

The Pale-Eyed Blackbird

By

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EXT. MARBLEHEAD, NH - DOCKSIDE, MORNING

The dock at the port of Marblehead is crowded with well-wishers as people are seeing off the passenger ship The Marlin. To the side stand a young woman in a blue day dress and matching hat and a ten year old boy in dark slacks and a white shirt waving to a couple in their forties who are standing on the deck of The Marlin.

A large foghorn sounds as the crowd cheers.

GIDEON

Goodbye, Mum! Goodbye Dad!

RILLA

And don't forget to write!

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla, you don't know Mum and Dad. They don't write. They just send weird postcards.

RILLA

Are you sure, Gideon? The last that I checked, I thought they sent me a letter.

GIDEON

I bet that letter was mostly telling you that they were dumping me on you while they gallop off to dig up the next mummy.

RILLA

You're a cheeky boy, aren't you?

As the ship pulls away from the dock, the crowd begins to disperse. Aunt Rilla looks at her watch and shakes her head. Gently, she guides Gideon over to the main street.

RILLA

We had better hurry. Mr. Humperdink really doesn't like it when I'm late. And especially so since I've already imposed upon him.

GIDEON

Imposed upon him?

RILLA

Well, I couldn't just leave you to your own devices, could I? Mr. Humperdink has kindly allowed me to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILLA (cont'd)  
bring you in to work with me, as  
long as you don't cause mayhem.

GIDEON  
Of course I won't cause any mayhem.

RILLA  
Are you sure? I thought the very  
nature of little boys was to cause  
mayhem.

GIDEON  
Didn't Mum and Dad give you a  
glowing review about me?

RILLA  
Sure. But are you sure that they  
were around you long enough to  
really tell?

GIDEON  
Aunt Rilla!

RILLA  
Ha! Well, come on then. We won't  
want to be late. Mr. Humperdink  
can be a real grump about  
tardiness.

GIDEON  
Your boss certainly does sound like  
a grump. I bet his face looks like  
he's been sucking on lemons for  
breakfast.

RILLA  
Sush, Gideon. You don't want Mr.  
Humperdink to hear you say that.

Gideon and Aunt Rilla walk down the main street and turn at a side street which appears to be lined with a series of Victorian homes. However, one house has a sign in front saying that it is the Rathborne Library. They walk up to the house and Rilla opens the door and they step inside.

INT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY, MORNING

The foyer of the Rathborne Library appears to look like every other foyer of a Victorian home. Rilla helps Gideon out of his coat before taking her own off and storing the coats in a closet.

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RILLA

So this is Rathborne Library. It's mostly books, but there are a number of objects in the collection. It would be prudent that you stay away from those while you're here. You don't want to break them. Mr. Humperdink would be angry, to say the least.

GIDEON

Yes, Aunt Rilla.

RILLA

Good. I'm sure you can peruse the library and find something of interest to read while you're here.

They move from the foyer to the main living room which had been converted completely to book storage. The walls are lined with shelves and on the main floor, there are more shelves of waist height. At the center of the room is a large round table with several chairs and green shaded library lamps.

As they enter the main room, a door at the opposite side of the room opens, revealing a handsome man in a button down vest holding a saucer in one hand and a teacup in the other.

GIDEON

Is that Mr. Humperdink?

IAN

Good God, no. I'm Ian. Ian Donovan.

RILLA

This is Mr. Donovan. He's the archivist at the library.

IAN

I'm the only archivist at the library.

RILLA

Ha. It's a wonder that you're even up here. I thought the basement was your home.

IAN

One shouldn't make too many assumptions, Miss Bryson. And you must be young Gideon.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Yes.

IAN

You look like a strapping young lad. You wouldn't mind helping me out in the basement, would you?

RILLA

I can't believe you're trying to enlist my nephew as unpaid labor.

GIDEON

But Aunt Rilla, it's not as if I'll have anything else to do while I'm here, do I?

IAN

The boy's right. Besides, what harm is there? There's nothing down in the basement except those old tomes. There won't be any chance that he might accidentally break one of the Rathborne's Ming vases if he's busy hauling books for me.

RILLA

Well. I couldn't impose on you. I'm supposed to be taking care of Gideon.

IAN

Maybe, but you must admit that it would be a good solution. You know that you only narrowly convinced Humperdink to have him here.

RILLA

How do you know that?

IAN

Ears, my dear. I have ears.

RILLA

Why you unscrupulous eavesdropper...

The front door slams shut and the three of them slightly jump at the surprising interruption.

(CONTINUED)

HUMPERDINK

Agnes! Where's my dratted hat?

GIDEON

(whispering)

Who's Agnes?

