTINUED)

of a nearby building. He watches the villagers enter the church for a while, before turning and hurrying back to Alyssa. He barely makes it back to the square before he runs into her, a small bag of rations draped over one arm, a look of fear marring her face.

ALYSSA

We need to leave, now.

GAEN

I know, head for the jungle.

He turns her with one hand and they both hurry to leave the now empty village, breaking into a run once they pass the boundary houses as they race towards the jungle.

On the steps of the church, the old merchant pours a handful of golden coins from one of the priestess's pouches into his hand and looks at them with concern, before rushing inside, the doors swinging shut behind him with a low, solemn groan.

EXT. SHADOWVINE JUNGLE - NIGHT

Night has fallen as the two continue to trek through the jungle, Gaen setting a hurried pace to put as much distance between themselves and the village. Alyssa struggles to keep up with him, her hands stretched out in front of her as she feels her way through the darkness of the jungle, but exhaustion begins to set in and before long she tumbles to the ground, tripping over a large root in a half-asleep daze. Gaen hears the crash and stops, turning back to walk over to where Alyssa sits unharmed but dazed on the floor of the jungle.

GAEN

Are you alright?

She nods wearily, and he stretches out a hand to help her to her feet which she gratefully accepts. Gaen gazes at the surrounding area, and takes one final look at the path forward before turning back to Alyssa who has taken a seat on the root, exhaustion making even the simple act of sitting up straight a challenge.

We should make camp here, we've gone far enough.

ALYSSA

No.. I can keep going.

She goes to stand up but her legs give way beneath her, and she falls to her knees on the rough jungle floor. Gaen makes to help her, concerned she may be injured, but she lets out a light chuckle, looking up at him with a smile.

Ok, maybe a few hours wouldn't hurt.

(CONTINUED)

Gaen smirks back at her, and the two set-up a small camp in the bows of the tree whose roots lay everywhere around them. They prepare a small meal from the rations they purchased at Echo Lake, and talk generally about the jungle and their journey trying to avoid bringing more darkness to the jungle. Eventually they turn in for the night, Alyssa falling asleep between two large roots at the base of a tree, Gaen near the fire with Wolf.

EXT. SHADOWVINE JUNGLE - MIDNIGHT

Muffled thuds awaken Alyssa from a dreamless sleep, and she stares around for a moment groggily, trying to focus her eyes in the dim light of the fire that has almost burnt itself out. It doesn't take long before she see's Gaen, pinned to the floor by two soldiers clad in silver armour that is caked with the dirt and debris of the jungle. Seeing her awake he struggles against their grip only to have his face forced into the dirt by one of the knights, his shouts muffled by the soft ground and foliage. A few feet away Wolf grows menacingly, held aloft by another soldier in similar armour who holds the ethereal animal by its neck, golden light emanating from the gauntlet that grips it.

ALYSSA

Gaen!

She struggles to get up from her awkward position between the roots, only to have a large plate boot push her heavily back to the floor. Looking up she sees a fourth soldier, this one garbed in much more ornate silver armour that is trimmed with a golden metal that glows softly against the darkness of the jungle. However such a light pales in comparison to his eyes, which sit in their sockets as burning golden gems. He gazes down upon Alyssa, eyes running up and down her as if he were assessing a piece of meat. Gaen struggles against his captors, managing to force himself into a kneeling position despite their protests.

GAEN

(He growls menacingly)

Get off of her...

The radiant man turns away from Alyssa hearing Gaens growl, and smirks at him. He strides over slowly, every step a deliberate action, each branch broken having its destruction chosen precisely. When he reaches Gaen he stares down at him with the same burning gaze, before raising a plated hand in a fist which he slams into the side of Gaens face, the force of the blow drawing blood immediately, the crack of bones audible throughout the dark clearing.

(CONTINUED)

SOLEN

You would do well to learn your place.

Gaen spits, a large glob of flood flecked saliva hitting the boot of the radiant man and stares up at him defiantly. Solen meets Gaen's gaze unblinkingly, the golden orbs radiating their light upon him, and his face twists into a sickening smile before he lands another blow, this one to the top of Gaen's helmet forcing him into a bowing position. Wolf growls and struggles against the soldier holding him, desperate to defend its master.

SOLEN

That's better.

He turns back towards Alyssa, both hands clasped behind his back as he stands straight, his posture impeccable.

You gave us quite the run around young lady. My men and I have been out here for days trying to find you in this filthy jungle, to no avail. Truly I'm impressed you got this far, though I see now you're not alone...

He spares a quick glance to Gaen who has managed to upright himself again, sitting teeth bared, his face consumed with hatred.

In truth we might never have found you if you hadn't left us such a, favorable trail.

He reaches inside a pouch attached to his belt, and draws out several golden coins which he throws to the ground in front of her with a smirk. They land with dull thuds against the soft flooring of the jungle, but the gravity of her mistake makes every thud resonate like the beat of a drum.

It's not very often you see the Church's divine currency in such a backwater community, and the man who you gave these coins was most eager to show the rest of his friends his earnings.

He paces back and forth in the clearing as he pontificates, his eyes never leaving Alyssa who sits shrunken into the tree roots, her eyes locked on the golden coins that lay before her.

Of course, we couldn't have such rif-raf scurrying around with such... sacred money, something had to be done, and when we learnt he had seen you... well.

He stops, staring down at Alyssa who's eyes slowly raise to meet his.

(CONTINUED)

Let us just say that neither he,
or his village, will be a problem
again.

Her entire face tremors at the impact of what he says, and
her eyes begin to tear up as she realises the cost of such
a simple mistake. Her voice, fragile and torn, barely
sounds as she says,

ALYSSA

No.. please no...

The emotional turmoil builds up inside her, and a cold
rage begins to set in as the mistake and its consequences
roll over her again and again.

There were children there,
families, they were innocent,
you're supposed to be a Beacon of
good. Those people worship you
and you betrayed them, you
monster!

She leaps for him in her rage, and he waves a hand idly in
her direction, a wall of golden light sending her flying
back into the tree which she impacts, hard. She falls to
the ground, shards of bark and leaves shaken free from
above drifting to the ground around her as she gasps for
the air that was knocked out of her by the force of the
blow.

GAEN

Coward...

Solen turns slowly, his eyes locking back onto Gaen who,
head raised, growls his words with unbelied ferocity. For
a moment, Solen's eyes flare with what could be rage,
before the simmer back into his sockets.

SOLEN

Remove his helmet, I would see
the man who dares challenge a
Radiant.

One of the soldiers holding Gaen reaches for a latch on
the side of his helm, only to recoil in horror as the
metal gauntlet binding his own hand crumbles inward, the
sickening squelching and cracking of his hand being
reduced to pulp echoing through the jungle almost as
loudly as the mans screams of pain. He falls back
releasing Gaen, who quickly turns on the second soldier,
tripping with him a quick kick to the legs. He wastes no
time and immediately charges at Solen, who stands
passively watching the scene unfold. As Gaen leaps for
him, he raises a hand and the same golden light that sent
Alyssa flying forces Gaen to the ground, his legs giving
way so that he falls back to his knees once more.

Such curious armour, such a
curious man, I wonder, who are

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SOLEN (cont'd)

you that you would risk so much
for this woman.

The light presses down harder and Gaen is forced to all fours, the strain of keeping himself upright causing his breathing to come in short, sharp gasps that wrack his entire body with the effort.

No matter, you will not be around
long enough to be more than a
mild curiosity.

Solen draws a longsword from a sheath at his side, its blade reflecting his own innate light making it seem to glow itself. He raises the sword over Gaen, preparing to deliver a killing blow, when the soldier holding Wolf cries out as the beast finally finds purchase on his arm, tearing into the flesh beneath the armour with savage vigour till the bloody stump is forced to release him. As soon as he hits the ground wolf charges Solen, his ethereal form allowing him to leap with both grace and savagery.

Caught unawares, Solen takes the full force of the wolfs attack as its rams him in the side, but even with such inertia it does little more than stagger the Radiant. Wolf rebounds quickly to the ground, preparing for a follow-up attack, but Solen is quicker. As his paws leave the ground, Wolf meets the blade of Solens sword which cuts into the ethereal form as if it were flesh, drawing a long jagged wound across Wolf's belly. The force of the blow sends Wolf rolling a short distance across the clearing before he comes to a stop, unmoving near to Alyssa.

Alyssa lets out a whimper, still unable to speak from the force of the blow she endured, and tries to crawl towards Wolfs body, every movement sending shock waves of pain through her body. It doesn't take her long to reach him, and as she draws close to the wolf he passively licks the air, unable to move his head or body. She gently lift him up, onto her lap, stroking the coarse fur of his head, and tears fall down her face as Wolf licks her hand a final few times, before his eyes slowly close. It is only a few seconds before his body begins to disintegrate, the ethereal green form dissipating into thousands of small green lights that drift into the wind around Alyssa.

Solen stands watching the scene unfold, his face a mask of passivity. He turns back to Gaen, his golden eyes blazing.

SOLEN

None shall escape the judgment of
the Beacon.

He goes to raise his sword, only to stop as Gaen begins to convulse in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

Gaen clenches the ground beneath him, large tufts of dirt and foliage gripped in each hand as sobs heave from between clenched teeth. As they become more pronounced a black substance begins to arc across his face beneath the skin, forming a web of vein like protrusions. He begins to wretch violently, and black ichor splatters from his mouth to the ground below, burning the area upon which it lands. His body starts to contort, the armour seeming to rend and reform in places, the fragments of visible skin splitting as more of the dark substance pours from within him.

For the first time Solen seems unsure, concerned by what is happening in front of him. The other soldiers back away somewhat, only the man with the crushed hand remaining on the floor nearby, still writhing in agony.

As Solen watches in horror, the golden light that pins Gaen to the floor dissipates, flickering several times before shattering like glass, and Gaen raises his head, his face replaced by a nightmarish tooth filled maw composed of the black inky substance and bone. It lets out a horrific ear splitting screech that forces all but Solen to clutch their ears in pain, before tearing across the ground towards the injured soldier, grabbing him with a claw-like appendage and dragging him up into the tree-line in the blink of an eye.

The soldiers horrific screams echo monstrously through the jungle, the leaves of trees shaking as the man is dragged through the area by the creature Gaen has become. The sound of tearing flesh and snapping bone punctuates the air like the crackle of a fire, some matching the screams in their magnitude. As soon as the screams stop, the body is flung back into the campsite falling before Solens feet, a bloody and broken mess barely recognisable as human.

The two remaining soldiers move closer together, swords drawn as they stand back to back, staring terrified into the jungle around them. As Solen watches, the creature tears from the shadows of the jungle once again, the speed of its movement creating such a draft that the camp-fire is put out, leaving only Solens armour and the flash of steel to light the area. He watches in dismay as the creature bounds between the soldiers, tearing them apart with its distended limbs that twist and reform seemingly at will.

For a moment the soldiers attempt to fight back, parrying some of the blows that come their way, but it becomes clear from the warped cackle that emanates from the creature that it is merely playing with them. It grabs the first soldier by the face, its claw completely covering all of the mans features, and twists him with such vigour and fury that his spine shatters instantly before he is torn in half, both fragments thrown into the jungle.

The last man turns and attempts to run, only to have the creature leap onto his back pushing him to the ground where it sets about devouring him, taking large bites out of anything close enough to its maw that cleaves through bone like a knife through butter. It is only a few seconds before the man ceases to move entirely, and the creature lets out another ear piercing shriek into the night sky.

Solen stands watching his men die, and the horror on his face turns to rage. Recognition flashes behind his golden eyes, and a low hiss escapes his throat as he utters

SOLEN

Guardian....

The creature turns towards him, the dark cavernous sockets that pass for eyes meeting his, and a guttural clicking sound echoes out in response. It rises to all fours, Gaens legs now mis-shapen and twisted into powerful clawed appendages, and begins to circle Solen who responds in similar fashion, his golden eyes never losing track of the creature.

In the blink of an eye, the creature is before Solen and slams into him with a huge black tendril that sends him flying through several trees with sickening force. For the first time Solen's armour seems to buckle as he crashes to the ground, staggered, but on his feet. The creature wastes no time in giving chase and is immediately upon him again and the two engage in a series of blows that send ripples through the jungle, the force tearing the surrounding area apart as golden light meets black ichor. They move rapidly, decimating the landscape as they fight, but it is soon clear that Solen is losing fast as his light begins to dim, his parrying becoming slower, more haggard.

With a screech the creature throws him once again back into the campsite, his passage knocking several trees aside, a large branch falling and striking Alyssa on the head. As she drifts on the brink of consciousness, she watches as the creature lifts a broken Solen from the ground in one giant appendage. He screams as small tendrils infiltrate his body through various points of entry, his eyes, his mouth, his ears and begin digging into the flesh below, tearing him apart. The last thing Alyssa sees is the great bone filled maw opening and drawing in the light from the radiant, siphoning it off as a golden mist that is consumed by the darkness, and with this she passes out, her own darkness taking her.

INT. THE ENTITIES CAVE

With a start Alyssa awakes, her breathing fast and panicked. She stares around her disorientated, flashes of the battle ricocheting through her mind, and clutches her head as an arc of pain shoots from the small wound left by the impact of the branch. She draws her hand away finding a small amount of dried blood upon it, but after some deliberation and probing decides any bleeding has stopped, and wipes the remains on her now filthy robe.

Her eyes take a while to focus in the dim environment she now finds herself in, and as she look around she sees she has awoken inside a large cavern, stalagmites and stalactites jutting from every wall, reminding her of the creatures tooth filled maw with a shudder. Several torches hang from the walls, lighting the majority of the cave, though dark ominous shadows lurk in the furthest reaches, concealing anything that may hide within them. A small movement to the right of her makes her start, and she sees Gaen crouched by one of the large stone protrusions, staring into the shadows. For a while she simply stares at him, her uncertainty and fear preventing her from approaching, but eventually the strangeness of the situation they find themselves in dwarfs her immediate concerns and she makes her way as quietly as she can over to Gaen.

As she nears his position, a loose rock beneath her feet gives way and she slips with a small cry, but before she hits the ground Gaen is next to her, hand clasped over her mouth stifling the rest of the scream. He nods in the direction of the shadows, and as Alyssa stares past him she sees something shifting with the darkness, coils unwrapping and writhing as a greater body moves. After a few seconds the movement ceases, and it becomes harder to distinguish what lurks within the shadows. Alyssa turns back to Gaen who releases her mouth.

GAEN

Are you ok?

She hesitates for a moment before nodding, and he breathes a sigh of relief. He turns and motions for her to follow him as he carefully picks his way between the large stones, making his way towards what seems like an opening in one of the walls that leads away from the main cave system. They only make it a few steps before a voice hums out of the darkness, drifting seductively across the air in such a manner that both Alyssa and Gaen are immediately drawn to its source.

THE ENTITY

Now now, where do you think you are going? Come, come to me children.

(CONTINUED)

A force takes hold of both Alyssa and Gaen, and although they struggle their bodies move with a will of their own, walking slowly but surely towards the source of the voice.

Yes... Yes... step into the light
so that I can see you both
clearly.

They stop close to a torch embedded into one of the stalagmites, the flame casting warped shadows across the cave as it flickers. Alyssa's eyes dart around the room searching for whatever spoke to them, and after a short while she sees one of the larger shadows begin to move, slithering behind a large stalagmite that sits near to a pool of shadows.

My my, such a beautiful girl, and
such a strong man, all for me.

The voice lets out a low chuckle, and a slithering noise like the sound of a great mass being moved over the rock hisses out from behind the stalagmite. As the shadows begin to coalesce, moving closer, Alyssa begins to panic struggling frantically against her own body to no avail which only increases her terror.

Come now, don't be scared, I
won't bite.

A figure emerges from the shadows, stopping at the edge of the light so that it is not completely revealed, yet is clearly visible. Garbed in a red robe the figure stands at only two thirds Gaen's height, hunched over in a manner similar to a frail elderly woman. From the long red sleeves dangle several gnarled and worn fingers that flex and creak with every movement, their complexion making them seem like the branches of a tree. From within the hood drapes long, tangled black hair matted with various bit of natural detritus, insects crawling within in that appear only briefly before submerging once more into the depths of the hood. As it raises its face towards them Alyssa tries to let out a small scream that is smothered by her locked body, the light revealing a pale passive mask of a face, the eye sockets and mouth composed entirely of gaping black holes that seem to sink into nothingness.

The Entity lets out a low chuckle, the inhuman nature of its voice making it seem more like it is clucking softly.

Does my appearance scare you my
dear? I'll admit I do not hold a
candle to one as beautiful as
yourself, yes, such beauty, such
grace.

She glides over to Alyssa seemingly without taking a step, raising a gnarled hand to caress Alyssa's face, her rough fingers sliding across the pale smooth skin. Her fingers gradually move towards the wound in Alyssa's head and when it makes contact with the dried blood the entities entire

body convulses with pleasure, a low guttural murmur emanating from within the hood. Alyssa squirms against its touch, her muffled protests lost within the confines of her body, but the entity pays no attention to her, consumed by the throws of pleasure coursing through it. A long barbed tongue drifts lazily out of the hole in the mask, occasionally darting in the air like a snake scenting its prey. It drapes across Alyssa's face, smearing her with a thick salivary substance as it passes, quivering with pleasure as it reaches the open wound before drawing back inside the mask.

The Entity draws its fingers back into the robe, the low clucking noise echoing from within its body, and glides over to Gaen who watches it intently. As the Entity glides away Alyssa looks down, and her eyes widen as she sees a large tendril, the same colour and texture as the gnarled fingers, trailing out from the confines of its robes, back into the shadows.

You, you radiate strength and power, its...

The Entity takes a deep inhalation as if sniffing the air, then exhales with a rasping grating noise that sounds like stones being ground together.

Intoxicating. Tell me, what do you hide beneath this sheath of steel? What I would give to see what lies beneath your helm.

Its fingers begin to trail up towards the helmet, and Gaen smirks as he prepares for the entity to suffer a backlash similar to the soldier from the jungle, but its hand stops a few inches short, hovering in the air in front of his face.

Come now Guardian, you didn't think it would be that easy did you?

His face drops instantly, and he tries to speak, his mouth forming the shapes but no sound coming out.

GAEN

How?

THE ENTITY

How did I know?

She lets out a hoarse cackle that convulses with every beat.

How do you think I found you? I was drawn to your flame, your power, the darkness within you has a...

She takes another deep inhalation. Distinctive flavour. It has been a long time since a Guardian set

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

THE ENTITY (cont'd)
foot in my jungles, not since
they sealed me in this accursed
tomb.

Alyssa chokes on her words, and the entity turns its head to her, cocking it quizzically in a bird like manner. It twitches one of its gnarled fingers in her direction and Alyssa feels her vocal chords relax, her mouth free up. She coughs for a moment as the pent up strain releases itself, quickly catching her breath though her voice is still strained, rasping from the effort.

ALYSSA
What do you want from us?

THE ENTITY
Why my dear you think you'd be
more grateful to the one who
saved you. My children found you
both unconscious in the wilds
surrounded by such..

It cocks her head back in Gaens direction, the black pits of its eyes starkly contrasting the white of the mask.
Glorious carnage.

The entity pauses for a moment, staring at Gaen, before its head snaps back to Alyssa with a sickening crack.
The least you could do is thank
me!

ALYSSA
(Bitterly)
Thank you...

The entity cocks its head in a short sharp nod, bobbing up and down several times before backing off somewhat into the shadows, hovering on the fringe of the light. It whispers to itself, the words inaudible, and Alyssa looks at Gaen, poorly concealed terror swimming beneath her features. He nods back to her calmly, and is about to speak when the entity turns back to them both, gliding slowly across the stone floor till it stands only a few feet away. In its hands it holds a small stone orb, pale blue in colour but with a swirling maelstrom of light at its core that causes the light to refract within it, creating a rainbow of different hues. The entity cradles it in its hands, lovingly caressing its smooth surface as it rolls it between its gnarled fingers.

THE ENTITY
Many believe that the most
delicious part of a human is the
flesh, carved from the bone and
cooked just right, the skin
sizzling in oil.

It clucks lowly to itself as if reminiscing a pleasurable memory.

But I know something far more
savory, something no flesh
compares to.

The entity walks over to Gaen who struggles against the invisible forces that bind him, teeth gritted in a snarl. As it reaches him, a coarse wrenching noise emanates from within the confines of its robe, and its entire body ripples from the base upwards causing the body to shake violently. From the sockets of both its eyes and mouth, small glowing worms crawl lazily, dropping from the cavernous holes into her waiting hands below. She takes one in between her index finger and thumb, staring at it in the torch light lovingly, before draping it across the nape of Gaen's neck. She repeats this process with the rest of the worms, and slowly but surely they begin to make their way up towards his helmet, forcing their way under its metal rim. Gaen's struggle ceases for a moment, then his body begins to spasm and convulse, seizing against the forces that hold him in place. The Entity twitches its fingers and he falls to ground, writhing in agony, his screams echoing through the cave. Alyssa looks on in horror, but when she goes to cry out a quick flick from the Entity silences her once more, forcing her lips together.

Yes... far more delicious than
flesh, memories, experiences,
secrets. These are the things I
crave and you reek of such
delicious delicacy's, such
torment, such horror, so much
darkness.

The Entity begins to convulse in pleasure again as Gaen writhes on the floor in pain, a low cackle escaping her gullet. Eventually Gaen goes still, his breathing shallow, and the Entity raises one of its gnarled hands as if controlling a puppet, its fingers flexing and twitching. As the hand rises, so does Gaen until he is kneeling in front of the Entity. It raises its other hand and holds it inches from his face, moving open palmed in circles until it finds a point that satisfies it, upon which it curls its gnarled fingers, touching the metal of his helmet with a hissing noise that causes dark smoke to emanate from its finger tips.

As my pets burrow deeper, they
unearth such glorious caverns of
the human mind, vaults you don't
even realise you have. The thrill
is... indescribable.

It lets out a gasp as it stares into the sphere, images flashing rapidly across the smooth surface.

My my, such turmoil in this one,
the struggle to maintain control

(MORE)

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THE ENTITY (cont'd)
yeeesss.... I remember it all to
well. Yet there is something
else, something I do not
recognise, tell me your secrets
child of darkness.

It makes a pulsing motion with its hand and Gaen lets out a rasping groan as his entire body pulses with it, convulsing in rhythm with the hand movements.

Oh... oh yes... the sweet
delicacy of destruction, so much
death oh. I must go deeper.

Her entire body ripples with pleasure and for a few moments she seems lost within her throws of ecstasy, then suddenly it stops.

My my, what is this, so well
guarded, buried so deeply.

The orb explodes shards flying across the room, and with a shriek the Entity recoils from Gaen in horror, drawing back into the darkness, wailing with pain.

MONSTER! What are you? WHAT ARE
YOU!?

As it fades into the shadows screeching, the worms drop from Gaen's helm to the floor, blackened and writhing in pain, letting out small cries before reducing to smoldering ash which is blown away swiftly. Gaen clutches at his head groggily, trying to clear his thought from the worms invasive probing. He staggers to his feet, pain arching through his body from the strain, and as he rises Alyssa feels her body relax, the invisible force holding her losing its grip allowing her to stagger forward towards him. They meet between themselves, leaning of each other for support in a brief respite. It is only then that they realise the screeching has stopped, and a deathly silence encompasses the entire room. Both hold their breath for a moment, and after a while Alyssa goes to speak

ALYSSA

I think...

The floor beneath them begins to buckle and tear, the rock cracking, and several stalactites fall from the ceiling, crashing into the floor with deafening thuds as the rock shatters apart.

Gaen grabs the torch from the nearby rock and holds it towards the shadows, where the flames reveal coils of twisted flesh and bone that arc into the rock below, marked by the same gnarled texture as the entities hands. The coils writhe and contort, and as they do so emaciated corpses become visible within their confines, some clawing at the air as if struggling for freedom, though many

(CONTINUED)

remain still, frozen in a position of abject horror, glowing worms crawling across their faces moving in and out of any available sockets.

The floor beneath Gaen and Alyssa cracks and shatters, and the walls similarly begin to crumble, revealing beneath them huge twisting tendrils that arc back towards the central pile of coils where the red robed figure now rises from within the writhing pile. Its hood is drawn back revealing the long matted mane that was only visible in part before, insects and bodies alike writhing within its tangled knots. The mask upon its face is shattered and chipped, and beneath it a cylindrical maw churns with thousands of hooked teeth that tear apart anything they come in contact with. But what draws Alyssa's gaze more than any other horror is the eyes that sit within the hollow caverns that make up its sockets, blood red, hungry eyes.

The Entity lets out an inhuman roar and charges towards the two, Gaen managing to grab Alyssa and drag her out of the way just in time to avoid being crushed by the long thick tendril that sprouts from the base of the robe. It lands on its hands, which have now grown and warped to become claw like appendages that dig into the rock with ease, and turns to see the two run into a tunnel that leads from the side of the cavern, Gaen leading the way, torch in one hand, Alyssa in the other.

Gaen and Alyssa struggle to run as fast as they can through the narrow passageway, the strain and exhaustion of the past few days taking a heavy toll on them both. As they run the walls around them collapse and crumble to reveal more tendrils, those corpses trapped within desperately reaching for the two of them, trying to grab onto some form of lifeline, but even those who find purchase do not have the strength or endurance to hold on and they become more of a hindrance than any danger in themselves. Behind them they hear the shrieks of the entity as it chases after them, the clicking of its claws against stone echoing down the passageway drawing ever closer, causing Alyssa to constantly turn in fear as if she expects it to be right behind her.

They take several turns within the tunnels before eventually Gaen stumbles as they come to a rocky downward slope leading into a small circular chamber, dragging Alyssa with him. The two roll down the loose stones and gravel, Gaen doing his best to shield her from the worst of the fall until they land in a heap at the base. Quickly rising to their feet they search desperately for an exit, some-way out of the room, but find nothing. Gaen turns towards the doorway and draws both his weapons, standing ready to fight the entity as it comes for them.

GAEN

Get behind me...

ALYSSA

There has to be some way out,
something we haven't found, we
just need to keep looking.

She scrabbles around in desperation, searching the small room for any passageway that would lead them to safety, but finding nothing sinks to the floor in defeat.

ALYSSA

It's over..

The screeching and clawing of the entity resonates into the small room, the acoustic nature of the chamber making the sounds loud and immediate. Alyssa picks up a small rock from next to her and throws it in rage at the walls of the cavern, which are already starting to give way to the writhing tendrils that lay beneath them. It is only when she goes back to stare at the floor that she see's something carved into it.

She quickly begins to scabble around, clearing away the stones and debris that lay across what is revealed to be a smooth stone pedestal, surrounded by intricate sigils carved into various layered rings that arc out across the entire room. At the center of the pedestal, a small indent lays in the middle of a network of crystalline veins that arc off into the greater circles, joining more branches that course through the entire design.

As Alyssa searches, Gaen activates his weapons, the gyroscopic devices spinning in his hands. The visible strain of standing to fight is obvious, and sweat drips from beneath his helmet onto the grimace that coats his face. Within the dark confines of the tunnel a pair of red eyes light up hungrily, the low laughter of the Entity echoing down the passageway, no longer melodic and seductive but instead twisted and inhuman, cruel malice tinging every laugh.

THE ENTITY

Now now... so much fear... so
much terror... if only you knew
what I knew, it wouldn't be me
you were afraid of.

She burst into a cackle of maniacal laughter. Alyssa runs her hands across the sigils, searching for something to use in the indent, when her robes are brushed back by the movement revealing the golden bracelet on her arm. The bright colour of the gold immediately catches her eye in the light of the torch, and she sees the seal embedded in the top of it is roughly the same size as the indent in the floor.

(MORE)

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THE ENTITY (cont'd)

Come now children, come to me,
and stay in the darkness....
FOREVER!

As it lets out this final scream, the Entity charges forward towards Gaen, its claw like fingers tearing chunks of stone and flesh from the walls as it scrabbles to draw its bulky form across the narrow passageway. Gaen braces himself, the weapons spinning ready in his hands, but before the entity reaches him Alyssa grabs him by the arm, dragging him into the center of the pedestal where she slams the bracelet into the indent.

Immediately blue light fills the room as the pedestal glows, light arcing through the web work of crystals that lay within the intricate circles that cover the floor, illuminating the sigils within them. The Entity screams in frustration and pain as it is blinded by the light, recoiling into the tunnel shrieking.

THE ENTITY

No! Don't leave me, stay with me
please... DON'T LEAVE ME!!!!

Its shrieks are soon drowned out by the sound of mechanisms stirring into life as the circles surrounding the pedestals begin to rise into the air, revealing an intricate system of gears and runes that lay beneath. These too begin to glow, and as they do the stone circles begin to spin rapidly around the pair, soon forming a gyroscopic effect similar to that of Gaens weapons. Wind whips past Alyssa and Gaen, and as they watch several runes, the same as those embroidered on the bracelet, manifest in the air in front of them forged from the same blue light that runs through the entire machine.

The whirring and light soon becomes too much for the pair, and Gaen shields his eyes whilst Alyssa closes hers and screams, her voice lost beneath the boom of the titanic machine. With a final shriek a shock wave of blue light ripples out from the device and the circles cease their movement, revealing the pedestal to be empty, Gaen and Alyssa having vanished without a trace.

The rings glow softly as the power fades from them, falling back into position, and darkness once again consumes the room. As the last light fades, the entities laughter cascades around the chamber slowly rising in both pitch and volume, and a worn gnarled hand reaches for the bracelet that lays forgotten in the indent.

INT. SPIRE RUNE GATE CHAMBER

A flash of blue light spontaneously bursts from what begins as a warped pinprick in the air, small particles of fine blue energy drifting gently away as they are dispersed by the natural wind currents of what is revealed to be a temple like chamber. Dark columns rise up into the shadows that conceal the ceiling, the floor marbled and ornately detailed with a similar circular pattern to the chamber that resided in the Entities domain, though this one is much more ornate and detailed with several additional rings spiraling from the central pedestal.

Alyssa and Gaen stand clutching each other, her crouched on the ground, ears covered by her hands and eyes screwed shut, him holding her with an arm across his helmet visor. For a moment they simply hold this position in this stillness of the room, before Gaen slowly lowers his arm, assessing the new location they have found themselves in before removing himself from Alyssa's embrace. She clutches for him as he moves, panicked by his sudden absence, and he gently touches her on the shoulder.

GAEN

It's ok, look.

Slowly Alyssa opens her eyes, taking a moment to adjust to new dimly lit room.

ALYSSA

Why is everywhere we find ourselves always so dark...

She looks around, enraptured by the detail of the columns and patterns that line to floor, running a finger over the smooth cold edge of one of the marbled rims. Gaen looks down at her, a look of confusion and disbelief marking what little of his face is visible.

GAEN

What did you do?

Slowly regaining her sense from the trauma of the entities lair, Alyssa sits back on herself flustered, and for a moment the words come out half jumbled, barely intelligible as she tries to make sense of what just happened herself. Eventually she manages to collect herself, her words still coming out in a rush of excitement and exhilaration as the fact they escaped begins to sink home.

ALYSSA

I.... I don't know. There were symbols I'd see before, and my bracelet just fit into the.. My bracelet!

(CONTINUED)

She scrabbles around the floor searching desperately for it, but when it becomes clear it did not travel with them she falls back with a sigh, pushing a loose lock of hair from her face in frustration. Gaen watches her scrabble around for a moment, carefully studying the circular rings around her. Several sigils on the stone still hold a faint blue light that dims further as the particles of blue energy drift from them, and Gaen takes care to look at each one, noting its place and form. Eventually he turns back to the defeated Alyssa, who sits reeling from the experiences of the past few days.

GAEN

For now it's not important how we got here, what matters is where it sent us. I've never seen anything like this.

ALYSSA

I have... a few years ago when I was taken to visit the Cathedral of Solace during the coronation of one of the new Elders. There were books and scrolls in the library there I had never even heard of, some so old they crumbled in your fingers as you held them. There was one scroll that had a drawing of a room exactly like this, I couldn't understand most of the text since it was written in a language the priests said was long forgotten, but they told me it was called a Rune Gate.

Gaen takes a moment more to stare at the room around him, but as the last particles of energy drift into the wind the darkness begins to close around them and the columns and ornate designs disappear into the shadows.

GAEN

We should move, try to find an exit before it becomes pitch black in here.

He starts to walk towards a tall arched doorway on one of the far walls, one of its stone doors slightly ajar as if welcoming its new guests. As he approaches the door he slows, causing Alyssa to walk into his back making both him and her jump. He frowns at her and she shrinks back apologetically, taking a few steps away so as to put some space between them. With a disgruntled nod he begins to move forward again, coming to the doors and leaning against the one that remains sealed and listens. After a few moments of silence, he proceeds through the archway into a dark tunnel that spirals upwards to some unknown

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destination, a small doorway of light in the distance illuminating the tunnel somewhat. He motions to Alyssa to follow, and they slowly make their way into the passageway, Gaen alert for any other presence that may harm them.

They only manage a few steps before several armed guards burst from the shadows, swords drawn and shields raised, immediately surrounding the pair. Gaen makes for his weapons and as he does so the guard nearest to him lunges with his sword, attempting to block Gaen's movement only to have the sword plucked from his hands before he is knocked to the floor by a blow to the back of the head. Several other guards make for the now armed Gaen, who quickly dispatches them with ease whilst taking care not to harm them, the sparks of swords colliding illuminating the dark passageway. Soon only two soldiers remain conscious and they stand shoulder to shoulder, blocking the passageway. Gaen prepares to charge the soldiers when a voice, commanding strong and bold resonates down the corridor, ringing off the coarse rock that the passageway is carved from.

DAKEN

That's enough, stand down all of you!

The two soldiers immediately sheathe their weapons, holding their shields to attention as they part to reveal a tall man carrying a torch, dressed in a long ornately patterned robe made of a material that seems to shift and shimmer with every movement. It only takes a second for both Gaen and Alyssa to notice that his skin, although seemingly normal, flows and ripples like a freshly disturbed pool of water, its translucent nature revealing racing currents that course beneath his surface. Alyssa gasps in awe.

ALYSSA

An Elemental...

The man smirks and lets out a small chortle, staring down at the ground before raising his gaze to meet Alyssa's.

DAKEN

Half-Elemental actually, and honoured to meet you both.

He bows low in a manner both formal yet welcoming. As his head raises a dashing smile crosses his features that seems to light up the dark corridor.

My apologies for not meeting you sooner, I had matters to attend to that unfortunately could not be delayed.

He notes the unconscious soldiers on the floor, a flicker of amusement crossing his handsome features. Looking at Gaen he nods politely.

I must thank you for not harming my men, they mean well even if their actions may have seemed a tad extreme, and I know their families would have missed them sorely should they have passed. They simply wish to protect our organisation from any who would see it harm.

ALYSSA

What organisation? Who are you?

DAKEN

Where are my manners!

He gestures dramatically.

Please follow me, I'll explain everything as we walk.

He strides off down the tunnel towards the lit doorway, and after exchanging glances of both confusion and trepidation Alyssa and Gaen begin to follow, walking a few feet behind their host. The soldiers stay behind, waiting a few seconds before checking on their unconscious friends, murmuring to themselves quietly.

Before long Daken reaches the doorway and stands gesturing to Alyssa and Gaen, who carefully tread towards him, Gaen on edge for any form of betrayal. With a sweeping motion Daken gestures to the doorway through which Alyssa and Gaen both look with awe. Before them lays a great stone chamber that spirals upwards to dizzying heights, the ceiling barely visible. Multiple levels carved into the rock teem with activity as a mixture of hundreds of races go about their daily lives, families visiting markets, soldiers training for battle, all working together in what seems like a giant hive.

DAKEN

My name is Daken, chancellor of the Shadowed Eye, and it is my pleasure to welcome you both to the Spire.

As he speaks several fireworks launch into the air in the center of the chamber, raining shards of energy down on delighted children who run playing through a small garden that grows on the base floor, to which Gaen and Alyssa now emerge, a look of shock and amazement on both their faces. Daken strides out behind them to stand next to Alyssa, looking down at her with a warm smile that belies a sadness hidden beneath the surface.

We've been expecting you Alyssa,
I'm sorry we were not able to

(MORE)

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DAKEN (cont'd)
reach you sooner, the matter
became more complicated than we
had hoped.

She turns to him, mouth open to ask a question but he already stands a few feet away, striding off towards another passageway that arcs upwards to another level. Casting a confused glance at Gaen, Alyssa bolts after Daken smiling as several children begin to follow her laughing and playing.

ALYSSA
How do you know my name? What is
this place I... I don't
understand.

Daken laughs warmly, his smile instantly putting Alyssa at ease.

DAKEN
It is a lot to take in isn't it.
Why don't you and your companion
take a few hours to walk around,
explore, talk to some people. I'm
sure you will be greeted with
open arms.

ALYSSA
But I...

DAKEN
We will talk later I assure you.

He stops walking and places a hand gently on her shoulder, stopping her in her tracks.

For now enjoy the Spire and its citizens, I have some important matters to attend to but if it is acceptable to you both, I would very much like to invite you to a meal at my chambers later this evening where we can discuss matters further. Oh and before I forget, here.

He hands her a small pouch of coins which jingle as she grasps them. Lost for words, Alyssa simply nods at Daken who with a warm smile bows once more before Alyssa, giving a courteous nod to Gaen who stands a short distance behind her.

Until later then, I will send
someone to collect you when it is
time to eat.

With these words he turns on his heel and strides into the nearby passageway, his swirling robe giving a final flash

before it rounds the corner. Alyssa turns to Gaen who stands a short distance from her, a look of unease apparent on his face. Alyssa, too caught up in her bewilderment and excitement fails to notice this, and walks towards him enthusiastically.

ALYSSA

This place, this place is amazing! I mean have you ever seen anything like it?

GAEN

No.. I haven't

ALYSSA

Come on! We have to go explore, I want to see everything!

She moves to run past him but Gaen roughly grips her fore-arm as she passes, causing her to stop with a confused hurt look on her face. His face is hard, but softens quickly as he sees her expression and he releases her arm.

GAEN

Just... be careful. I know it seems incredible but we don't know a lot about this place or the people who run it.

ALYSSA

All Dakens done since we arrived is be as courteous as possible, and you want to find fault in that?

GAEN

No that's not what i'm saying, but he knew who you were, and we both know how dangerous that could be. For all we know he works for the church! Not only that but if this place is such a paradise then why were we met by an armed guard that tried to attack us? What are they so afraid of?

ALYSSA

You know what, fine. If you want to stand around in the dark and see the bad in every situation then thats up to you, but i've had enough monsters and death for a lifetime.

She turns and strides away enraged, her steps heavy and harsh. After a few steps she stops and turns her head back to Gaen, glancing at him over her shoulder a solemn betrayed look on her face.

Besides, he's wouldn't be the
only one keeping secrets... would
he Guardian.

With that she turns and walks away into the crowd, the rage replaced by a mixture of sadness and betrayal. Gaen stands, staring after her until she vanishes into the crowd, his jaw clenched in a mixture of anguish and frustration.

INT. SPIRE CENTRAL CHAMBER- MARKET QUARTER

Alyssa wipes a tear from her eye as she walks through the crowds of people that swarm the base level of the spire, occasionally jostled about by those around her but mostly left untouched. With a grimace, she buries the sadness deep down and steels herself to it, determined to enjoy what little time she has. As she looks around again, she marvels at the architecture of the spire, the way the levels are a mixture of natural formation and man-made construction, ram shackle bridges made of various material crossing gaps in the otherwise consistent natural layers of rock. Several buildings dangle seemingly haphazardly from each level, jutting out over the central chamber which spiral upwards, getting wider and wider as it rises until it hits a rocky ceiling lined with outcrops and small structures that dangle perilously from large rocks hanging down above the central plaza. What stands out to her most though is the colours, vibrant and varied that naturally line the rock of the entire structure in gemlike deposits, reflected beautifully by the natural wild-life and paint of the buildings so that everywhere she looks, her eyes are dazzled by an array of brilliant colour.

A ball rolls in front of her, rebounding off the toe of her worn and muddied boot, and a little boy runs up to a few feet away where he stands anxiously. Alyssa crouches down smiling and picks up the ball, motioning warmly for the boy to come get it. The boy shakes his head, and perplexed Alyssa rolls the ball across the ground to him where he grabs it and runs off into the crowd. Alyssa rises to her feet, a look of disappointment and concern crossing her face, perplexed as to why the child would be so afraid of her. She walks forward a bit more, now noticing the strange looks several passing members of the crowd give her, before she passes a small ornate mirror that sits on a market stand, catching a glimpse of herself in it.

Before her she sees a woman garbed in a muddied brown robe, blood staining the hem, with a fading wound on her head and several unidentifiable fluids coating both her and the mess of hair that spikes from her head, bits of

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detritus from the jungle and the entities lair locked in the tangles and knots that have formed from the days of neglect.

Recoiling from the less than pleasant visage, Alyssa jingles the coins in the small pouch and a small grin crosses her stained face. Scanning the area she sees the small boy and her friends still playing with the ball and walks over to them, crouching a few feet away and holding out a handful of the coins.

ALYSSA

I'm sorry to interrupt your game,
but i've never been here before
and i'm a little lost. Do you
think you could show me around?
Maybe somewhere I could get a
bath and some new clothes?

The children hesitate, whispering between each other, before the boy steps forward slowly, his face suspicious as he approaches Alyssa. He reaches out, taking the coins from her hand, and runs back to the other children who stand in a circle around the boy, all chattering excitedly. After only a few seconds the little boy runs back to Alyssa and takes her by the hand, leading her with a smile through the throng of people, into the Spire.