IAN

(whispering back to Gideon)

That's Mrs. Humperdink. She sometimes drops by to do various things.

GIDEON

Like what?

IAN

Like dusting or making tea or...

RILLA

Shh!

Mr. Humperdink appears at the threshold of the main room from the foyer. He is an older man with spectacles and a ruddy pallor from too much drink. He is wearing a suit with a loud pattern.

HUMPERDINK

What are you two standing around for? And what's this child doing here?

RILLA

Sir, this is my nephew Gideon.

GIDEON

Hello, sir.

HUMPERDINK

Humph. I can't have children running around in here, Miss Bryson.

RILLA

Mr. Humperdink, I assure you...

IAN

Young Gideon will be working with us. You'll be doing the enviable task of shelving books, won't you, Gideon?

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Er, yes, I suppose so.

HUMPERDINK

Well, as long as he doesn't go traipsing around where the precious artifacts are being stored!

With that, Humperdink storms through the library, his attention elsewhere.

HUMPERDINK

(yelling)

Agnes! Where's my hat? Woman, do you hear me?

GIDEON

Do all husbands yell at their wives like that?

RILLA

Certainly not. Your father doesn't yell at your mother like that, does he?

GIDEON

Well, no. Except when father loses his glasses and can't find them.

IAN

(putting down tea cup)

Er. Well! Let's get on with work then.

RILLA

Hold on there. What do you mean "Let's get on with work?" You're not going to let my poor nephew do all the heavy lifting.

GIDEON

Aw, Aunt Rilla. I don't mind lifting books. I'll do them one at a time.

IAN

You heard the kid. One at a time. What's the harm in that?

RILLA

Oh, all right. I suppose that's harmless enough.

(CONTINUED)

IAN

Right then. I suppose we should get back to work before old Humperdink comes back in here and starts yelling at us rather than poor Agnes.

Ian and Rilla head towards a closed door at the far side of the main room. After a brief look around in the main room, Gideon shrugs and follows the two adults to the door. They open it and Ian flips a switch, turning on a light, revealing a narrow stair down to the basement. They head down.

IAN

I got started on the third section a little earlier before I decided to take a tea break. And after going through ten volumes of some history of the eastern peninsula, I'm not sure we should even keep them down here.

RILLA

Old history or not, we have to catalog them, Ian. It is not our place to say whether we should throw away obsolete tomes.

IAN

You're right. That's Humperdink's pervue. But you know what he'll say about it. He keeps everything. Even gum that's already been chewed and stuck at the bottom of his shoe.

GIDEON

Ew!

RILLA

He can't be as bad as that.

IAN

Well, you haven't seen his shoe.

At the bottom of the stairs, there is a long thin corridor that stretches several yards away. There are two doors to the right, two doors to the left, and one door straight ahead. The doors are not labeled. Ian opens the first door to the left, revealing a large cavern of a room with shelves of old books. To one side is a small table where the record keeping books are kept.

(CONTINUED)



IAN

Here we are. Dismal place, isn't it. No windows.

RILLA

Which is just as well. I think it would be worse seeing the sunny day outside and knowing that you're stuck inside doing this.

The two adults head to the table to take their catalogs. Gideon tags along as Rilla heads towards the opposite side of the room to start cataloging there.

GIDEON

What can I do to help, Aunt Rilla.

RILLA

You really are a good boy, aren't you? I can't believe your parents left you here with me. They could have at least had you on as a helper at one of their digs.

GIDEON

(shrugging)

I don't know about that. Mum told me that I was too young to know how to handle fragile specimens properly.

RILLA

Well, it's just your luck. Books aren't particularly fragile. I suppose you can start helping by going to those shelves on the other side. Most of these books should already be in some sort of order, but if you see something that looks out of place, just put it on the table at the other end of the room.

Gideon nods and immediately heads over to the next row of shelves to scan for out of place books. He reaches out to touch the bindings to all the covers and at first, only encounters volumes of moldy encyclopedias and texts and histories and philosophy. He finishes that aisle and then heads to the next aisle.

The sound of Rilla and Ian scribbling away in their catalog books fades and Gideon finds himself alone in the stacks. As he walks along a row of dark tomes, he spots something shining in the dim light. He bends down and picks

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up a strange golden coin which has a star on one side and a picture of a fairy on the other.

There is some writing on the edges of the coin.

GIDEON

"The wait is on the other side."

Hm. I wonder what that means?

Gideon pockets the coin but then notices something on the shelf. It is a tattered looking leather bound journal stuck between volumes twenty-one and twenty-two of the Encyclopedia of Plants from Norther Europe. He pulls out the journal but finds that he cannot open it because there is a lock on it. He heads out of the stacks to the table at the end of the room.