INT. SPIRE CENTRAL CHAMBER - GARDENS

Gaen sits in the middle of the lush Garden at the heart of the Spire, large colourful plants curling elegantly around him, thick grass crushed beneath the heavy metal of his boots. Around him families and other residents of the Spire relax in the warm light of the sun that shines down from several openings in the roof of the structure, the light neither too warm nor too bright.

As he watches those around him, a small child runs around wildly with a similarly sized dog that chases her happily, barking and jumping through the long grass that almost conceals it entirely. A deep sense of loss crosses Gaen's face, and he stares down at the floor in contemplation, thinking of Wolf. For a while he simply remains like this, unmoving in his quiet remorse, when a figure walks over and takes a seat next to him quietly.

CHRONA

Hi!

Gaen turns his head slightly to acknowledge the figure next to him, revealing her to be a young girl, no more than fifteen. The girl smiles at him warmly, scrunching her eyes as her face is consumed by the width of the smile which beams toothily at Gaen, the girl's long blond hair framing the smile.

(MORE)

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CHRONA (cont'd)

I can't help but notice you seem sad? I mean everyone else here is smiling and happy, and then theres you, sitting on your own all doom and gloom. What's that about?

Gaen turns his head back to the floor, a flicker of annoyance crossing his face.

GAEN

I'm fine, thank you for your concern.

The girl sits back with a huff, blowing a short burst of air upwards to flick a strand of hair from her face.

CHRONA

Well you don't seem fine, if you ask me you seem downright miserable? So what happened?

Gaen sighs, irritation lining his voice as he refuses to raise his head to meet the girls questioning stare.

GAEN

It's none of your buisness... but I lost someone very close to me.

The girls smile fades somewhat, a flicker of sadness marking the beaming face for a split second.

CHRONA

Oh... i'm sorry. I didn't know.

GAEN

It's fine, now if you don't mind, i'd like to be alone.

The girl leans forward from where she sits, placing her chin on her hands as she gazes out across the garden.

CHRONA

You know, death isn't always the end, sometimes it can be a brand new beginning. My mother always used to tell me that when we pass on, we'll always return in another form. Its cyclic... cyclee, its a circle, like time. You never truly die, just move on to another life taking with you all the experiences of all the other lives you've lived.

Gaen doesn't respond, staring down at the grass below him trying to ignore the girl who looks down on him with a smile, unphased by his harsh attitude.

She said, those that truly form a bond will always manage to find each other, that they're destined to be together through all their lives, and that somehow, someday, they'll be reunited one day even after death.

She places a small hand on Gaens shoulders, as she leans closer to him comfortingly, her grasp a mix between a hug and a pat on the back.

Don't worry too much about Wolf ok? He's happy, I promise.

Gaen spins on the girl in a mixture of shock and confusion only to find her gone, the seat next to him completely empty save for a small necklace from which hangs a pendant. As Gaen reaches down and grasps it in his metal hand he looks around the garden for signs of the girl, but amongst the milling crowds and happy families can see no sign of her. As he looks down at the necklace he holds the pendant in his hand, and a small smile creeps across his face as he holds the jade wolf close to his chest, carefully placing it over his head.

INT. SPIRE CENTRAL CHAMBER

As Gaen exits the passageway running down from the Gardens he emerges into a much quieter central chamber, much of the activity having died down as people retire to their homes for the evening. Looking up he can see the sun has moved further through the sky, its light now only lightly touching the hole at the centre of the roof leaving the spire slightly dimmer, though still warmly lit. As he walks towards the centre of the room, he sees Alyssa stood talking to a soldier who stands casually beside her leaning on a long spear that rises to at least a head above him. Gaens dark mood lifts somewhat when he sees her, no longer garbed in the ragged travel clothes he had become accustomed to, now instead wearing a loose fitting set of armour, beautifully decorated with various symbols and patterns embroidered into the leather. It suits her perfectly, and for a moment he is enraptured by her quaint beauty, staring unabashed at her. She notices him approaching and turns, head hanging shyly as she sees him assessing her new clothing. The soldier standing next to her only sees Gaen when he stands a few steps from him, and snaps immediately to attention, raising his spear and holding it in a form of salute.

SOLDIER

Sir, I have been sent to escort you and lady Alyssa to Chancellor

(MORE)

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SOLDIER (cont'd)
Dakens chamber. If you'll follow
me we'll head there directly.

Gaen nods to the soldier, not really listening to what he says as he gazes at Alyssa. Soon he realises he has been staring too long and awkwardly snaps back to reality, melancholy thoughts quickly returning to the forefront of his mind.

The soldier turns and begins to march quickly towards the passageway through which Daken left earlier, and Alyssa follows close behind leaving Gaen to trail at the back. Both exchange occasional awkward glances, but neither attempt any communication, both deciding to themselves that this is not the place or time to talk.

Whilst the passageway rises steeply up into the higher levels of the Spire, the journey is short and soon they emerge in a large lavishly decorated room, couches covered with cushions and various other luxuries lining its edges behind soft netted curtains, impressive tapestries hanging from the walls draping down to graze the floor. At the centre of the room a large table lays spread with various foods and drinks the likes of which neither Gaen nor Alyssa had ever seen, her eyes growing wide with amazement.

As soon as they walk through the door Daken rises from his chair at the centre of the table and walks briskly round to greet them both, giving a low and courteous bow to Alyssa before proceeding to hug her tightly.

DAKEN

My dear you look truly
astounding, I have never known
anyone to make armour look even
half as beautiful as you do
tonight.

He kisses her hand, before raising his head and nodding in respect to Gaen, who hesitantly returns the favour. Daken takes Alyssa gently by the hand, leading her round the table to a chair next to him as he speaks.

I trust you enjoyed your day
among the concourses of the
spire, tell me, what new
adventures did you find.

As Alyssa takes a seat next to him she starts to regail him with her activities, complimenting him several times on how wonderful the spire is. Gaen moves round to take a seat at the end of the table, his eyes catching on a large round table situated behind a curtain overlooking a large balcony. Various figures and statues arranged strategically cast shadows across a map of the country, and Gaen instantly recognises this as a war room.

(CONTINUED)

Whilst Daken listens tentatively to Alyssa, his eyes catch Gaen's gaze and a slight frown crosses his face, quickly masked behind a mild chuckle as Alyssa relates a humorous anecdote. When she has finished he turns to Gaen, meeting his gaze even through the visor of his helm.

DAKEN

And how about you my friend? Did the wonder of the Spire entertain you as much as it did your companion?

Gaen hesitates slightly, and it is noticed by Daken who immediately picks up on it, smirking as he draws pleasure from Gaen's discomfort.

Come now, surely there was something that impressed even you! After all this is a place of many treasures, fine arts, a wonderful community, truly a paradise in a world torn by conflict.

With an uncomfortable nod and a disquieted cough Gaen mumbles a response.

GAEN

I... enjoyed the garden, it was very pleasant.

Daken leans back in his chair, the smirk even more evident.

DAKEN

See, even a man trapped in a steel cage can find something of value in my home, you both do me a great honour by joining me here this evening.

Gaen nods politely, and Alyssa too bows her head.

ALYSSA

It's you that honours us, after the journey we've had this has truly been.. what was it you said? Paradise?

DAKEN

You are too kind my lady.

He bows his head once more, kissing her hand and making Alyssa blush.

GAEN

So tell me Chancellor. What exactly is this place. Who are you?

A frown once again flits across Dakens face and the currents beneath his skin swirl with disquiet at his distaste for Gaens bluntness, causing him to raise a glass of wine to his lips to cover the movement. He swirls the glass in front of him, inhaling deeply through his nostrils before taking a light sip, placing the glass gently back onto the table as the red liquid diffuses beneath his skin causing a swirling effect before fading into blue green hue that now stands out starkly in the bright light of the room.

DAKEN

Straight to the point, I appreciate your bluntness my friend. Who I am is as much who we are, my place here defines my identity and I would give everything to protect our cause.

ALYSSA

And what cause is that?

He smiles gently to her before proceeding.

DAKEN

We are known as the Shadowed Eye, an organization who dedicate their life to righting the wrongs and injustices perpetrated by the Church of the Beacon. We have seen their true face, the entity that lurks beneath their pagentry and radiant demanour, and we know of its abhorrent nature, how it feeds from those who follow it, manipulating all touched by its light to do its bidding.

He spits dramatically onto the floor in disgust.

It sickens me to my core to see such evil allowed to roam our world freely. Yet for within every evil, there is the opportunity for great beauty, and it fills me with joy to see one such as yourself freed from the chains of their tyranny.

His eyes meet Alyssas gaze and they linger smoderingly for a second, before she averts her eyes, blushing. She picks up a small glass of wine and draws it to her lips, missing her mouth and accidentally pouring the wine onto her lap. Panicked she attempts to place the glass back on the table, but misses by a fraction and it wobbles dangerously on the edge before falling to the floor. Eyes scrunched in embarassment she holds her breath, preparing for a barrage of insults from her host, but after a few seconds Daken

(CONTINUED)

bursts into fits of laughter, slamming his fist onto the table in mirth. Even Gaen chuckles and Alyssa turns red with shame.

Do not fret my lady, glass is
easily replaced as is the wine
within it. Come now, you turn as
red as the drink itself!

He laughs again and this time Alyssa laughs with him, a nervous yet heartfelt giggle. After a few moments of this Daken sighs loudly, wiping a tear from his eye. He gestures to the food laid before them with open arms.

No more talk, for now eat and
enjoy before the food cools! I
promise you there are more
exquisite flavours and textures
on this table than you have ever
experienced in your life. When we
are finished we can continue our
discussion.

As Alyssa and Daken fill their plates with a variety of foods, Alyssa carefully sampling and choosing a piece from almost every platter, Gaen watches, still uncomfortable and suspicious of the man that sits before him. His reluctance to eat is noted by Alyssa, who with a large slice of meat in her mouth points towards a particularly well cooked animal of unidentifiable species, and Gaen's stomach rumbles as saliva fills his mouth. Succumbing to his stomach's needs, Gaen too fills a plate, and soon the three are contently eating their way through the table, Alyssa and Daken chatting idly about trivial things as Gaen watches him carefully.

INT. DAKEN'S CHAMBER - AN HOUR LATER

Daken leans back in his chair massaging his belly and lets out a large belch, a small whisp of blue/green air dancing delicately on the breeze before dissipating. Alyssa in a similar state groans, a small burp catching in her throat as she tries to hold it in.

ALYSSA

I feel like I may explode, I
don't think i've ever been quite
so full in my life.

Even Gaen sits in his chair somewhat uncomfortable, adjusting his armour as its tightness beckons discomfort from his full stomach.

DAKEN

Truly it was a marvellous feast,
I shall give my compliments to
our cooks as soon as possible,
they deserve praise I do not

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAKEN (cont'd)
think even I can give to credit
their mastery.

The sound of shouting and voices arguing echoes up the corridor, carried by the wind into the chamber causing Daken to sigh, running a small toothpick between incadescent teeth that are all but see through.

Ahh that'll be our other guest, I hope you don't mind but I hired you a guide to assist you on the rest of your journey. I assure you he is the most skilled and loyal man I have ever met, despite his... less than approachable demanour.

GAEN
And what journey is that? How do you know so much about us?

DAKEN
As I said, we live to make the Church's life a living hell, it is my job to know everything of import that occurs, and my lady, you are perhaps the most important thing to happen to either side in the history of our conflict. After all, who do you think engineered your escape from that desolate church?

ALYSSA
That was you?

Her eyes light up.
Have you heard from Hieron? Did he make it out safely? Please you have to tell me.

For the first time since meeting him, Dakens face falls visibly as sorrow tinges his features. Even the swirling currents beneath his skin slow, reducing to mere waves, and he hesitates to meet Alyssa's gaze.

DAKEN
I am truly sorry that it is me that has to pass this news to you my lady. Hieron... did not make it.

Alyssa's face falls, a hand moving to her mouth to cover her despair.

ALYSSA

No....

DAKEN

He was captured by the Church,
that much we know, and taken to
be tried before the Elders under
the charges of treason against
the Beacon.

The gravity of the charges instantly registers with Alyssa, and her face falls into her hands where she holds her head in quiet sorrow.

There was nothing we could do,
although we tried our hardest to
save him. Hieron was a dear
friend to me, and I miss him
greatly with every day that
passes.

Gaens hardness towards Daken softens slightly as he see genuine emotion grip the man, the sorrow on his face as real as that of Alyssa, and he bows his head in silence for the fallen man that helped save her life respecting both their loss. At that moment a loud voice bellows from the corridor, the fury in his voice almost comical.

RHADAGAST

I said get out of my way you
stinking eejit.

There is a roar followed by the clang of metal against stone and one of Dakens soldiers bounces across the floor, landing in a heap near the foot of the table.

SOLDIER

Sir i'm so sorry I tried to
stop..

DAKEN

That's quite alright, you may
leave now Dywin, take the rest of
the night off.

The soldier quickly leaps to his feat, saluting Daken with a sharp bash of his spear into the floor.

DYWIN

Thank you sir.

He turns and marches back down the passageway, visibly cowering from the hulk of a man that walks through the entrance to the room, even the large passageway seeming small in the prescence of his dominating figure.

(CONTINUED)

DAKEN

Lady Alyssa, allow me to
introduce you to Rhadagast,
captain of the Furious Dune
Divers and commander of my fleet.

Alyssa gazes up at the tower of a man, having to tilt her head upwards to see him clearly. His frame is strong and lean, muscles bulging from the heavy black coat that adorns his frame, hanging down to the floor where a metal hem scrapes against the stone. A short red beard covers the majority of his face, highlighting the large green eyes that sit prominently, now staring down at the table full of food. Atop his head a large black hat marked by three corners sits tightly, tipped at a slight angle as it is weighed down by the large chain that hangs from it, a long tooth dangling loosely near the brim.

The man marches forwards to the table, immediately reaching towards one of the meat plates and grabbing a leg from it, tearing it clean from the torso with ease and shoving it into his mouth. Juice dripping from his chin, he holds out a greasy hand to Alyssa who reluctantly accepts his hand shake, her small finger almost crushed by the steely yet warm grip.

RHADAGAST

A pleasure to make your
acquaintance lass, I've heard a
lot about yeh.

He turns to Gaen who sits solemnly staring at the giant of a man, meeting his gaze squarely, his green eyes narrowing.

And who are you supposed to be? A
bloody statue? With a face like
that i'd send the man who carved
it to the brig without a second
thought.

Gaen snarls and draws himself up, deftly moving round to square up against Rhadagast, though his head barely reaches his chin even with the helmet.

Oh that's how its gonna be is it?
Well then best prepare yourself
lad, engarde.

He swings the legs of meat at Gaen who draws one of his blades, parrying the blow and sending Rhadagast staggering. He quickly catches himself, turning back to Gaen with a hearty chuckle.

Oooh im impressed, but lets see
if that was just a lucky shot eh?

He leaps back into the fray, lunging and jabbing with his legs of meat as Gaen parries and blocks him, occasionally retaliating with a blow that is just as skillfully deflected. Alyssa stands in her chair, her face red with exasperation.

ALYSSA

Gaen stop it! Sit down!

But her cries are lost between the two men who meet in a cross of swords, face inches from each other. Rhadagast smirks,

RHADAGAST

Not bad, not bad at all. FOR A
LITTLE GIRL!

Gaen roars with fury and begins an assault that puts Rhadagast on the defensive, the blows ringing loudly and bone collides with steel. All through the fight Rhadagast chortles, enjoying the sport, whilst Gaen is goaded into a greater and greater fury. Eventually his rage causes him to mis-step, and Rhadagast siezes the opportunity to disarm him, deftly flicking the blade out of his hand and holding the bone to Gaen's neck. As Gaen snarls Rhadagast hooks his leg with one his, tripping him so he falls backwards onto the floor, where Gaen rolls across the stone to where his blade fell. He instantly grabs it and is about to lunge when Daken steps between the two intervening with a shout.

DAKEN

ENOUGH! Both of you, sit down
now!

Gaen stops mid-way through his lunge, and Rhadagast takes another bite from what remains of the now some-what dishevelled leg of meat before nodding to Daken. He moves over to the seat at the other end of the table to Gaen, pulling it out and dropping his heavy frame into it, causing the wood to creak and groan from the strain. The table shakes visibly as he raises his two great leather boots up and places them heavily onto the stone of the table, a look of great comfort settling on his features. Gaen rises and sheathes his blade, catching Alyssa's look of disapproval. He bows to Daken solemnly.

GAEN

I apologise, that was
innapropriate.

DAKEN

There is no harm done my friend,
I first hand know how skilled an
agravator Rhadagast can be.

RHADAGAST

Well i'm deeply hurt! I'll have you know there are many social circles in this world that consider me quite the pleasure!

Gaen returns to his seat, his fury still visibly boiling beneath the surface.

Ahh comon on now lad, don't be like that, was just a wee bit of fun. Truth be told you're a finer fighter than i've seen in years. Been a long time since anyone gave me that much of a fight. My hats off to ya.

He takes off his hat, bowing it as a gesture of good will, and Gaen nods back, his rage subsiding somewhat.

Alyssa smiles across the table as peace settles, and is about to speak when the words catch in her throat. She chokes a little, shock on her face as she rises to her feet and clutches her throat, words dying on her lips as only a croak spews forth. Gaen rises to his feet and Daken moves over to her and patting her on the back, assuming she is choking, concern lining his face.

As he raises his hand to deliver a sharp slap, hoping to free whatever food has become lodged in her throat, Alyssa's eyes spark with golden light and the room around her is flung into disaray as a shockwave tears through it, upending both the table and Rhadagast who rolls across the floor to collide with an ornate column, dazed.

Alyssa falls to her knees clutching her head, coarse whispers roaring deafeningly yet unintelligably around her as golden light streaks from her body. As the whispers increase in volume she lets out a shriek that pierces the air, causing Daken and Rhadagast to clutch their ears in pain. Gaen braces himself against it, struggling towards Alyssa, fighting against the force that radiates from her.

As he reaches for her, his hand finally makes contact with her shoulder and through his mind flashes a torrent of images, a great city shrouded in darkness, a bright light appearing above it. As the light spreads to the streets below the city shatters, rupturing as if struck by some ungoldly force that tears it apart, and as he watches in horror half of the city falls away, crumbling into a dark abyss, consumed by the void below. A terrifying roar, its inhumanity wrenching rings around him, and a horrific visage of bone and blood flashes before his eyes before darkness consumes him.

With a gasp he finds himself back in Dakens chamber, Alyssa weeping in his arms. Daken rises to his feet from where he was knocked by the force, a look of great concern on his face.

(CONTINUED)

DAKEN

The Beacons tie to her is getting stronger, it's trying to establish control.

Gaen looks up at him as he turns to Rhadagast who stands by the pillar watching the scene unfold, eating his leg of meat.

You must leave at once.

INT. SPIRE EXIT RAMP

Rhadagast, Alyssa and Gaen walk down a large exit ramp that trails from the center of the spire to its exterior. Bright sunlight shines through a great opening ahead of them, through which multitudes of figures swarm as various races enter and leave the Spire. Several street merchants stand at the side of the ramp with stalls, calling out loudly to the crowd as they attempt to sell their wares, but the party pays little attention, Rhadagast and Alyssa deep in discussion. Alyssa's face is somewhat pale, and she still seems shaken from the events of the meal, but otherwise holds herself together, a thin smile on her face.

RHADAGAST

So yer telling me that theres a city somewhere out in that blasted desert? I mean no offence lass but are ye sure? I've travelled these dunes for years and I've never seen so much as a shack that could stand on that infernal sand.

ALYSSA

That's what the map says, it's really all we have to go on unfortunately, I wish I could be more help.

RHADAGAST

Don't worry your pretty head about it, you making it all the way here is as impressive a feat as any.

He turns to Gaen who walks a short distance behind them, his gaze wandering around the busy convoy as takes note of all the different people that swarm around them.

I expect we've got you to thank for that lad, you've done well.

Gaen tips his head in recognition of the thanks, and Rhadagast snorts.

(CONTINUED)

RHADAGAST

He doesn't talk much, does he?

ALYSSA

You get used to it, though where I was raised they always taught us to "be wary of a quiet man, for he has much to hide".

She takes a meaningful glance at Gaen, who turns his head away, refusing to make eye contact as a sour grimace purses his face. Alyssa's eyes dip as shame causes her to blush, instantly regretting the unnecessary jab. Rhadagast's eyes dart awkwardly between the two, his demeanour instantly awkward and uncomfortable as he is unsure how to respond without offending one of the others.

RHADAGAST

Errr, well yes, I guess that could be true, though personally I always prefer a quiet man, its the ones that talk your ear off you need to watch out for. Long days trapped on a ship, he'll make ya want to throw yerself overboard in hours.

Alyssa giggles and even Gaen smirks at the attempt to alleviate the situation, Rhadagast sighing with relief as the tension passes. A sudden flash of realisation hits Alyssa and she stops, turning to Rhadagast.

ALYSSA

Wait a minute. What you said earlier, are you telling me we're already at the desert? But it's half way across the country from where we are.

He continues to walk and she trots to catch up as they near the exit of the long ramp, the rock walls curving outwards as they reach the tip of a large gateway, huge steel doors hanging loosely open accepting all visitors.

RHADAGAST

Aye but ye travelled via a rune gate didn't ya, and those buggers will send ya to another world before ya can blink if you're not careful, bloody ancient technology, gives me the willies.

A bright flare of light momentarily blinds Alyssa as she steps out of the ramp, and for a moment she is dazed before finally adjusting to the harsh sunlight that beats down, causing the air to ripple with heat as if it were an ocean. Before her stretches a long concourse of docks and

(CONTINUED)

stores that run alongside a small stone platform. Beyond that, an endless sea of golden sand stretches as far as she can see, the sand shimmering and warping in the heat, glittering on the gentle breeze that carries it through the air. She turns to look back up at the Spire, for the first time seeing it from the outside, a massive conical formation that arcs up into the sky to dizzying heights, floating several feet above the ground at its base. For a moment it seems like it might float away as the breeze causes the entire structure to shift with a groan, but as Alyssa stares she sees several huge iron chains embedded in the surrounding rock and sand, tethering it to the ground.

ALYSSA

This is.. I don't.

RHADAGAST

Come now lass, don't tell me you've never seen a floating city before.

He laughs heartily, his dominating frame shaking jovially. It truly is quite a site to behold isn't it. I remember my first time seeing it, nearly passed out from the shock.

ALYSSA

It doesn't make sense, how did we get here?

Rhadagast stands and ponders for a moment, scratching his head as he searches for a way to explain their re-location, when Gaen interrupts, still staring up at the floating structure.

GAEN

It was the bracelet, the symbols carved on it must have been some sort of address that led us here, translocation of matter via a subdimensional network of gates.

Both Rhadagast and Alyssa stare at him, shock and bewilderment lining their faces, more than a little hint of confusion running across Rhadagasts.

ALYSSA

How do you... I mean... that's.

GAEN

I don't know.

He shrugs passively, turning from the spire and walking on towards the docks.

I just, know it somehow.

RHADAGAST

Well i'll take yer word for it laddy, but it dunne make me feel any better about it.
Transdimensional
who-sa-ma-callits just sounds like another way of saying creepy old magic, and I want nothing to do with any of that.

He turns and matches Gaens stride as he walks past him towards the stone concourse, Alyssa staring after them, her eyes follow Gaen with an expression of concern and confusion as she ponders this sudden burst of knowledge. She takes one last look up at the Spire, taking in the magnitude of the floating city, before turning and running after the two, swiftly catching up though not without breaking a sweat from the unbearable heat.

EXT. THE DOCK

As they walk along the stone concourse Alyssa watches the activity around her with enraptured interest. Men and women of varying race and size haul baggage and cargo onto what look like giant dunes that sit just off of the rocky pathway, small clouds of sound ejecting into the air as the heavy barrels and crates land. As they walk many of the people working on the sides of the dock stop and produce a mixture of bowing, cheering and saluting as Rhadagast walks past, and he responds in a similar fashion, bowing, waving and smiling a toothy grin at those who wish him a safe journey and cheer for his passage.

GAEN

It seems like you have quite the following.

RHADAGAST

Aye lad, when you've been doing something as long as I have it pays to make as many friends as possible, and thats what how I treat my crew and ship-mates, as friends not labourers. I would rather fight side by side with a brother than a man for hire anyday, after all they're a lot less likely to stab ya in the back.

Gaen nods approvingly, his gaze wandering over the faces that turn and greet them as they pass, seeing the genuine and affection, the loyalty they have towards Rhadagast.

(CONTINUED)

GAEN

I can see why Daken made you
Commander of his fleet, your
reputation with your men is
impressive.

RHADAGAST

Well thank ye kindly lad.

He turns to Alyssa who walks on his other side, enjoying the jubilation, her eyes darting from point of interest to point of interest. Nudging her shoulder he gives a wink and a small smile.

See, I knew somewhere beneath all
that armour there was a flesh and
blood man, just gotta let him
warm up to ya.

GAEN

Trust me, i'm warm.

Rhadagast laughs again heartily, wiping a tear of mirth from his eyes.

RHADAGAST

Aye the desert may be beautiful,
but she's also a harsh mistress,
and this heat will only get worse
until nightfall. Ahh here we are.

He gestures to a dock near the end of the platform where a large crew of mostly human men, though a couple of women and a Booldar are also present, are loading several crates and barrels onto a large sand dune that seems to pulsate as the heavy cargo lands on it.

How goes the loading Jason?

A tall thin man, very little muscle covering his bones runs towards them, his face somewhat gaunt but healthy looking. He reaches forward and clasps Rhadagast's beefy hand, his own looking like a child's in the giant's grip, shaking it heartily before Rhadagast pulls him in tightly for a bear hug that crushes the wind from him, causing him to stagger back wheezing.

JASON

(Wheezing)

Everythings set for departure
Captain, we were just waiting for
you.

RHADAGAST

Aye well i'm here now, prepare
everyone for launch, we'll be
leaving shortly. Oh where are my
manners, Alyssa, Gaen, this
here's Jason my first in command
and life long brother in arms.

(CONTINUED)

Both Alyssa and Gaen bow their heads in greeting to which Jason looks quizzically, before waving his hand in return.

JASON

It's a pleasure to meet you both!

He turns and runs back to the vessel, beginning to bark orders to the others standing around who immediately spring into action checking that the cargo is secure and unmooring several large ropes from the dock which they let fall into the sand where it sinks slightly, the ends trailing out of view.

ALYSSA

This may be a stupid question
but... where is the ship?

A long warm smile crosses Rhadagast's face and he turns to them both.

RHADAGAST

Well don't tell me you've...
neither of you? Oh this'll be a
treat then. Come on, quickly now!

He grabs Alyssa by the hand and runs with her in trail to the dune, taking a powerful leap from the edge of the stone dock launching them both into the air to land atop the sand dune. Alyssa wobbles as the sand shifts beneath her feet but Gaen lands behind just in time to prop her up. As soon as they land Rhadagast climbs atop a small pile of barrels and begins commanding his crew, shouting orders which Jason responds to in a manner befitting a checklist.

RHADAGAST

Cargo secure?

JASON

Check.

RHADAGAST

Supplies?

JASON

Enough to last us three weeks at
least, four if we let the diver
rest.

RHADAGAST

Ale and other essentials?

JASON

Well stocked and strong enough to
kill a man, just as you like it
sir.

Rhadagast grins, his teeth shining yellow in the desert light, the brightness of the sun revealing several dark gaps where a few teeth have escaped him. He jumps down from the barrels, turning to Alyssa and Gaen.

RHADAGAST

Yer best hold on tight, this'll
be an experience you'll never
forget.

With that he pulls a large ornate horn from his side and blows deeply into it, the deep booming sound echoing across the docks causing a rousing cheer to come from all the workers who crowd around the edge of the stone platform. For a moment both Gaen and Alyssa look around in confusion, before the sand beneath them makes a low bucking movement, almost throwing them from their feet. Slowly but surely the sand starts to peel away, rolling down to the side of what is revealed to be a large wooden platform, ornate yet worn railings lining its side. As the sand continues to fall, Alyssa rushes over to edge of the platform, staring down below it and catching a glimpse of something large and scaled moving within the shifting sand. With a bellow similar to that of the horn, and a jolt that would have sent Alyssa reeling over the railing were it not for Rhadagast catching her by the scruff of her armour, a great spined worm coated in heavily armoured plates, large black tendrils draping below it that writhe and twitch with the creatures movement, rises into the air as if floating on some unseen force.

As the great beast shakes the remaining sand from its body, the crowd erupts into more cheering and Rhadagast smirks at Alyssa who stands amazed, jaw once again open in disbelief. He turns and marches back towards the central deck where Gaen sits on a barrel, staring up at the head of the worm which has emerged some twenty meters ahead of the platform, a long set of pincers clicking as they feel the air around them, the last grains of sand falling to the desert below.

RHADAGAST

Hold onto yer hats ladies and
gents, we've got a lot of ground
to cover and no time to waste!

As the crew rush around performing last minute preparations for departure, Jason barking orders and pointing at anything out of place, Rhadagast strides up to the bow of the platform, once more drawing the horn to his lips. With a deep breath he blows once more into the horn, the sound resonating in harmony with the worm that roars in return, a melodic yet deafening below. The worm lurches forward, darting into the air with surprising speed as it shoots into the sky, quickly leaving both the Spire, and the cheering people behind.

EXT. DUNE DIVER PLATFORM- SUNSET

Alyssa sits on the side of the platform, her legs trailing below her through one of the slats in the side, occasionally brushing against some of the spines of the great worm that pulses beneath her, letting out low melodic notes as it glides smoothly through the air. She closes her eyes and leans back, letting the wind whip through her hair, a look of utter contentment crossing her face. As she opens her eyes she cannot help but marvel once again at the beauty of the desert before her, its golden sand a swirling sea of mystery that ripples and pulses with every gust of wind.

A door loudly creaks to her left, and Alyssa looks up the deck to see Gaen emerging from a tall wooden door in the side of the platform that leads down into the captain's quarters. As he shuts the door behind him he turns towards her, catching her staring, and she quickly averts her eyes gazing back out into the desert, but not before he notices the movement. He hesitates and starts walking towards the other side of the decking when he stops, and with a sigh turns, walking towards Alyssa. As he takes a seat next to her she turns her head away, her face red with a mixture of emotions that represent the confusion and turmoil within her. He opens his mouth a few times to speak but words fail to come out, and after a while he just shuts it, staring out into the desert with her. Occasionally she glances towards him, making sure never to be caught, and he too does the same, both awkwardly taking turns in staring at each other until finally they mistime it and their eyes meet, producing an awkward laugh as they both turn away. Gaen looks back out over the desert, a small smile on his face, and as the sun begins its final descent before them radiant orange light casts its glow across the desert, making it shimmer even more than before, the dancing particles giving it an almost flame like appearance.

GAEN

It's beautiful.

Alyssa awkwardly snaps to attention blurting out her question before recoiling in embarrassment as Gaen struggles to answer.

ALYSSA

What?

GAEN

I uh.. I said it's beautiful, the desert I mean.

ALYSSA

Oh... yes it is.

She sighs.

(MORE)

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ALYSSA (cont'd)

All that time I spent locked in the Church I was taught all about the world, I read about these places but...

GAEN

It could never quite match up to the real thing.

ALYSSA

Exactly! And the priests filled our head with so many stories of the evils that lurk outside of the Church's reach... I don't know I guess I knew it was wrong, but at some point I started to believe it.

She looks down at her feet, swaying in the air, a sad smile crossing her face.

All that time wasted heeding their beck and call. I never even considered what amazing experiences I was missing out on. I definitely never expect this...

Her gaze lingers longingly on the desert, and Gaen stares with her. After a while, the silence becomes somewhat uncomfortable as neither knows how to continue the conversation. Eventually Gaen once again breaks the silence, his tone falling slightly more serious.

GAEN

Rhadagast says we should be there in a few days, but since we're not really sure where there is it could be sooner, or longer...

He pauses, his face falling somewhat solemn as if something weighs heavily on his mind. Alyssa takes note of this and her face softens slightly.

ALYSSA

Whats wrong?

Gaen stares down into the desert for a while, before bringing his eyes up to match the sinking sun.

GAEN

Do you think there are any others? In this city I mean...

ALYSSA

Guardians? I... I don't know. The stories all say that they simply vanished centuries ago, leaving

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALYSSA (cont'd)
this world without a trace but...
I guess you're the proof that
that was just another lie.

Slowly but purposefully, she moves her hand across the decking, eventually coming to rest on top of Gaen's. He glances down at the hand and Alyssa panics, unsure if she overstepped her bounds, about to withdraw. Yet as her hand moves his overlaps it, holding it in a tight embrace. Their eyes meet, and a soft smile spreads over both of their faces. Eventually Gaen breaks the gaze, turning his face away, shame and pain replacing the soothing happiness as he releases her hand.

GAEN
I'm sorry, for not telling you
what I was, what I am. Not many
people...

ALYSSA
Not many people would understand,
I know. I mean you're a living
legend, even to me that's a little
jarring.

GAEN
I never meant to hurt you, I want
you to know that, but maintaining
control of.. that thing. Its a
constant struggle, and when
Wolf...

She raises her hand to his shoulder and he nods, emotion choking the words in his throat.

ALYSSA
I never told you how sorry I was
for your loss. He was a good
friend.

After a moment she lowers the hand, placing it in her lap as she contemplates everything that happened.
Do you know what it is? That
thing inside you?

GAEN
No, just that its always been
there, or at least for as long as
I can remember. It's like, a
constant itch you can never
scratch, a whispering voice in
the back of my head that begs for
release constantly.

Alyssa suddenly sniggers, causing Gaen to turn towards her with a look of hurt and rage twisting what little of his face is visible. She holds up a hand as she laughs, and tries to stammer out words inbetween deep breaths.

ALYSSA

No... no.. I'm sorry it's just. I mean look at us, one destined to be possessed by a God, the other a host for a monster that eats people. I mean did you ever see your life being quite this... I don't know. Strange?

For a moment confusion replaces the hurt on his face, but it quickly breaks into a smile and he too joins in with the laughter, both of them sitting on the edge of the deck laughing in unison. As the laughter dies down, Gaen pulls out one of his blades spinning it in his hand.

GAEN

These blades, and this armour, they're the only link I ever had to where I came from. The man that found me, who raised me, said he came across me one day wandering alone in the woods, crying. I was already wearing the armour, and no matter how hard he tried to get it off it wouldn't budge.

It wasn't till I was seventeen that I heard my first tale of the Guardians and began to piece things together. That's when I knew I had to know more, had to know why I was left alone wandering in those woods. This city... it could finally give me answers, about who I am, about what I am.

They both sit in quiet contemplation as they stare at the desert below, the turmoil of their lives weighing heavily on them both. As the sun's last rays radiate across the deck Gaen rises to his feet, taking Alyssa by the hand and pulling her to hers.

GAEN

Quickly, come with me. I want to show you something.

Alyssa's protest is lost in her throat as he drags her across the deck towards the tail end of the platform, where the sun now angles its last rays across the sand.

(CONTINUED)

ALYSSA

Gaen I don't see anything.

GAEN

Shhh just watch, havn't you ever wondered why they call it the desert of glass.

ALYSSA

They ran out of ideas for names? I don't.

He puts his hand across her mouth gently and points as the sun finally dips below the horizon, the darkness of the night broken only by the light of the moon. As the orange light fades, so too does the consistency of the desert, and slowly but surely the golden sand begins to fade, the particles becoming completely transparent beneath them. The effect occurs as a ripple, spreading from the horizon towards the Dune Diver, and as it reaches the pair the sand beneath them rolls away into nothingness. As it fades, the sand reveals deep gaping chasms that stretch down into darkness, illuminated by giant crystal formations that glow with a green/blue light making the transparent sand above them shimmer and sparkle, the wind rolling across it making it seem like an ocean.

ALYSSA

It's incredible...

Gaen turns his head towards her, Alyssa too enraptured by the beauty of the desert to notice.

GAEN

It truly is.

Down on the main decking, Rhadagast leans in the shadows watching the two, a small blade dancing between his finger as he eyes them both. With a flicker of frustration he slams the knife into the wooden railing, embedding it within the frayed wood. He turns without a second glance, walking down a set of stairs that leads down into the darkness of the ships hold.

INT. DUNE DIVERS HOLD- EARLY MORNING

A large bumping motion quakes the Dune Diver, awakening Alyssa from a restless sleep in a hammock that hangs close to floor, occasionally brushing against the warped wood of the platform. It doesn't take her long to adjust to the dim light that filters through gaps in the planks, blearily rubbing her eyes as she looks around only to find the hold empty except for herself. Swinging her legs from the hammock she lands barefoot on the frayed wooden planks, jumping as a splinter buries itself into her soft skin.

(CONTINUED)

Its only as she sits pulling the splinter out with an yelp of pain that she hears the muffled shouts filtering down from the deck above, panic clearly lining many of the cries and bellowed commands. Quickly pulling on her boots, neglecting to buckle all the latches completely, she rushes to the narrow stairway that leads up onto the surface, making her way up it as the Diver lurches and leans, almost throwing her from her feet.

Eventually she reaches the solid wooden door at the top, meeting resistance as she pushes against it, the door not budging in its frame. She tries again, this time throwing her full weight against it and with a groan it slowly pushes open before flinging back on its latches as a strong gust of wind catches it, sand tearing into Alyssas face as she emerges into a raging sandstorm that whirls violently around the Dune Diver. Shielding her eyes she attempts to scan the deck whilst staying upright, eventually spotting Gaen and Rhadagast stood on the bow of the ship attempting to secure a harness line that leads down to connect the platform to the Diver.

As she nears them they finally manage to pull the robe taught, Rhadagast tying it into a extremely complex yet secure knot with ease, leaning back against the deck and breathing a deep sigh of relief which causes him to cough and splutter from the inhaled sand. He notices Alyssa approaching, and covers his mouth with one of his arms as he speaks, not wanting to repeat the mistake.

RHADAGAST

Ye chose a poor time to come
above deck lass, better you head
down to the hold and wait out
this storm.

ALYSSA

I can help, just tell me what
needs to be done.

Rhadagast eyes her up and down unconvinced before he gives way, moving across the deck towards a stack of barrels that rattle loosely, tugging on the robe that binds them instantly stilling them.

RHADAGAST

As you wish, secure any loose
cargo you find, just give a tug
on the robe and tie it off, nice
and simple. With any luck we'll
be out of the storm in...

His words trail off as from deep within the storm what sounds like the distant striking of thunder echoes ominously on the wind. He stops in his tracks, scanning the area around the Dune Diver, his eyes peering into the storm as he attempts to pierce the sand with his gaze.

(CONTINUED)

From within his jacket he pulls a small set of goggles bound by an elastic strap which he pulls over his head, setting them into place on his head. A small visor with several lenses drops over the goggles and Rhadagast flips through them as he gazes into the storm, the lenses helping to filter some of the sand from his vision.

The booming increases in both pace and volume, and it soon becomes clear that it is no thunder, but instead the sound of drums beating loudly in the storm. As Gaen tracks the noise it works its way around the entirety of the Dune Diver, seemingly circling the ship whilst the pounding of the drums gets louder and louder, ever drawing closer. Rhadagast runs down to the main deck, a smirk on his face as he shouts to his crew who dash about the deck following commands from Jason.

RHADAGAST

Look alive lads! We've got company and they aren't gonna wait for an invitation! Prepare the hooks and draw ya blades.

He turns to Gaen and Alyssa, shouting to them over the storm.

Lad you're with me, lady Alyssa please, head below the deck and hold on to whatever you can, you'll be safe there.

ALYSSA

Whats going on? Wheres that drumming coming from?

Rhadagast is about to answer when he is forced to jump out of the way as the floor opens beneath him and a large spherical cannon folds out from within the deck, a long and dangerously pointed harpoon jutting from its neck. He turns to bark orders to the men who grab the machines, pulling them into position by the railings of the platform, locking them in place with heavy chains whose rattle is lost to the fury of the storm. As they move to the main deck, Jason runs past and Alyssa grabs him by the arm.

ALYSSA

Will someone tell me whats going on?

JASON

Pirates my lady, using the storm for cover, now please get below deck, we can handle this. The captains the best there is, ain't no-one commands a diver like he does.

(CONTINUED)

He turns and runs to help secure one of the cannons which becomes knocked loose by the storm, the men struggling to pull it back into place and secure it. Gaen puts his hand on Alyssas shoulder gently, moving her with him towards the door leading below deck. She pushes his hand from her shoulder turning on him almost immediately.

ALYSSA

I want to help! I'm not useless
you can't just shut me away.

GAEN

It's not safe and without you
this entire journey is pointless,
we need you alive.

ALYSSA

That's stupid, I can fight just
as well as the rest of you.

He sighs with frustration and picks her up, slinging her over his shoulder. She kicks and punches at his back but the armour completely absorbs the force of the blows, Gaen barely reacting to them. He reaches the door to the hold and throws her in, making sure she lands safely below where she turns and begins to charge up the stairs.

Don't you dare Gaen, GAEN!

He shuts the door, drawing a heavy set of crates across it so that it can no longer open, securing them in place with a chain that he binds to two rungs in the floor. Alyssa begins to hammer on the door screaming bloody fury at him, and when he is sure the door will not budge he struggles against the storm back to where Rhadagast stands scanning the skies. As he nears the Captain, Rhadagast points to the sky to the right above the Diver and bellows to his crew.

RHADAGAST

Incoming on the starboard side!
Arm the hooks and hold steady!

From the storm of sand and wind another great Dune Diver emerges, this one a mixture of reds and browns that camouflages it almost perfectly against the sand storm. Whilst slightly smaller than the one upon which Gaen stands, it is covered in ferocious look spikes and spines that hang from the platform upon which various men in sand coloured robes and rags wave their weapons, screaming in a language Gaen does not understand. On its tail, a large metal spike protrudes viciously in a hook like curl designed for ripping and gouging apart any foes, and it lashes it towards Rhadagast's diver as it descends, narrowly missing the platform.

As it draws even with their diver, running almost parallel Rhadagast raises his hand.

RHADAGAST

Hold lads, keep her steady now!

Several of the men slowly pull back large iron handles on the cannons causing the hooks in their necks to turn slightly, sinking back into the weapons as they prime to fire.

Just a few more seconds! Keep
your calm!

The diver finally draws perfectly parralell, several men on the enemy ship running the egde with large spears which they throw across to Rhadagasts ship. Most fall harmlessly, either striking the platform or the Divers scales and falling to the floor, but one sails towards Rhadagast who catches it in the air with a hearty laugh. He quickly turns it and throws it straight back across, impaling one man through the chest sending him skittering across their deck.

FIRE!

With a screaming noise that rings through the storm, the cannons launch their barbed hooks at incredible speeds across the gap between the divers. They arc gracefully through the sky, glinting against the little sunlight that breaks through the chaotic storm, before plummeting towards the pirates platform landing in a shower of splintered wood and gore as they bury themselves into the both the decking and the worm below, connecting both divers by a series of large thick ropes.

They think they can mess with my
ship, attack my crew, well
they've got another thing coming.
FOR THE EYE!

With his war-cry echoing across the deck Rhadagast runs towards the railing of the platform, leaping over it to land squarely on one of the thick ropes which he begins to slide down in a standing position, laughing heartily as the bloodlust of battle sets in. Several other crew members follow suit and board the other ropes that trail tautly between the divers, Gaen not wasting any time in leaping on behind Rhadagast as he watches the mad captain sail down the rope, dodging a barrage of arrows and bullets which fly from the pirate's platform, laughing as he fires off shots from his own pistol which he draws from within his cloak. He instantly kills several pirates that are clustered around the end of his rope attempting to sever it, and lands with a thump on the deck, engaging the nearest pirate with a long cutlass, the tooth from his hat swinging wildly as he darts between enemies cleaving them into pieces, firing shots wildly with his free hand.

A large man, his face coated in sand covered bandages charges at the captain from across the decking, his thudding footsteps sounding even above the fury of the storm and combat. In his hands he wields a large chain

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which ends in a spiked metal ball, its shiny steel surface dulled by layers of caked blood and grime. He swings it towards Rhadagast who unaware, drives his sword into a pirate unlucky enough to fall into his line of sight, and the ball would have killed him instantly were it not for Gaen who leaps in the way, deflecting the ball with one of his blades before landing with a flourish, firing several shots from his weapons which shift between blade and pistol with such speed that the transition is barely visible. The large man crumbles to the deck as blood begins to seep from several holes in body, and Rhadagast turns tipping his hat to Gaen.

RHADAGAST

I owe ya lad!

He parries another pirate who charges him, swiftly knocking him over and beheading him.

It's a fine day to die, but i'd
just as soon live to have another
drink!

His hearty laughter rings out across the battlefield, several of his men cheering from amidst their engagements, and Gaen and Rhadagast stand back to back, both deftly dispatching any pirate foolish enough to come near them. They fight with such co-ordination that it seems they are the same person, and from across the battlefield Jason watches, his eyes glinting with dangerous jealousy before he is dragged back into his own fight against a woman with a long spear, garbed in minimalistic clothing that only covers the essentials. He darts between her jabs, small daggers glinting as he curls himself around her, impaling both into the back of her neck. She drops to the floor dead and he smirks as he wipes he blood from his face, before stumbling as a jolt shakes the deck. Looking ahead he sees the two worms begin to drift apart in unison, only to come back towards each other in one fluid rapid motion. Turning to Rhadagast he yells with all his strength, the force visibly straining him.

JASON

DEATH ROLL!

Rhadagast looks up from his fighting just in time to see the two worms heads narrowly miss colliding, both worms turning vertical and beginning to rise into the air coiling around each other. As more of their bodies become vertical the combatants that stand unawares are sent flying, falling down into the desert below where they disspear amongst the raging storm. Rhadagast grabs Gaen, dragging him to the side of the platform where a half shattered railing hangs securely from the edge. He turns and bellows, his message as much for his crew as Gaen.

(CONTINUED)

RHADAGAST

Hold on tight!

Gaen sees several of Rhadagasts crew leap for any secure object and for the most part they all make it in time for the Diver to turn itself completely vertical as it coils arounds its foe, twisting into the air as if in some bizzare dance highlighted by the swirling storm around them. Many of the pirates realise too late what is happening and are flung from the deck, bits of debris and loose cargo raining down on those who manage to grab hold of something in their fall, knocking them loose. A barrel falls towards Rhadagast and Gaen, bouncing along the vertical deck before launching into the air towards them, and Rhadagast fires several shots into it causing the cask to rupture and explode, showering them with a coarse red liquid to which Rhadagast opens his mouth, drinking in the wine with glee.

RHADAGAST

Ahh that hit the spot, I think
it's about time we be leaving
lad, don't you agree?

Gaen nods, his grip slipping on the railing momentarily causing him to leap back against it, regaining his hold. Rhadagast pulls the horn from his belt and lets out a deep bellowing blow that roars over the screams of those plummeting to their deaths. His crew immediately scabble their way across the vertical deck towards the large hooked ropes still embedded in the platform, cutting them loose one by one and swinging back across their diver where they hang dangerously amidst the swirling storm as the two worms climb ever higher. From within another pocket in his jacket Rhadagast pulls a small purple sphere with various mechanical components lining the outside. He flicks open the chamber of his gun barrel, and seeing it empty turns to Gaen.

RHADAGAST

Time to prove yerself lad, when
the ball glows, shoot it! And
pray to yer gods that theyre
taking care of you today.

He twists several of the mechanisms, starting them spinning vigerously and launches the orb into the air towards the front of the Divers platform. His aim is true and his throw strong and the orb arcs upwards, reaching its peak swiftly near the divers head as it starts to glow a bright purple colour that constrasts the browns of the sandstorm. Gaen flicks one of his blades into gun form and fires a single shot that hisses through the air, narrowly avoiding several bits of falling debris before it hits the orb squarely with a clink. For a moment the world seems to fall silent as fractures appear along the surface of the orb, before a huge explosion rips through the surrounding

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area carving a large chunk of flesh from the Divers head. It bellows with pain, further explosions rippling down its back as the orb falls towards Gaen and Rhadagast whose face falls slightly as he sees his weapon exploding towards him.

RHADAGAST

Well that can't be good.

He glances around him and sees the final rope embedded in the deck a short distance below them.

Jump lad! JUMP!

Both him and Gaen launch themselves towards the rope as an explosion rips through the deck they held, the force of the detonation tearing the final hook from the decking as it shatters around it causing the robe to flail wildly away into the storm. Rhadagast catches it within one of his hands, sliding down it somewhat with a grimace of pain as the rope burns his skin, swinging back round just in time to catch Gaen who having missed the robe flounders through the air. With his free hand Rhadagast catches him by his gauntlet, his hand gripping him tightly, and hauls him onto the rope just as their Diver levels out, freed from the ties that bound it to its foe who now falls heavily towards the desert, viscious scorch marks lining its back amongst the wreckage of the shattered platform.

With a bellow Rhadagast cheers and the rest of his crew join in, hanging from the ropes that dangle loosely from the Diver as they drift away into the storm.

EXT. DUNE DIVER PLATFORM

A hand grips Gaen as he drags himself over the edge of the platform back onto the deck of the diver, hauling him onto the warped wooden floor. Rhadagast looks down at him as he catches his breath, nodding with approval.

RHADAGAST

Ye did good lad, ye did good.
Theres always a place fer ye on
my ship if ya need it.

With that he strides away across the platform barking orders and congratulating his men on their victory. From across the deck Jason glares at Gaen, malice lining his face which he quickly conceals before follow Rhadagast through the crowd, recieving another crushing hug when the captain spots him. As Gaen rises to his feet he stops as he sees Alyssa, hair wildly out of place, splinters sticking out of her amour though none have wounded her, a look of indignation and comical fury aimed directly at him.

(CONTINUED)

He takes a step back as she stalks towards him, raising her hand to strike him and he goes to raise an arm in defence only to stop and she freezes in her tracks, her eyes drawn to a something directly above him. Several of the other crew members turn to look in the same direction, some paling and others jaws dropping as whatever shocked Alyssa catches their eye. Even Rhadagast's eyes widen with something amid to shock and anticipation as he gazes behind Gaen, and the effect is no different when Gaen finally turns, a great tear in reality hanging in the air before him, lightning arcing from its jagged edges around which reality warps before disappearing into the maelstrom of the rift.

A large bolt of lightning strikes down nearby, brushing dangerously close to the diver which lets out a low moan of discomfort, tilting as it swerves away from the powerful blast. Several people are thrown to the floor by the sudden movement, and Rhadagast grasps a railing and he begins to bark orders to people, several other lightning bolts crashing down inches from the Diver.

RHADAGAST

Secure everything and head below deck!

He turns to Jason who stands a few meters from him awaiting orders patiently, though his eyes dart nervously towards the rift every few seconds.

Manual control lad, guide this beastly out of here before we all get fried.

Jason nods and runs across the deck towards the bow, pushing a foot down on a small panel that lays concealed near one of the prominent railings. The railing detaches with a hiss, popping free and reforming swiftly, the wood creaking and groaning from the strain, forming a set of handles that arc down onto the Diver allowing the operator to turn its head as they please.

ALYSSA

Wait you can't leave! This is it!
I don't know how but, what else could it be?

RHADAGAST

I'm sorry lass but this ain't no city, there's only death waiting for us if we stay here.

Another bolt of lightning crashes down, this one scorching the decking causing the Dune Diver to bellow in fear.

GAEN

She's right, we can't just leave now we're so close.

(CONTINUED)

RHADAGAST

Aye and what would you have me do? Risk the lives of my men, my ship just so you can have a chance at finding something that may not even be here!?

ALYSSA

If we don't then we'll all die anyway, the Church will come for me and even with your entire fleet do you really think you stand a chance against the Beacons might?

Rhadagast hesitates, his face conflicted and he weighs up every possible outcome of events that could spiral from this one decision. With a grimace of indecision he lets out a low moan and rubs a hand across his face, before bellowing to his crew.

RHADAGAST

Ughh I can't believe i'm saying this but. All hands on deck! We're not leaving just yet.

The crew around him look uneasy, no cheers of support this time, and several stand in disbelief at the their captains orders, Rhadagasts face souring as they fail to move. Well don't just stand there! Protect the ship! Get any cargo on deck down below, fasten the platform moorings.

Jason turns from his position.

JASON

Captain?

Rhadagast holds up his hand to him, gesturing for him to wait a second whilst he turns back to Alyssa and Gaen, his face resolute as he seeks his new course of action.

RHADAGAST

So whats the plan? What do we do?

Alyssa and Gaen look uneasily at each other, neither sure what the answer is. Gaen looks back out at the rift, the diver drawing relatively close to its position as it attempts to pass it, Jason desperately attempting to dodge the strikes of lightning that radiate even more frequently from its horizon.

ALYSSA

We fly into it.

Even Gaen turns to Alyssa in surprise as she suggest what sounds like a suicide run. Rhadagast's jaw momentarily dropping in surprise before he bursts into a hearty laughter, the strikes of lightning punctuating every laugh.

RHADAGAST

Oh aye we'll just fly into the
gigantic swirling hole of doom,
that'll be fun!

He laughs again, but at Alyssas face his laughter slowly fades as he realises she is being serious, her eyes meeting his with a hard stare.

Well... but... ye can't be
serious! Fly? Into that thing?
Have ya gone mad?

ALYSSA

You asked what we should do, this
is near the area the map states
for the location of the city
isn't it? I don't see any city,
but I see that thing there and
that's the best lead we've got.

Rhadagasts eyes dart to Gaen who stands a little uneasy, but steels himself, the same serious commitment lining his face. He nods to Rhadagast in agreement with Alyssa and the captain turns in despair.

RHADAGAST

Bloody lunatics, the whole lot of
ya.

A wide grin creeps across his face as he turns back, his beard standing on end from the static in the air.

I like you, I like ye both.
Darkness be damned, why not.

He turns to Jason, cupping his mouth as he bellows down the Diver.

Take her in lad!

JASON

But captain!

RHADAGAST

Death or glory, that's what we
live for lads, we've come this
far ain't no sense in turning
back now, the young ladies got
that right.

Several of the crew still hesitate and even Jason fails to respons.

Excuse me? Are ye telling me that
my crew, the same crew i've

(MORE)

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RHADAGAST (cont'd)
fought countless battles with,
that faced endless storms with a
cheer, are more afraid than this
wee little girl? Is that it? You
want to go running home to yer
mummies, cower in the bosom as ye
suck yer thumbs?

Several of the men let out a resounding.

CREW

No!

RHADAGAST

I'm sorry what was that? Must
have something in ma ear cause
that was pathetic!

With a roar of,

CREW

NO CAPTAIN!

The crew leap into action, bracing themselves as Jason reluctantly swings the diver towards the rift in space, the beast bellowing in disapproval but unable to alter its course. As the draw close to the great rift, its size becomes apparent as it clearly dwarfs even the massive worm, its edge rippling and crackling as reality tears around it.

RHADAGAST

So what's yer plan? How do we
pass through safely?

ALYSSA

I... I hadn't thought that far
ahead.

RHADAGAST

WHAT!! Well what the are we
supposed to do? Ram it?

ALYSSA

I don't know! Havn't you ever
tried something like this before?

RHADAGAST

What flying into a tear in the
bloody sky? No lass can't say I
have!

ALYSSA

Well I.... Gaen?

A short distance away, Gaen walks towards the bow of the ship, every step slow and heavy as if he was sleep walking. Alyssa jogs to catch up, drawing parralell to him quickly, yet he keeps walking, slowly and methodically towards the end of the platform, towards the rift.

Gaen whats wrong? Gaen?

She reaches for him but Rhadagast catches her hand holding her back. She turns to protest, struggling, but he points at Gaen causing her to turn her head.

RHADAGAST

Look.

As Gaen nears the edge of the platform his armour begins to glow an ethreal blue colour, sigils of various shapes and sizes that were not previously present illuminating themselves with a cold radiance from which light particles drift. Beneath his helmet his eyes take on the same cold light which shines through his visor, making it seem as two small specs of light shining through the radiant metal. His mouth moves as if he is whispering, but either no sound comes out or it is lost beneath the wail of the wind and the crack of the lightning which strikes ever closer to the diver, its discomfort apparent.

Gaen raises a hand towards the rift, open palmed, and before Alyssa can react a bolt of lightning leaps from it impacting Gaen on his gauntlet, electricity surging through his body, rippling visibly over the armour. Yet it does not harm him, and as the power surges through his body Gaen merely stands whispering to the portal, the runes on his armour slowly beginning to detach from the metal, floating incandescantly into the air. Like a tornado of symbols and light they coil around the lightning bolt that lingers between Gaen and the portal like a tether, worming their way up around the fluctuating tendril until they touch the edge of the rift around which they swarm, slowly working their way around the entire tear until its edges glow blue with the light of the symbols.

For a moment the centre of the rift collapses in on itself, the darkness congealing into a ball before it expands rapidly to fill the tear, stabilising to form a steady gateway beyond which stretches a seemingly endless rocky chasm that hangs disembodied in the air.

RHADAGAST

Well i'll be damned.

ALYSSA

Gaen!

Alyssa cries out as he crumples to the floor, his legs giving way beneath him. He instantly returns to consciousness, clutching his head, shaking it in disorientation.

(CONTINUED)

GAEN

What.. What happened?

ALYSSA

The gate, you opened the gate!

Gaen looks up at the stabilised portal, then down to his hands in bewilderment.

GAEN

I... I don't remember... I...

His words are lost as Rhadagast belows over him to the crew who stand in awe of the newly formed passageway.

RHADAGAST

See lads, what did I tell ya! And ye doubted yer old Captain. Shame on the lot of ya!

His words are scolding, but said with a grin that belies more humour than insult.

Jason!

JASON

Yes captain?

RHADAGAST

Take us through.

Jason hesitates and for a moment it seems as though he might refuse, but he grimaces and with a swift movement of the handle the Diver arcs for the centre of the gateway, letting out a bellow as it crashes into the rift, slipping through it only to vanish from the desert, the rift destabilising in its wake as the gateway slams shut behind it.

INT. THE CHASM

As the diver fully submerges in the rift, the crew is bombarded with a mixture of colours and sounds that tear across the deck causing everyone to shield their eyes and ears for fear of going blind or deaf. Within an instant though, reality snaps back around them and they find themselves hanging inside a large chasm, large glowing crystal formations embedded in the rock walls dimly lighting the surrounding area.

Rhadagast, toppled by the lurch as reality snapped back into being around them, sits up and grabs his hat from where it has fallen nearby.

RHADAGAST

Well, now that was something wasn't it.

(CONTINUED)

He stands surveying his ship, several other crew hands slowly rising to their feet, Gaen and Alyssa stood near the bow.

Status report? Jason how fares the diver?

JASON

She's fine captain, a little spooked, but no more than the rest of us.

RHADAGAST

Good, lets check our supplies, someone give a head count, and I want...

JASON

Captain look!

Jason excitedly interrupts Rhadagast pointing at something below the diver, and with a flicker of annoyance Rhadagast turns, walking towards the edge of the deck with several other men, as well as Gaen and Alyssa who all stare down into the darkness of the Abyss below them. It doesn't take long for Rhadagast to spot what excites Jason so much, as not far below them a large stone platform leans out across the abyss, several docking moors lining its edges. Against the wall upon which the dock lays, a large door carved from the chasm itself and covered in a mixture of symbols and large geared mechanisms sits embedded in the rock.

Rhadagast strides over to Alyssa and Gaen who both gaze down upon it, Alyssa's face a mixture of excitement and anticipation, whilst Gaen holds both trepidation and a somewhat serious grimace.

RHADAGAST

I don't know about you lass, but that looks like an entrance to something grand if i've ever seen one.

ALYSSA

It's the city, it has to be. Gaen we found it!

Gaen nods in agreement, but something within him recognises the design and structure of the door and its surrounding area, and this buries his smile beneath a turmoil of emotions leaving him in a concerned grimace. The Diver drifts down slowly out of the air, Jason taking great care when maneuvering between the narrow walls of the chasm, eventually drawing along one of the mooring posts that line that great dock. Looking down Alyssa's head spins at the endless drop below her, Gaen having to catch her as she trips, a smile crossing her face.

(CONTINUED)

ALYSSA

Sorry.

GAEN

It's alright, let's go.

He leaps across the small gap between the diver and platform landing deftly with several other crewmen who proceed to secure the landing ropes to large iron rungs that jut out of the stone. The diver moans with contentment at finally having a chance to rest, and Rhadagast pats it on the side of the head, a low murmur of pleasure emanating from deep within the worm.

RHADAGAST

Ye did good lass, ye did good.

He turns to his crew, now assembled on the platform.

Until we know more about this place we remain on guard, I want sentries posted every hour, make sure the rotations fair. We're gonna take a small party deeper and see what we can find. Jason, Tommin, you're with me, Gaen and Alyssa. The rest of you stay safe, guard the Diver. If we ain't back within a few hours I want ye to fly till ye find a way out of this place, but do not enter the city, understood?

The crew respond with a resounding

CREW

Yes Captain.

And return to securing the diver, repositioning men as sentries. Jason and a large man with something akin to a cannon strapped to his back step forward, standing by Alyssa and Gaen. Tommin stretches out a hand to both, heartily shaking both their hands, his cleanly shaved face split by a wide grin.

ALYSSA

It's a pleasure to meet you
Tommin.

He nods but does not reply, Rhadagast joins them having given a final few orders, placing a heavy hand warmly on Tommin's shoulder. Alyssa looks quizzically at the large man, who still fails to respond to her greeting, staring happily at them all. After a short assesment of the situation Rhadagast laughs.

RHADAGAST

He can't talk lass, don't worry
theres nothing wrong with ya.

Tommin smiles, shaking his head enthusiastically before opening his mouth wide, revealing the severed stump of a tongue which makes Alyssa flinch somewhat in disgust, despite her attempts to hide it.

GAEN

We should move... lets go.

He turns and strides ahead of the group leaving the rest looking after him. Rhadagast looks at Alyssa in confusion, a flash of concern crossing her face.

RHADAGAST

Whats got up his armour?

ALYSSA

He's never met another Guardian,
let alone been to one of their
cities, i'm sure he's just
excited.

RHADAGAST

Aye... poor lad, must be lonely,
all these years with no-one like
him around.

He smirks to Alyssa.

Let's hope that changes today eh?

She smiles back and nods, and the group walks after Gaen towards the great door that towers above them. As they draw close they catch up with Gaen a few meters from the door, staring up at it, looking at the intricate mechanisms carefully.

GAEN

There's no switch, no key,
nothing.

ALYSSA

Maybe its like the runegates? You
need a specific combination to
get in?

RHADAGAST

I think it might be simpler than
that lass.

He brushes aside some of the fluorescent moss that coats the stones in the area, pulling a large clump from the top of what appears to be a small pedestal. In the center of the stone lays the imprint of a hand carved into the rock with similar crystal formations to that of the runegate lining it.

(CONTINUED)

Yer up laddy, i'm fairly sure it
ain't gonna work fer me.

Gaen walks over quickly, placing his palm in the slot without hesitation, and a low creaking sound echoes through the chasm. Light immediately begins to spread from the imprint, trailing down the formations lining the pedestal and arcing rapidly across large veins of crystal in the ground which, submerged beneath a layer of solid rock, glow dimly even through their concealment. The light hits the base of the door and begins to curl its way around the frame, flowing into the sigils and symbols which burst into life with blue light at its contact. As the light reaches the tip of the door, the great gears within it begin to stir, screeching and moaning as they turn as if moving for the first time in centuries, rotating slowly in place, showers of rust falling to the floor below.

With a low groan, the sound of stone grating on stone begins to resonate within the cavern as the great doors slide open slowly, the mechanisms within it whirring as they spin rapidly to maintain the movement. After a while it halts its progress, a narrow passageway laying open between the two halves of the door, wide enough for party to fit through with ease. Gaen nods and in silence, all five members pass through, excitement and awe at the great door mechanism lining all faces but Gaens who jaw sits clenched in grim determination. As they take their final step through the great divide between the door, the mechanism retracts and the door slowly seals itself behind them as the party moves into the darkness that lays beyond, Alyssa and Jason glancing back with some concern as the doors shut with a heavy clang.

EXT. SHADOWS PRECIPICE

The five stand on the precipice of a large chasm that spreads before them into darkness, the light rapidly fading as the doors slowly close behind them, sealing them inside the abyss. Tommin pulls a torch from a satchel that hangs across his chest, attempting to light it with a two flints that spark brightly in the darkness. It catches just as the two doors fully seal behind them, providing a brief respite from the darkness that closes in on them causing even Rhadagast to huddle closer to the group. Tommin shines the torch around, leaning over the edge of the chasm as a rock skitters across the floor before flying off the edge, disappearing without a sound. To either side of the group, the remains of a great stone arch arc upwards only to crumble a few meters into the air, the middle of the structure missing. Alyssa casts an uncertain look at Gaen who glances up at the shattered arch, his face darkening. Turning he sees a small path running alongside the chasm, leading down the cliff face, and immediately he sets out to follow it, quickly being

(CONTINUED)

swallowed by the darkness as he leaves the safety of the flame. Jason runs back to heave against the door, trying to open it again, but it refuses to budge and eventually he concedes, falling back to the group.

RHADAGAST

No sense in standing here, the
lads got it right. Tommin you
lead, I'll take up the rear,
watch your footing all of ya.

They set along the path, following Gaen who constantly walks just on the edge of the flame, occasionally vanishing as he slips into the shadows. Alyssa walks between Jason and Tommin, her concern for Gaen deepening as he draws ever more distant from them. She is so caught up in watching after him that she fails to notice as part of the cliff face gives way beneath her feet, causing her to teeter dangerously over the edge before Jason grabs her, pulling her into him against the chasm wall breathing harshly. Fear on both their faces.

ALYSSA

Thank you...

JASON

Don't mention it.

Alyssa turns to look for Gaen but he is nowhere to be seen, having continued to walk onward. The party turn and continue to follow the path, a lot more carefully now, and Rhadagast pats Jason on the back gently, nodding in approval and thanks for his quick action. Before long the path begins to widen, eventually trailing away from the chasm wall and spiraling down into the darkness. Several more bits of ruined architecture line the path, the group having to pick their way past more than one fallen column, and as they round a sharp bend past the remains of another arch they find Gaen stood still, staring ahead of him into the shadows. Alyssa walks up slowly behind him, the path now wide enough for all five to stand next to each other with ease, and places a hand on his shoulder gently causing him to start. He immediately relaxes as he sees her, but quickly turns back his attention in the direction he was staring, completely silent, his lips drawn thin.

ALYSSA

What is it? Did you find
something?

GAEN

Theres no-one here. It's just...
ruins.

ALYSSA

We don't know that. They could
just be deeper in, I mean, we
havn't even found the city yet.

(CONTINUED)

Even as she says it the hope in her eyes fades, knowing equally well from the decaying ruins around her that something terrible happened here.

GAEN

Yes... we have. You're standing
in it.

He draws one of his blades, spinning the gyroscope in the fire light as the weapon flickers into its pistol setting, though this time the barrel is longer and more pronounced. Raising it above his head he fires, the shot screaming as it arcs through the air, leaving a trail of light behind it that shines in the darkness. The flare erupts in an explosion that casts an eerie white light ahead of them, the bright light hovering in the air above. Alyssa steps back, drawing her hands to her mouth in horror, Rhadagast and his men visibly paling even in the coarse white glow of the flare.

Before them lays the city of Shadows Precipice, or what remains of it, the broken and shattered structures silhouetted against the bright light of the flare, jutting from the ground like the bones of some gargantuan skeleton. All around them, buildings lay torn open, their rooves caved in or crumbling to the point where they teeter on collapse. Great citadels rise out of the ground ahead of the them, their walls broken and hollowed, the insides slipping down into their foundations as the structural integrity is slowly worn down by the years of neglect. But what stands out to them all more than anything, and what makes Alyssa fall to her knees in despair is the streets that stretch out infinitely before them, lined with the bones of thousands of men, women and children, rusting armour decaying around the bleached skeletons whos jaws hang agape in their final death cries.

RHADAGAST

By the Gods... this... this is
too much.

ALYSSA

Gaen I...

GAEN

Let's keep moving.

He starts to walk ahead into the city.

RHADAGAST

Move where lad! There's barely a
wall still standing!

Gaen points to a large citadel near what would have been the centre of the city, its walls hanging open revealing a relatively intact interior.

(CONTINUED)

GAEN

If we can make it there we can at least get a decent view of the city, see if theres any other structures that stand out. If nothing else maybe we can find an exit.

Alyssa stares up at the cold emotionless mask that covers Gaens face, concern mingling with the horror that still wracks her body. Gaen once again sets out ahead, moving swiftly amongst the debris, taking care not to step on any other bones. After a while it becomes an impossible task as the path becomes clogged with bodies, forcing him to walk atop the dead who crack and click as their skeletons are moved and broken underfoot, creating a symphony of shattering bone that echoes chillingly through the city. The others follow, Alyssa barely containing her disgust and fear as she crosses the sea of the dead, every crack making her wince. Rhadagast pulls a flask from within his coat and drains it in a series of gulps, the strength of the alcohol making him wince. He offers it to Tommin and Jason who each follow suit in a similar manner, their pale faces becoming flushed as the alcohol burns through their system.

They walk for around half an hour through the dead city to reach the citadel, the bones crunching beneath their feet eventually pushed to the back of their minds as they try to ignore the macabre situation, though it is never fully forgotten. As they draw close to the great building they find it in similar state as the rest of the city, great stone steps leading up to its entrance coated with the debris intermingled with the dead that fell there, the skulls staring back hollowly at the party who gaze up at the dark structure. Above them the light from the flare begins to die down, and Gaen motions for them to follow as he begins to make his way up the stairs towards a ruined set of doors, a large gear having fallen from somewhere above taking out half of the entranceway.

INT. SHADOWS PRECIPICE CITADEL

When everyone has made it inside they stand for a moment, staring at the shattered building around them. The dying light outside casts shadows that seem to creep and crawl across the rubble, casting horrific sillouettes of the bones that lay scattered even here. Eventually Gaen speaks again, breaking the silence causing Alyssa and Jason to start.

GAEN

We should head to the top of the building. Fire another flare and see what we can of the surrounding area.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

And how are we supposed to get up there?

He gestures a short distance within the building where a large set of stairs lay in ruins, the supports having collapsed in on itself leaving the skeletal remains clinging to the walls in places.

GAEN

Me and Rhadagast will climb between the floors. The rest of you wait down here, see if you can find anything.

ALYSSA

I want to come with you. I don't like the thought of us splitting up, not here.

GAEN

You'll only slow us down, the sooner we reach the top the sooner we can find an exit.

The hurt on Alyssa's face pierces into Gaen, but he steels himself to it and turns away, walking over towards the remnants of the staircase. Rhadagast gently pats Alyssa's shoulder, trying to comfort her somewhat.

RHADAGAST

He's right lass, it's a dangerous climb and we can't risk ya getting hurt.

She turns her face away from him, the hurt mixing with anger at being brushed off so callously. Rhadagast looks after Gaen and turns back to her, an understanding look on his face.

Sometimes its better to feel nothing at all, than to feel pain like I imagine he's suffering right now. Remember, no matter how bad this seems to you, to him.... well, you catch my drift.

He pats her once more before turning and jogging to catch up with Gaen who is already beginning to scale one of the walls, climbing deftly between the remains of the staircase.

INT. SHADOWS PRECIPICE CITADEL - THIRD FLOOR

With a groan Rhadagast pulls himself up from the remains of the stairwell, rolling onto the ground wheezing from the effort of the climb. He flops his hand in Gaens direction, who stands assessing the next bit of wall they need to ascend to reach the next floor.

RHADAGAST

Lad.... Lad slow down. My old bones can't handle this.

He stops to wheeze again for a second, staggering to his feet as he shuffles over to Gaen, stopping next to him.

RHADAGAST

Sit down for a moment, rest. If ya push yourself too hard you could hurt yourself or worse.

GAEN

I'm fine.

His voice is steady as he responds, but Rhadagast can immediately see Gaens chests rising and falling heavily, sweat beading and running down his cheek from beneath the helmet.

RHADAGAST

Well then, at least give this old timer a chance to breathe eh?

He sits down on a rock and removes his hat, fanning himself with it. After a moment, he goes to speak, hesitating slightly before committing himself.

Lad, about the city... i'm sorry. Truly, I am.

GAEN

Don't... the sooner we get out of here the better. Just leave it at that.

RHADAGAST

You can't just bottle something like this away though, yer not thinking straight because of it. Look at the way you treated Alyssa back there, didn't you see the hurt in her eyes. She cares for you lad, you can't just throw her away because you don't want to deal with the situation.

Gaen rounds on the Captain, a look a rage twisting his face into a malicious snarl.

(CONTINUED)

GAEN

Deal with the situation. EVERYONE IS DEAD! This city is in ruins, theres no-one here and this entire journey has been a complete waste of time.

He slams his fist into a nearby chunk of debris that explodes with the force, fragmenting into little chunks some of which skitter below through holes in the floor.

Theres nothing to deal with. I don't know what I expected, I mean, I at least thought there might be a few survivors, someone who could help us, who could help me.

He looks out over the ruined city through the shattered remains of a wall.

But this... I never expected this.

As he stands overlooking the city, he clutches his neck as a sharp stab of pain surges through him, causing him to wince. Rhadagast walks up beside him, and as Gaen draws back his hand he sees a network of small, black veins squirming beneath the Guardians skin.

RHADAGAST

It's getting worse... isn't it lad.

GAEN

It's nothing.

Now its Rhadagasts turn to get angry, and he grabs Gaens arm in an iron grip, staring straight into his visor.

RHADAGAST

No it ain't nothing and you know it. You were the one that came to me and asked for my help, you were the one that said you were scared of losing control again, that it was getting harder and harder to stop it. And look at you now!

He releases Gaen's arm and steps back with a sigh.

Lad i'm... i'm just worried about ye is all. Bottling up all that rage, all that emotion, it aint healthy at the best of times and in yer case its a damn sight more dangerous. It's feeding that thing inside your, letting it spread through yer system, and I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RHADAGAST (cont'd)
don't want to have to be the one
to put you down should it get
loose.

For a moment Gaens face softens, and he relaxes somewhat, the black veins visibly receding as he breathes deeply.

GAEN
I'm fine. Honestly.

He looks at Rhadagast, managing a weak smile, and the captain returns it, although concern still heavily lines his face.

RHADAGAST
Aye well, I don't wanna have to
have this little talk again, now
comon, let see if we can't find a
way outta this place.

They both turn back to the broken stairwell, beginning to climb once again towards the top of the citadel. It only takes a few more minutes before they stand atop one of the crumbling turrets, the flat roof tilting at an awkward angle where some of the structure has slid away beneath it. Gaen draws his other blade, performing a similar transformation as before, and fires another flare high into the air. As it rises it illuminates the roof of the cave that sits high above them, several large crystal formations dangling from the rocky outcroppings that jut towards the city. With another bright explosion the flare bursts into life, illuminating the city below the two men, and both stare down at the shattered remains they have walked through. As Gaen turns though, the colour drains from his skin as he sees that where the other half of the city should be, only the abyss remains, a jagged cliff face marking where the remaining structures slid into the darkness, several buildings still clinging to side as they stave off the inevitable. Flashes of the vision he experienced earlier race through his mind and he takes a step back towards Rhadagast who stares just as shocked at the fallen city.

RHADAGAST
This... This is impossible.

GAEN
We need to get back to the
others.

RHADAGAST
Aye lad but look at this, I
mean...

GAEN

No Rhadagast, we need to get back
to the others now!

He turns and runs towards the opening in the floor, beginning to climb down hastily, Rhadagast following suit. Above them, some of the crystal formations slowly begin to pulse with dim light, golden energy rippling slowly across their surface.

INT. SHADOWS PRECIPICE CITADEL - GROUND FLOOR

Alyssa, Jason and Tommin walk through the broken corridors of the citadel, exploring the foundation level whilst they wait for the other two to descend. The dim light from outside causes their shadows to flicker as they grow and shrink against the dark walls, mingling with those of the dead to create a disturbing mural that constantly shifts with the movement of the light. As they round a corner near the back portion of the building they are greeted by a large slab of stone that leans precariously against the interior wall, one of the outer layers having fallen in on itself. Although only dimly visible, the flickering light of the flare occasionally casts its glare onto an iron door wedged beneath the stone, a reflected glint catching Alyssa's eye as she assesses the debris in front of her.

ALYSSA

There's an door under there!

JASON

And? There loads of doors and doorways around here, and each one holds the same damn thing.

ALYSSA

But there havn't been any others intact, what if there's something in there that could help us?

Tommin nods in agreement vigorously, and Jason sighs with frustration.

JASON

Well it doesn't matter anyway, we've got no way of moving all of this.

He gestures to the large slab of rock in front of him dramatically.

ALYSSA

It's not that big, come on i'm sure we can shift it.

(CONTINUED)

She moves to prop herself under the rock, bracing her knees as she heaves upwards, the strain contorting her face. She releases the force with a sign of exhaustion.

Well don't just stand there, help me!

Tommin immediately walks over, bracing himself next to Alyssa, and both look to Jason who sighs again in frustration before walking over and bracing himself with them.

JASON

On the count of 3 then. 1,2,3!

They all strain against the rock, and slowly but surely it rises above them, slowly sliding to the side. Alyssa squints at the doorway under the pressure of the rock, and as she sees it finally cleared struggles to speak, the strain of the weight evident in her voice.

ALYSSA

Ok, that should be enough.

With a final heave they push out from under the large slab, letting it slide down against the wall with a low scraping noise as the worn stone of the walls crumbles against each other. All three stand out of breath, sweat dripping from them, and for a moment they remain like this till they've recovered sufficiently. Alyssa immediately reaching for the door, which at first resists her attempts to open it, the rusted hinges squeaking and grating with the strain of their first movement in centuries. Yet slowly but surely, the door gives way slightly before completely swinging open causing Alyssa to tumble through the doorway as the force of her pushing meets open air. For a moment she sits dazed and Tommin runs to her, helping her to her feet and patting her down. She goes to thank him and stops as the contents of the room catch her eye.

ALYSSA

No...

As the light from Tommin's torch dances throughout the room, it reveals the heavy battle scars gouged deep into every wall of the room, blood stains still rusting on the stone even now. In the corner lays a crumpled heap of bodies, surrounding a lone skeleton in Guardian armour with a broadsword laying in its hand, its blade run through the chest plate of one of its opponents. And it is this chestplate, and the armour of the rest of the bodies that draws Alyssas horrified gaze, as the silver armour with golden trim glints in the light of the fire, blades with the sigil of the beacon engraved into them laying scattered across the floor.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

All of this... all of this death.
It was the Church. They killed
the only people that could stand
against them, then spread the
stories that they'd vanished so
no-one would go looking for them.

As the shock of the realisation hits Alyssa, Gaen and Rhadagast run through the open door behind them panting with the effort of such a rapid descent.

GAEN

We need to get out of here, now!

Above them, a low rumble echoes ominously through the city, slowly building with every second that passes. As she passes Gaen, pale and quivering, Alyssa's voice wavers as she tries to speak.

ALYSSA

I didn't... I didn't know... Gaen
I..

He stops her, grabbing both her hands in his as he moves her out of the room.

GAEN

It's ok, I know. We'll talk about
it later but for now we need to
get out of here.

The group turn and leave the room, Gaen waiting behind to take one last look at the body of the Guardian that lays against the wall. With a bow of his head, he draws the door closed and bolts after the others, catching up with them as they reach the steps of the citadel.

EXT. SHADOWS PRECIPICE

A thunderous booming noise echoes from above, and as the party looks up they see several large crystal formations dangling down from the ceiling above them, golden light radiating from each gem casting a pale radiance over the ruined city. Arcs of energy course between the formations, and soon they come to a point at the tip of one of the largest, a ball of golden energy forming that quickly expands with a screaming noise that tears through the broken streets. With a shockwave that ripples through the city, crumbling buildings and toppling Alyssa and Jason, the ball blasts into the ground with explosive force, detonating into a bright ball whose surface ripples and quakes as energy spikes from it into nearby structures, tearing through them like paper.

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From within the ball, three silhouetted figures emerge, their bulky armour and large weapons making them appear as mishapen and malformed giants, but as they step further from the light their humanity becomes all too visible, and three Ascendants, led by Dalamar march into the ruined city, their eyes burning with the same golden radiance that streaks around them as the sphere behind them fluctuates wildly.

Dalamar casts his burning gaze upon the ruins before him, his eyes quickly locking onto the group who stand still reeling from the force of the explosion. Gaen and Rhadagast are the first to recover, drawing their weapons with a snarl as they move to cover Alyssa, blocking her from the Ascendants piercing gaze. Yet still Dalamar stares, his eyes fixated on her even behind the two men.

JASON

Are those...

RHADAGAST

Ascendants. We can't fight them, not here. We don't stand a chance.

Gaen bristles with fury as his gaze darts between the three who stride down a wide street towards them, their gaze never faltering from Alyssa who still remains on the ground where she fell, he face pale and drawn with fear.

GAEN

They're the ones that did this. They killed everyone here.

RHADAGAST

Pick yer battles lad, the odds arn't in our favour on this one, we need to retreat and...

Too late Rhadagast realises that Gaen no longer stands by his side as the Guardian charges the Ascendants who stand passively, watching as Gaen leaps with such speed that his form blurs to those watching. As he reaches the peak of his jump, an Ascendant vanishes from the pack and appears next to him, its passive gaze turning on him as if in slow motion. It strikes him with such speed and force that he is sent flying through several walls, bouncing across the ground towards the edge of the abyss. He immediately recovers and makes to stand only for the Ascendant to once again appear next to him, this time striking him squarely in the face sending his head into the ground with a horrific cracking noise, a crater forming from the force of the impact.

RHADAGAST

Get her out of here! I'll hold em off.

Jason and Tommin, grab Alyssa by the arms, hoisting her to her feet as she watches Gaen tossed about the city like a dogs chew toy, the Ascendant showing no mercy. The three turn to run down a small alleyway that runs parralell to the citadel, but as they take their first step Dalamar appears in front of them, and from behind they hear Rhadagast gasping for air as the third Ascendants hand closes slowly around his throat. As his windpipe is slowly crushed the Captain hacks at his attacker with a blade, the metal rebounding several times before shattering completely in his hands, the Ascendant completely unphased.

Tommin lets out a coarse roar, his empty mouth bellowing as he draws his cannon from his back, charging Dalamar. He takes a few steps before pulling a lever on the side of the weapon, a small purple orb flying out of the end in a blur and impacting the Ascendant squarely in the chest, an explosion of flame and purple smoke rippling from the impact point throwing debris and dust into the air. Tommin smirks, but before he can react further Dalamar appears before him, completely unharmed. The Ascendant places his hand against the mans head, and a jet of fire arcs down to the ground, completely incinerating Tommin with a scream that is lost under the crackling of the golden fire.

Alyssa gasps as Jason grabs her from behind, and pulls a small dagger from his belt, holding it against her throat. The Ascendants stop in their tracks, the one crushing Rhadagasts throats relaxing his hand somewhat as its gaze turns to Alyssa who stands quaking in Jason's grasp.

ALYSSA

Please... Please don't.

JASON

I'm sorry, but Daken gave us orders. The Church cannot capture you, they can't win. The Eye will always keep fighting, no matter what the cost.

He turns to Rhadagast.

It's been an honour serving with you Captain.

RHADAGAST

(Struggling for air)

Lad.... don't.

But as the words escape Rhadagasts lips it is already too late, time slows down as Alyssa lets out a scream that echoes across the city, Gaen looking up from within the rubble just in time to see Jason draw his blade across her throat, the Ascendants throwing Rhadagast aside as they attempt to charge him. As the blade reaches the end of it's path, Alyssa lets out a final gasp, and an explosion

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of light ripples from her body flinging everyone around her back violently. Dalamar and the other Ascendant are flung through the wall of the citadel and into the street respectively, bouncing somewhat before they catch themselves, turning their gaze back to the tower of light that now emanates from Alyssa. Jason sails through the air, colliding with a nearby wall headfirst, his neck snapping instantly as he falls to the ground dead.

Gaens face is slammed once more into the ground by the Ascendant towering over him, a low hiss that still rings with a melodic tinge despite its viscious intention emanating from somewhere within the being, though its lips don't move.

SIER

Bow before your god, monster.

Gaen struggles, his face a grimace as he pushes up against the Ascendants foot, managing to raise his head just enough to watch as Alyssa glides from within the Tower of Light. Her body radiates energy that crackles and snaps around her, her skin tinged with golden light that spreads warmly from both her and the long arcing chains ending in cruel golden barbs that arc from her body like snakes, writhing in the air. On her face, a look of serene yet sinister calm devoid of emotion causes Gaen to shiver as she surveys the area around her, golden eyes burning into all whos gaze she meets.

The Ascendant within the citadel pulls himself free of the rubble, standing only a few feet from Alyssa who slowly turns towards him as he falls to his knees, head bowed before the embodiment of his deity that floats serenely before him. She glides across the ground, hovering a few feet above the debris of the shattered city, and comes to rest before him, reaching down with one hand and raising his head till he kneels before her, staring up with adoration. She stares down at him, her gaze passive, assesing, and he basks in the glory of her radiance, sheer ecstasy crossing his face. The bliss doesn't last long though, and quickly his face contorts into horrific pain as a coil of chains, wrapped around each other like a spiked tendril, plunge themselves through his belly, emerging from the other side dripping with viscera and gore.

The Ascendant lets out a silent scream of horror and Dalamar steps back into the ruins, the smirk on his face quickly fading into a grimace as his fellow ascendants body vibrates rapidly, energy leaking from him in golden bursts, the silent scream frozen on his face. Within moments his body erupts in a burst of light, and his burning husk falls to the floor, the skin melted and blistered, his eyes burnt from within their sockets. Golden smoke trails slowly into the air, lingering as it curls gently around Alyssas form which remains a clean and

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radiant golden, untouched by the death in front of her, her face still a clean pane of passivity.

Her gaze turns across the city to the Ascendant stood over Gaen, and without hesitation it bolts, fleeing towards the golden orb of light that still fluctuates on the ground a short way from the conflict. Before it gets half way though Alyssa appears before it, her chains tearing into him and shredding the armour around him as the Ascendant lets out an inhuman scream. It is tossed through the air in a maelstrom of golden claws that tear its skin from its bones as they rend the armour from his body, and in desperation the Ascendant attempts to fire a bolt of energy towards Alyssa. The bolt impacts her directly in the chest, rippling as the light sinks within her, consumed with no effect. Her eyes turn towards his tattered form, and the Ascendant screams once more before a torrent of golden flame erupts from Alyssa's palm, consuming the Ascendant in a blaze wide enough to torch half the city with it.

Alyssa drifts to the ground alongside the new smoking remains, gazing at them idly before a noise in the rubble causes her to slowly turn, her eyes settling on Gaen. She stares passively at him for a moment as he rises from within the rubble, but soon her face twists into a horrific visage which screams horrifyingly at him, her mouth contorting into extreme angles. Her entire body shudders as from behind her Dalamar plunges a small black device into her back which begins to arc a web like network of black chains across her body, Alyssa convulsing and screeching as the network solidifies into plates, forming a large ornate sarcophagus that stifles out the light. Before the face plate shuts Gaen sees Alyssa fall unconscious, the radiance fading away leaving just the normal woman, and he struggles towards her across the broken ground, limping slowly as his damaged body cries out with pain.

Dalamar turns his gaze as he sees the Guardian limping towards him, his face passive and uncaring, and as he sees the man presents no danger he turns with the sarcophagus which now floats a inches above the ground, walking back towards the Golden orb. Gaen stumbles falling to his knees, and pulls his weapon from its sheath, firing a desperate shot towards the Ascendant. It hits him in the back of the head, rebounding off Dalamar's helmet with a ping, and the Ascendant turns his head slightly in annoyance, gazing back at the wounded man. As he reaches the orb's edge, he raises his sword, pointing it at the great crystal formations above, and slices it through the air. A wave of golden energy ripples from the blade and arcs up towards the ceiling of the great cavern, impacting it with an explosion that tears across the rock face. As large chunks of rock and crystal begin to rain down upon the city, crushing every beneath their wake, Dalamar lets a small smirk slip through the passivity of his face and

passes into the orb, the sarcophagus floating gently beside him. When both have vanished from sight completely the orb ripples and quakes violently before dissipating into arcs of golden electricity that launch up into the great crystal formation, dissipating without a trace as the entire ceiling gives way, falling towards the city.

A large formation crashes down a short distance from Gaen, the shockwave knocking him from his feet as he staggers through the ruins towards the citadel, the effort of standing back up sending ripples of pain through his body. As he passes the doorway of a small building that stands surprisingly intact a hand reaches from inside grabbing him as a hearty voice booms out above the collapsing city.

RHADAGAST

In here lad, quickly, we don't have much time!

The large captain drags Gaen into a small room where the floor coils in front of them with markings instantly recognisable to Gaen. A large chunk of stone lays across its middle, blocking the position where an indent is barely visible beneath the blockage.

GAEN

(His breathing ragged)
A rune gate?

RHADAGAST

Aye, this place is coming down and we don't have a much time. Help me move this, quickly!

The two heave at the rock, the strain showing on both their faces, and after a few tries they manage to roll it to the side, Rhadagast wasting no time in tearing the tooth from his hat, plunging its flat end, which is revealed to be coated with similar symbols to Alyssas bracet, into the indent. The gate immediately stirs into life, the mechanisms spinning around them destroying any rubble in their path. As the gyroscopic motion builds up, the blue energy beginning to arc around them, a large formation directly above Gaen and Rhadagast detaches from the ceiling, tumbling towards the ground. Both brace to be crushed by the enormous geode, but as it falls the rune gate reaches its maximum velocity and in a flash of blue light they vanish seconds before the ground around them erupts as the large crystal slams into it, crushing everything in its path.

INT. SPIRE RUNE GATE CHAMBER

The two men fall to their knees as the blue energy fades around them, the darkness of the Spires rune chamber closing in as they pant heavily, trying to regain their breath.

Footsteps echo through the chamber and before long torch light appears at the entrance tunnel, preceeding the arrival of Daken and a group of armed soldiers. Daken strides in, his long robe swaying behind him as it skims the rough ground, and his face drops as he sees the two men before him, their wounds and poor physical state instantly apparent.

DAKEN

Rhadagast, what happened, your crew, your diver, where are they? Where is Alyssa?

Between coughing and spluttering Rhadagast manages to choke out a response, his voice hoarse and torn from inhaling so much debris.

RHADAGAST

Ascendants... Dalamar... took her.

DAKEN

Then our worst fears have finally come to pass.

He turns to his men, pointing to two at the rear of the pack.

Gather the members of the council and have them convene in the war room, we have little time to prepare for what comes next. Go, hurry!

The two men bow and run off into the tunnel. Daken turns back to Rhadagast and Gaen only to have Gaen leap from his position on the ground, grabbing him by the hem of his robe and slamming him up against a pillar that stands near to the edge of the gateway.

GAEN

You told them to kill her. This is your fault!

He pulls back and slams Daken against the pillar again, knocking the air from the elementals body causing him to gasp. The soliders lower their spears, preparing to charge Gaen, but Daken raises his hand ordering them to stop. As he catches his breath he turns his eyes to Gaen, staring directly into his visor attempting to meet his gaze.

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DAKEN

For the deception, I am truly sorry and you have my deepest regrets, but you more than any should understand the position in which we are placed. This is not a game, this is war, and I would rather commit the atrocity of ending one womans life than risk those of all whom I care for, such is the duty of any great leader.

Gaen tosses him to the side, and he rolls along the floor for a short distance before coming to a stop, rising to his feet as he brushes the dirt from his robe.

GAEN

You're no better than the Church.

He turns and strides out of the room down a small side passage that arcs off from the Rune Gate chamber. Dalamar gazing after him before walking over to Rhadagast, offering him a hand as he attempts to rise to his feet.

DAKEN

Are you well my friend? Here, let me help you.

Rhadagast slaps his hand away, raising his eyes to meet Dakens in a mixture of disgust and betrayal.

RHADAGAST

The lads right, you went too far this time Daken.

Daken draws back, folding his hands behind his back as he stands rigidly straight.

DAKEN

I did what had to be done.

Rhadagast sneers as he rises to his feet. He pushes past the soldiers that surround him, and they back out of his way, fear flickering on their faces as they see the look of rage that boils dangerously beneath Rhadagasts features. As he reaches the exit ramp he turns once more and faces Daken.

RHADAGAST

If we're so desperate that we'll behave like the Church just to get the upperhand, if we'll kill innocent people, then why bother fighting? They've already won.

He turns and strides into the passageway, vanishing into the darkness, and Daken stands amongst his men rigidly, his face stern and unwavering.

INT. THE SPIRE DEPTHS

As Gaen stumbles through the dark passageway, his legs barely able to support him, flashes of Alyssa pass through his mind and he clutches his head in pain. He stumbles through a doorway and into a small room where a shallow pool lays a few feet in, small waves lapping at its edge. Around it, luminescent plants grow windingly over the various rocks and small boulders that dot the area, some draping from the ceiling, vines creating an intricate webwork that fills the entire chamber with its soft white light. As Gaen stumbles into the room, his gaze flickering around wildly as the images of Alyssa continue to bombard him, he falls to his knees in front of the water, hands clenching the loose soil beneath him. Lifting his hands to head, he pulls gently at the helmet that has for so long shielded him from the world, and removes it revealing him to be no more than a simple man, short brown hair glistening with sweat. As the helmet falls to ground, tears begin to stream from his eyes and he slams his fists into the soil in frustration, the malestromm of emotions that swirl within him causing him to break down as he realises his failure.

A tear drops into the pool, ripples rapidly spreading outward across the still surface, and where the tear fell a black inky stain begins to spread through the clear water. Slowly but surely, the Darkness rises out of the water, its form long and thin but steadily growing until from its tip the face of the creature within Gaen forms, staring down at him, it's bony teeth agape in something akin to a smile. Gaen raises his tear stained face to it, and their gaze meets lingeringly, the creature staring down into his eyes, into his soul. It croons, a low clicking sound echoing from its throat as it stares at the Guardian, and Gaens gaze wavers from the dark soulless voids that fill the sockets of its eyes, the red lights within burning into him. A clawed hand ripples from the watery form, reaching down and gently touching Gaen on his chin as he stares down at the ground, his eyes closing in defeat. Beneath him, the lake ripples softly as the creatures form shifts, its water reflecting Gaens face as he says something unheard to the creature, the tears ceasing to fall from his eyes. Its low clucking once more echoes through the cavern, this time sounding more like laughter, cold and malicious, its bony teeth chattering in its maw. As Gaen sits, eyes closed, the creature begins to swirl around him, slowly encompassing the Guardian in a cold embrace, until he vanishes beneath the dark water, the last glimpse of Gaen illuminated by the light of the plants, his face staring up into the darkness, hopeless, defeated.

INT. SPIRE WAR ROOM

In a dark stone room lit by torches that hang from iron holsters in the walls, Daken and several other members of the Shadowed Eye sit round a large wooden table. Rhadagast sits with his feet propped upon the surface, a pipe in one hand as he listens to the proceedings as the members argue amongst one another.

DAKEN

We can't just sit here and wait, now that they have their vessel it won't be long before the Church brings that thing to our plane, and when it does what do you think it's first stop will be? It has the girl, it knows our location and it will come for us as soon as it can. It will wipe us out.

A female Booldar, larger even than Rhadagast sits next to him, her bulky form concealed beneath a heavy set of plated armour from which jut spikes that glint in the flickering torchlight.

SILTA

And if we attack? What then? We may be well trained but they outnumber us hopelessly, and the Ascendants will tear through our ranks as if they were unarmed children. Engaging in direct conflict is hopeless, we have to retreat to another hold and wait for our chance to strike.

Across the table a short squat animal, fur jutting from its ears, a long beard trailing to the ground pounds its fist against the table, the minor impact barely making any sound.

ERA

There won't be another chance to strike, once the Beacon manifests this war is over. We can't fight a God, at least not directly.

SILTA

Even if we did attack as you suggest, we'd be assaulting one of the greatest strongholds ever constructed with nothing up our sleeve, no back entrances, no secret passageways. We don't even know where they're keeping the girl, how do you expect us to find her in the heat of battle!?

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A voice from the shadows curls snidely through the room, as from one of the nearby passageways a large figure emerges, a plate of food in one hand from which it tears a bunch of grapes, dropping them gluttonously into its gullet.

SAVAR

Mmm perhaps that is where I can be of some assistance.

Rhadagast, Silta and the other members of the council jump up immediately, drawing their weapons, all blades pointing to Savar who smirks, scoffing at the gesture.

Oh please, enough with the dramatics. I'm simply quaking in my boots.

SILTA

The Church attacks us and they send you? They think even less of us that I'd imagined?

SAVAR

My dear I can assure you this is not a pleasurable experience for me either, this entire place is a festering hole of squalor and ineptitude, I find it quite tiresome.

The room bristles and Silta begins to stride forward with her blade raised when Dakens voice rings out commandingly.

DAKEN

Enough! He's here under my command and you will not harm him.

Silta eyes Daken warily, before spitting at Savars feet and sheathing her sword falling back into her seat with a loud thunk as her amour collides with the stone.

SAVAR

Charming...

RHADAGAST

You invited an Elder here? What were you thinking Daken, we can't trust him!

DAKEN

These are dark times, you all know that and we need all the help we can get if we are to have any chance to succeed. Savar has sat on the council for three years now, he knows Beacon's hope

(MORE)

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DAKEN (cont'd)
and he knows where they're
keeping Alyssa.

SAVAR
Quite, and trust me when I say I
am more than happy to help you
gut the little bitch and the rest
of those antiquities.

ERA
Trust you? Your reputation far
succeeds you Savar, I know of the
crimes you yourself have committed
in the names of the Church,
unspeakable things...

SAVAR
Yes yes, and I make no apologies
for it, I played the role of my
position as required and I
enjoyed every second of it.

With gritted teeth and barely restrained fury, Silta
growls her words, her hands gripping the table so hard the
wood begins to splinter.

SILTA
Then why turn on them now? Why
help us?

Savar crams a small cake into his mouth, speaking through
the food as crumbs shower the table in front of him.

SAVAR
Well you see, the other Elders
and I do not see eye to eye and
have not done for some time. I
have my own opinions on how
matters should be handled which
they view as, shall we say
extreme? A disagreement was
inevitable. I believe they move
to have my position taken from
me, and that is something I
simply cannot allow to slide by,
I mean the sheer insult alone
warrants their deaths.

He crams another cake into his gullet, the cream filling
running down his chin as he smiles.

Helping you to stop their plans?
To be honest I don't give a damn
about you or your cause, but the
look on Rox's face when you stop
him, now that will be a sight
worth seeing.

Chortling to himself he crams further food into his already full mouth, and Daken looks away in disgust.

DAKEN

With the information Savar has given us we are able to plan a strategic assault on the citadel that will give us the highest chance of both recapturing the vessel and stopping the Church. We have no time to waste on further debate so I will call for a vote, all those in favour of retreating to one of the other holds, speak now.

He casts his gaze around the room, but no-one responds, even Silta, looking on with disgust at Savar, is silent.

Very well then, the decision is unanimous. The Eye shall go to war against the Church.

He pulls a small piece of parchment from within the sleeve of his robe, signing it with a quill handed to him by Era before sealing it, handing it to a Guardsman who stands to attention near the table.

Take this to the generals, have them assemble our forces for immediate combat.

The guard salutes and leaves the room, marching swiftly down a passageway. Era rubs his small beard ponderingly, raising his head to look at Daken.

ERA

Even with this decision chancellor, Beacons Hope is three days ride, even by Diver. How do you propose to reach the stronghold in time to prevent the possession?

DAKEN

Savar has, graciously given us the address for a forgotten Rune Gate outside of city walls. We can send men through in a constant stream until the army is assembled and then attack with a swift and brutal strike. Today we will assault the Church and will end this once for all. We attack before dawn.

INT. SPIRE RUNE GATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

A large throng of soldiers fills the narrow chamber, the Rune Gate sitting at the centre of the crowd, its intricate designs now properly illuminated by the newly placed torch light that lines the walls. All stand silent, no man daring to speak as the anticipation of what is to come fills them all with a sense of dread, each knowing there is a good chance they will not return from this battle. Daken stands nearby at the forefront of the army, his flowing robes replaced with rippling mail armour that seems to flow and shift with his skin, giving him the appearance of a cascading waterfall.

He gives a small signal, gesturing with his hand, and Era garbed in his own small suit of leather armour steps forward through the horde of soldiers, a sigil in hand. He looks up at Daken, waiting for the order to activate the gate, and Daken turns to his men, slowly rotating in place until his gaze has encompassed the entire room.

DAKEN

I will keep this short and brief, for war is not the place for eloquent speeches or long drawn out monologues. Know only this, you fight for your families, your freedom, you fight for the very fate of this world. We cannot fail. We will not fail!

The throng of soldiers burst into cheers around him, and with a nod to Era, Daken signals for the invasion to begin. The small furry being shuffles across the intricately designed device, a golden ring clasped between his two paws which he slots carefully into the indent at the centre of the gate. As the blue light begins to filter through the various sigils an unsettling silence falls across the room, the whirring of machinery the only sound save for the jostling of the troops armour, every member of the army bracing themselves for the conflict only moments away. As the rings rise into the air, beginning their dance slowly, Dakens gaze once more wanders over those assembled before him, and he contemplates how many of these men he sends to their deaths.

A sharp crack echoes from the gate as one of the rings jams in place, freezing in the air with a sickening groan that resembles nails drawn slowly across stone. Several other rings freeze around it, and Daken steps forward concerned as the malfunction slowly spreads through the entire gate, all of the rings soon coming to a grinding halt in mid air. Slowly but surely, the blue light at the centre of the mechanism begins to change, fading into a sickly red colour that casts its dark light across the room, emphasising the shadows of all stood before it. The rings buckle and groan before shattering, the individual

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sigils floating in the air as red light slowly creeps across their surface, now separate from the rest of the machine.

Soliders on one side of the room slowly start to draw apart, as if allowing someone passage, drawing Daken and the other council members eyes. Out of the shadows strides Gaen, his face exposed and pale, dark tendrils twitching and curling under the skin surrounding his eyes that now sit as blackened voids in his skull, red pinpoints of light flickering in the darkness.

RHADAGAST

By the gods lad... what have you done.

Rhadagast stares, fear in his eyes as Gaen drifts past, his pace unbroken as he ignores the Captains words. Several men anxiously look to Daken, preparing to intercept the intimidating figure, but even the elemental seems unsure as to handle the situation. As Gaen reaches the gate he steps over the mechanisms, drifting above the various gears that sit below until he reaches the central pedestal, surrounded by the sigils that hang in the air, their red light reflecting off of his armour. As he lands, his footfalls make no sound, and he stands silent in the centre of the gate, his eyes fixed at a point ahead of him though seemingly not focused on anything in particular. The sigils twitch and warp in the air around him, the stone in which they're carved seeming to warp and flex as if reality were distorted, and Daken looks to Rhadagast who uneasily steps forward, trying to catch Gaens gaze.

RHADAGAST

Easy now, I know you're in a lot of pain lad, more than I can imagine, but Alyssa wouldn't want this.

Gaens eyes remain focused on the space in front of him, but at the mention of Alyssa's name they flicker slightly. Rhadagast notices this, and takes a few more steps forward to the edge of the gate.

RHADAGAST

Lets just talk about this ok? No reason to do anything rash.

As he speaks the last words, his hand reaches towards Gaen, crossing the threshold of the broken circles. Immediately Gaen slams his hands to the floor, the sigils co-allescing around him forming a wall which spins violently, constantly shifting and re-arranging, only glimpses of Gaen visible within. Red lights shoots across the floor of the room, and from outside a deep moaning can be heard, the sound of metal straining and heaving.

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All around the spire, the iron chains that anchor it to the ground buckle and heave, the metal groaning from the sudden strain they're put under as the spire shifts its position, rising into the air. Several of the ramps leading down to the ground collapse, sending people and stalls flying as the huge stone structure rises further into the air, and as the onlookers below watch the chains binding the Spire to the surrounding rock began to snap, falling down to the desert below, crushing any unlucky enough to be beneath them. Below the point of the spire, a maelstrom of red light and sigils appear as a Rune Gate, large enough to encompass the entire Spire forms out of the air, energy crackling from it, arcing down to the sand below where it strikes, the heat turning anything in its path to ash.

Inside the Gate chamber, Gaen roars a primal inhuman scream that echoes even to those stood on the desert below, and with a thunk the Spire drops through the gate, the great stone city swallowed in an instant by the raging storm beneath it.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF SOLACE - DAWN

Within the Cathedral of Solace Alyssa hangs unconscious, bound in chains that hang from the great dome of the cathedral. Directly above her the great mechanism hangs open, its golden radiance drifting around her as particles of light dance in a swirling pattern. Nine Elders sit on their thrones, Savar's empty and scarred as if it had been destroyed in an act of abject fury, deep gouges scarring the once great pillar. The tiered seating is devoid of all life, no-one else but the Elders present for the ascension ceremony, and Cain stares from his throne up at the figure of the girl in chains. She is dressed in a flowing white gown that drifts down from her gracefully, the golden light making her seem truly beautiful despite the various wounds and bruises that mar her body. His fingers come together in a pyramid before his mouth and his gaze wanders around the room, making eye contact with several of the other Elders who meet him with a glance before their eyes are drawn back to the woman hanging before them.

CAIN

After all this time... the day is finally here.

HELENA

And truly it is a magnificent sight. Soon we shall bask before the true radiance of the Beacons power, we'll bring light back to this wretched world.

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CAIN

Mmmm, but at what cost I wonder. No matter what you say Helena, this doesn't seem right. The girl should be able to choose her own fate, who are we to decide that this is the correct path.

HELENA

We decide nothing, the Beacon in it's infinite wisdom chose this vessel so that it could come before us and fix the broken races of this world, to purge us of all darkness and doubt. We merely obey, knowing that it's word is righteousness and our actions are justified.

She speaks with a zealous fury, her movements exaggerated as her eyes glisten with the fevour of her beliefs, a broad smile twisted across her aged visage. As she finishes speaking she rises to her feet, standing on her throne gazing upon the woman in front of her who only now stirs from unconsciousness, her eyes groggily rolling open as she begins to struggle against the chains.

In it's light we follow, in it's words we find comfort, in it's grace we live purely, free of darkness. On this day, we usher in a new era of peace and light, on this day we save our world!

She raises the golden sigil that still dangles from her neck towards the great mechanism, and somewhat reluctantly Cain does so as well, averting his eyes as Alyssa's gaze falls on him, a look of defeat concealed beneath a grim mask of determination as she refuses to break down before the Elders, strong till the last. Above her the great dome creaks and moans as a split runs down the center of the stonework and the entire ceiling begins to retract, the great mechanism splitting with it, streaks of light coursing down the walls to somewhere beneath the Cathedral. As the two halves of the dome slowly fall away the citadel is revealed before Alyssa, and she gazes down upon a vast army spread before her, blanketing both the battlements of the great city and the plains beyond. Below her the floor peels away like a flower blooming, a great pool of golden energy revealed by a second mechanism, a rift in reality as its center gently humming. Arcs of light drift slowly around it, and as its radiance shines from the Cathedral the assembled army lets out a cheer that shakes the foundations of the great structure.

EXT. BEACONS HOPE - DAWN

A deafening roar screams over the top of the cheering soldiers, and as many turn to find its source they see a swirling maelstrom of red light tear open in the sky above them, sigils swirling violently from within it. As quickly as the soliders below gather to view the spectacle they turn and run as the Spire launches out from within the vortex, slowly peeling away from the red energy until it falls through the air freely, plummeting towards the outer walls of Beacons Hope. It hits the ground hard, and hundreds of men are instantly crushed in its passage as it scrapes along the ground, its tip gouging a large chasm into the earth below it. The Spire collides with the large balustrades that line the outerwall, decimating them as they buckle under the wieght of the great stone city, the wall instantly collapsing and the Spire rolls past. Eventually it comes to a rest within the walls of the city, clouds of smoke and dust billowing around it, a trail of destruction and death trailing behind.

For a moment there is almost silence, only the sounds of the wounded screaming and the crumbling of the buildings audible as the Spire lays amidst the debris of the outerwall. The Beacons army gather at its feet as a hissing noise emanates from several points across the spire, coolant rising from within. Several large sections of stone fold outward, landing hard against the shattered ground beneath them, and from within the spire charges the Shadowed Eye, banners with the purple symbol of a half closed eye flying high above the soldiers who roar with a battlecry that echoes through the city. Cannons fold out from within the Spire, opening fire on the Beacons army below as soldiers within the Spire scabble to react to their new location, large explosions ripping the Beacons troops apart as purple orbs are fired into the crowds, detonating instantly. As Alyssa stares down in a mixture of shock, fear, and hope, the first of the Eye's troops meet those of the Beacon in a viscious flash of swords and energy, and the battle for the vessel begins.

INT. SPIRE RUNE GATE CHAMBER

Daken, Rhadagast and the remainder of the men within the chamber pull themselves to their feet, the shock of the impact having sent many flying. A few lay nearby, injured during the collision with the outer wall, and medics attend to them carefully as they moan in agony on the floor. In the center of the chamber Gaens stands, still illuminated by red light that now seems to pulse through his body, veins standing out against his pale skin radiating the sickly glow. As Daken blinks the Guardian vanishes, and another loud explosion rips through the room as one of the walls disintegrates leaving a great hole of crumbling stone and dust. Through the new opening everyone within the room can see their new location, and Dakens eyes widen as he realises what has happened.

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RHADAGAST

I don't believe it.

DAKEN

Everyone to your stations now,
move out into battle formations
and prepare to engage the enemy,
use any of the access ports
throughout the Spire. GO!

The men all turn and bolt from the room, darting down the passageways that lead to various exits from the Spire. Daken and Rhadagast slowly walk over to the hole in wall, gazing down onto the battle that already rages in front of them, explosions ripping through the walled city. It isn't long before Rhadagast catches sight of Alyssa, hanging within the now open Cathedral surrounded by golden light, and he grabs Daken by the shoulder pointing.

RHADAGAST

There, that's where he'll be headed.

DAKEN

Then that is where we too need to be, though our journey seems like it may be somewhat difficult.

Rhadagast smirks and lets out a low chuckle.

RHADAGAST

Aye, but we've faced worse, and i'll be damned if I let a bunch of Priests and holymen stop me now.

With a nod shared between them both they take a few steps back and run towards the hole in wall, leaping through it into the air. Rhadagast fires out a line from his pistol that slams into the wall behind him, a hook expanding as a secondary line fires towards the ground embedding similarly into a shattered building below. As the Captain slides down the newly forged zipline, Dakens body dissolves into a torrent of water that curls through the air, slamming down into the ground next to Rhadagast as he lands with a tumble, immediately drawing his blade and a second pistol. Side by side the two leap into the fray, Daken's body reforming and reshaping as he uses vast torrents of water to crush any that come near him, weaving like a flowing stream between his opponents whilst Rhadagast impales them on his blade with a hearty roar, the shots from his pistol taking down men by the dozens. As the two begin to make their way towards the cathedral, cutting down anyone who stands in their way, a sharp crack echoes from further into the city where the tip of a large tower slides from its perch, collapsing to the ground below.

(CONTINUED)

A streak of red light bursts from within the remains and darts into air, spiralling towards the Cathedral before it is forced to abruptly turn as five Ascendants, golden wings sprouting from their backs rise to meet it. The Ascendants give chase, quickly matching the bolts speed as they roar through the air, the ground shaking with the force of their passage as the red streak dives between buildings and through walls, structures disintegrating as it collides with them, the rubble exploding violently towards the Ascendants who dodge and weave what they can whilst the rest pings harmlessly from their armour.

As they manage to draw close to the bolt three of the ascendants drive ahead into a pattern, swords drawn at they attempt to intercept its movement, but as they move to attack it black tendrils lance out impaling two of them immediately. Their bodies erupt into a ball of golden fire that consumes them from within with a horrifying shriek as their burnt husks fall to the ground below, black ichor consuming them. As the third Ascendant backs away the streak changes its direction arcing directly towards it, and although the Ascendants speed is great, the streaks is greater and it swiftly catches the Ascendant, plucking her from the air and casting her to the ground with such force that the ground beneath her buckles and quakes, toppling all those unfortunate to be in the impact zone.

The remaining two Ascendants, swoop round from behind a large building and raise their palms at the oncoming streak, radiant beams of light roaring through the air towards their mark. The streak moves to avoid the assault but a beam catches it on the side and it spirals from the force of the impact, disappearing into a cloud of dust as it slams into a row of houses. The two Ascendants immediately dart down to the ground, charging into the house where the red light finally settled, swords blazing with golden light. The sounds of a brief struggle emanate from within the shattered building before an inhuman roar screeches from within, a vast wave of dark ichor exploding from the building, long hooked tendrils gripping the ascendants tightly before dragging them back within the confines of the further ruined house with a scream.

Dalamar lands outside in an explosion of golden light, his great wings unfurling gracefully behind him. As he gazes before him he sees Gaen, or what remains of the Guardian, surrounded by tendrils of dark black ichor that arc dangerously from his shattered armour. The great gaping maw of bone like teeth grins viscerously at the Ascendant that squirms in its grasp, a hollowed husk all that remains of its companion, and as Gaen opens his mouth impossibly wide he begins to suck the light from the Ascendant, particles of light tearing from the being as he screams and writhes within the dark tendrils grasp. It doesn't take long for the creature to drain the Ascendant dry, and soon it drops another broken husk to the ground, the body rolling lifelessly within its now dull armour.

Slowly but surely its gaze turns towards Dalamar, its maw hanging open hungrily, and Dalamar unfurls a long golden chain, fire bursting into life along its length. With an explosive collision the two beings collide as the bestial Gaen leaps on the Ascendant, tearing at him with dark barbs. The Ascendant retaliates equally as brutally as his chain curls around him in a vortex of fire, tearing through the dark tendrils with a viscious hiss. He leaps into the air, his great wings flapping, and Gaen is quick to follow as their combat becomes airborne. They move with speed that makes its impossible to see with the naked eye, the only signs of their clashes the flaming craters of exploding buildings that erupt all too frequently across the city as the two kill and destroy anything that gets in the way of their conflict. Gaen eventually manages to grapple Dalamars wings, biting through one with a squeal of delight causing the Ascendant to roar in pain as they tumble to ground, smashing through various structures before coming to rest in the middle of the battlefield, conflict raging around them.

Dalamar staggers to his feet, the damage of losing a wing obviously weighing heavily upon him, and his golden gaze raises to see Gaen stood before him, the inky darkness completely consuming the last vestiges of his body as the creatures toothed maw roars inhumanly. It darts forward meeting Dalamars chains which he swings with renewed fury, and two once more engage in swift and destructive combat, the environment around them shattering with the force of the blows exchanged. Weakened by his injury, Dalamar loses his footing as he trips across the carcass of a fallen soldier, and for the first time a look of fear crosses his face as the darkness bears down on him, a swirling vortex of teeth and hooked barbs spread before the Ascendant as a thousand tendrils encompass him. It lifts him into the air with a shriek, carrying him for a short distance before tossing him to the ground, broken and bleeding.

As the Ascendant lays on the floor, struggling to move his broken limbs, a heavy black claw is placed across his chest. Above him the swirling vortex of darkness slowly reforms into a truly bestial creature, its dark maw snapping hungrily at the air as it roars, the sound causing all around it to quake in terror. The last thing Dalamar sees is the jagged teeth bearing down on him before the creature closes its great maw over the top half of his torso, twisting the Ascendant's body with a horrific snapping sound as his bones pops and snap, his bottom half held down by the great claw. With a flick of its head the dark creature tears the upper half of Dalamars body away, gulping it down into its great gullet before letting out another shrieking roar to the sky.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF SOLACE

From within the Cathedral Alyssa watches the battle raging below her, and tears begin to roll down her face as the death and destruction only intensifies. As Gaen's conflict with Dalamar ends before her she stares down on the man with whom she travelled all this time, consumed by the darkness he fought so hard to contain, and her tears flow harder.

The sun slowly begins its ascent as dawn breaks across the battlefield, the horizon becoming tinged with a purple orange hue as the sun's rays prepare to leap forth. Below Alyssa, Cain rises to his feet joining Helena who still stands staring expectantly at Alyssa. He raises his hands as he speaks to his brethren, his voice loud and domineering even over the raging of the battle.

CAIN

As the sun rises, so too does a new era, an era of prosperity, free of fear. When the sun's first rays touch the vessel, the lights union with its host shall be complete, and the Beacon shall be reborn upon this plane.

He clears his throat, and begins to sing a low and melodic hymn which the other elders quickly join, their voices rising soothingly above the sounds of conflict. Below Alyssa the golden rift stirs, its pool of light fluctuating and pulsing with every note of the hymn, and tendrils of light begin to coil upward towards the struggling woman who desperately tries to pull away from her chains. She looks out across the battlefield to Gaen who tears through countless soldiers with glee, devouring men in a single bite, and with a cry of deperation and fear calls out to him.

ALYSSA

Gaen!

The creature turns its head immediately, the golden light reflecting across the sleek black ichor, and begins to leap across the buildings towards the Cathedral with a roar, its speed causing it to become no-more than a blur once more. Yet even as the dark entity bears down upon the Cathedral, one of the sun's rays casts its soft light upon Alyssa who now struggles amidst a vortex of swirling light, particles dancing on the air. As soon as the sun's light touches her, Alyssa's head hangs in a sad smile, and an eruption of energy arcs out from her, golden light exploding violently from the centre of the room. Both Gaen and the elders are flung back, crashing through the rubble that surrounds them as the cathedral collapses in on itself, its walls shattering from the force of the eruption of energy.

INT. CATHEDRAL OF SOLACE- RUINS

Gaen awakens on the floor of the Cathedral covered in rubble, his eyes rolling groggily in their sockets before he manages to focus, coughing as he inhales the dust surrounding him from the fallen Cathedral. A golden light beats down on him from above, and as he looks up he see's Alyssa, floating in the air above him. A soft golden glow emanates from her as she floats above the destruction, golden chains coiling around her arms and legs where she was bound before, a subtle ringing noise chiming melodically through the air.

GAEN

No....

She begins to glide forward from the Cathedral, coming to rest just at the edge of the ruined dome, gazing down upon the battlefield below, her eyes wreathed in golden fire. As she raises a hand, a lance of light screams from within her palm, similar to the Ascendants but far greater in magnitude, incinerating a large swathe of land and anything on it, killing soldiers from both sides without discrimination. As she continues her cull, Gaen's attention is drawn to a scrabbling noise from his right, and he see's Helena, her legs shattered, dragging herself across the broken stone. Her hair is wild and her eyes wide with madness, a golden blade in her hand which she waves wildly before her, laughing maniacally.

HELENA

You can't stop it! You can't stop it! The light is here and it shall purge this world, just as we purged your kind all those years ago!

She claws her way towards Gaen, and he struggles to remove the rubble that covers him, desperately trying to break a hand free only to find it wedged as Helena manages to get atop him, raising her blade as she bears down on him to deliver the killing blow. A gunshot rings out hollowly amongst the cavernous ruins, and with a choking noise Helena drops the blade to the floor with a clatter, blood dripping from her mouth. With a sigh she collapses, rolling to the side of Gaen who manages to pull his arms free, quickly clearing the rubble atop him. A short distance away in the archway of a ruined corridor, Rhadagast and Daken stand breathless, the gun in Rhadagast hands still smoking. Both rush over to Gaen, helping him to his feet as he groans with pain, his body coated with red welts and wounds.

RHADAGAST

Are ye alright lad? That was a close one eh?

(CONTINUED)

Gaen nods appreciatively, the pain preventing him from speaking as he is supported between the two men.

GAEN

It's over then... we failed.

RHADAGAST

Aye lad, but we gave it our best,
there's nothing more we could
have done.

The rubble a short distance from the three shifts and rolls to the floor slightly, a hand flailing weakly from within. Daken rushes over, pulling the rocks aside to reveal Cain, blood trickling from wounds across his face. Daken supports the man against his legs allowing him to lean comfortably, and Cain struggles to speak, the words coming out as a hoarse gargle in his mouth that quickly leads into a coughing fit. Daken pulls a small flask from his hip, pouring water into the dying mans mouth which he swallows appreciatively.

DAKEN

Take it easy, you're badly
wounded.

CAIN

This isn't how it was supposed to
happen, it was meant to save
us...

He gasps in pain.

For so long we followed its
guidance, no matter what it
asked. What fools we have been.

Another coughing fit wracks his body and blood spurts from his mouth, dripping down into his short beard.

RHADAGAST

Aye, and now the entire worlds
gonna pay for your idiocy. That
thing won't rest until we're all
dead.

A shockwave ripples through the ground as The Beacon lets loose another blast, the roar of the golden flame consuming the screams of those trapped within its fury.

CAIN

No, there is still hope. You...

He points a frail finger shakingly at Gaen.
You can end it, whatever it is
that lurks inside you...

Another gasp of pain ripples through his body, but a grimace of determination sets across his face as he tries to speak.

You can kill it, kill her.

Dakens face turns to Gaen who shakes his head slowly, pushing away from Rhadagast who turns his gaze upon the Guardian as well.

GAEN

No... I won't.

RHADAGAST

Lad, we've run outta options here.

GAEN

So we should just kill her!?

RHADAGAST

(Shouting furiously)

We don't have a choice, don't you think if there was any other option we'd take it!? It's too late... she's gone lad.

GAEN

No, I refuse to believe it. She's too strong for that! I won't abandon her.

He turns and runs towards Alyssa, scrabbling up the piles of rubble to get close to where she still floats in the air casting her fiery gaze across the now burning battlefield, troops fleeing towards the plains. Every step Gaen takes causes him to grimace in pain, yet still he climbs the rubble and eventually ends up on the remains of one of the tiered seating sections, only a short distance from Alyssa. He slowly staggers towards where she floats, her face blank and emotionless save for the roaring flame in her eyes.

GAEN

Alyssa, Alyssa stop!

As he cries out she raises her hand again, sending out another stream of light and fire that erases another part of the city, the brightness of the flame causing him to shield his eyes.

Please, I don't want to do this!

LISTEN TO ME!

After a short moment, Alyssa's head turns towards Gaen, and she slowly floats towards him. As she nears the ruined platform, the flames in her eyes die slightly, and a deep sadness mingled with fear scars her radiant features.

(CONTINUED)

ALYSSA

Gaen I... I can't see anything.
I'm so scared, please, are you
there?

GAEN

(Struggling against the
pain)
I'm here, just, come towards me.

ALYSSA

Where are you? Please, don't
leave me here, theres so much
pain.

Her face snaps back and forth with a melodic screeching noise as she alternates between Alyssa and the thing possessing her, the two halves conflicting each other as the Beacon wrests for control. As she reaches the edge of the seating, inches from Gaen, he reaches out with a hand and touches her face, the conflict on her face quelling instantly as she gazes sadly at him.

GAEN

It's going to be ok, I promise,
i'll protect you.

ALYSSA

It's so bright, I can't see and
it hurts, it hurts so much I cant
bear it. Please Gaen, please help
m...

She cuts off as the words catch in her mouth, the flame in her eyes flickering in and out, revealing Alyssa's beneath them. As Gaen looks down in horror he sees a long black spike of ichor that juts from his hand, embedded in Alyssa's stomach. As the radiance within her flickers and dies, a ripple of golden energy silently passing through Gaen as it travels through the air, and she falls towards him into his arms. Gaen drops to his knees from the strain of his broken body, and with a chattering laugh, the dark ichor slowly fades away from his arm in black smoke. Alyssa lays limply in his grasp atop the ruins of the great Cathedral, and he cries into her body, desperately stroking her hair, begging her to wake up.

GAEN

Please... please don't go.

But no words escape her mouth, and as her body begins to pale, Gaens sorrow turns to anger.

GAEN

No... no it's not fair... it's
not fair.

(CONTINUED)

He draws her tighter to him, rocking back and forth, and as he turns his face to the sky dark veins begin to arc across his face which contorts into a twisted mask of rage. He screams to the heavens, his body beginning to twist and rupture as dark ichor bursts forth, and as his scream continues it slowly becomes more inhuman, more monstrous. As the camera pans up to look above the Cathedral, a sickening tearing sound creeps through the air as a colossal rift tears across the sky, sickly green light radiating from within it, pulsing in unison with Gaens cry of anguish that now transforms fully into a grotesque roar.

Cut to: Black

Alyssas voice drifts out across the darkness, gentle and calm.

ALYSSA

And should light fade from this world, should the Beacon ever fail, then only one thing is certain. The Darkness will return, and it shall consume us all.

The End

Written by Nicholas J Pritchard