When he turns his back, a shadow in the stacks flicker as if it is trying to hide from the light.

At the table, Gideon finds Ian sitting to one side, going through a pile of books.

IAN

Hey there, kid. What have you got there?

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla told me to look out for books that were out of place. I found this. But it's locked.

Gideon hands over the journal to Ian just as Rilla comes out of the stacks holding an arm full of books. She dumps the books on the table and sits down.

RILLA

What's that?

IAN

Looks like young Gideon has found something interesting. It looks like someone's journal.

RILLA

Someone's journal?

IAN

No writing on the outside. And there's a lock. But that can be easily picked.

Ian reaches back into his pocket to pull out a long thin wire. He begins to attack the lock on the journal with it.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Wow. You know how to pick locks?

IAN

Uh huh.

RILLA

Ian! Are you sure you should be doing that? I mean, it's locked for a reason. You can't just go prying into someone's secrets like that.

IAN

Trust me, most people's secrets aren't that interesting.

RILLA

What's that supposed to mean?

IAN

Most people write in their diaries about their love lives. Personally, I don't care about that.

GIDEON

Ew. He's right. I wouldn't want to read about other people's love lives either.

RILLA

People's love lives are besides the point. I'm talking about the principle of the thing.

IAN

Ignorance might be bliss, but curiosity has to be satisfied. Ah!

Ian finally unlocks the journal. He flips through the pages which are covered in a writing that is not from a human language.

RILLA

That looks like gibberish to me. I mean, I can't read it. Can you?

IAN

No. Maybe it's in code.

GIDEON

Do you know how to crack codes?

(CONTINUED)

IAN

I'm a research librarian, kid. Not a cryptographer. But you have time on your hands. You could probably have a go at it if you don't feel like shelving books.

GIDEON

Okay. I'll give it a try.

As Ian hands the journal over to Gideon, Rilla gives a sigh and heads back into the stacks to do some cataloging. A moment later, Ian follows suit. Gideon takes a seat and begins to leaf through the journal himself. After a moment, he reaches out to grab pen and paper and begin to attempt to see if it is a code.

A montage starts. We see young Gideon puzzling over the book and making notes and throwing them away while he is having lunch with his aunt, later while Rilla and Ian go back to shelving books, and when he has wandered up to the first floor to sit at a window nook, unnoticed by Mr. Humperdink.

He studies the journal while he is eating dinner and right before he goes to bed. He is still looking at it the next day while he is walking with Rilla back to the library.

INT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY BASEMENT, SECOND MORNING

Back in the basement of the library, Gideon audibly flips the page. And then he starts hearing a strange sound like many bells tinkling. He discovers that it is coming from his pocket, from the strange coin that he had picked up earlier. The words remain the same, but the images have changed. Now there is a picture of a key on one side. The other side is blank.

GIDEON

Strange. I swear it didn't look like that before.

Faint laughter drifts out from the dark stacks. Gideon immediately looks up to peer into the darkness.

GIDEON

What was that?

The laughter abruptly stops.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Who's there?

Gideon gets up from his chair and begins to move into the stacks.

GIDEON

Who's there? Aunt Rilla? Mr. Donovan?

The shadows around him begin to hiss. Frightened, Gideon turns around and begins running, only to hit something and slide back down to the floor.

A young boy who appears to be about the same age as Gideon appears to be blocking his way. There is something strange about the boy's eyes that mark him as not quite human. And he appears to be wearing clothes that were fashionable a century ago.

GIDEON

Who are you?

CAETANO

I am Caetano. I could ask the same of you.

GIDEON

My name's Gideon. You don't look like you belong here. You didn't come with Mr. Donovan, have you? Or Mr. Humperdink?

CAETANO

I don't know anyone named Mr. Donovan or Mr. Humperdink.

GIDEON

Then how did you get here.

CAETANO

I just come and I go. Where did you come from?

GIDEON

I didn't come from anywhere. I came with my aunt. She works here as a librarian.

CAETANO

Your aunt must be a boring old lady. These dusty books must be dry reading indeed.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

My aunt isn't that old. Aunt Rilla is younger than my parents.

CAETANO

Humph. At any rate, I'm not going to stick around here. You're not that interesting.

With that, the strange boy makes a swift turn and disappears back into the stacks. Gideon finally gets up from the floor and hurries past several shelves to check where the boy went, but he cannot find a trace of him. He heads back to the front desk to find Rilla there putting several more books on the table.

RILLA

What have you been up to? It looks like you've got dirt on your knees.

GIDEON

I bumped into another boy. I didn't know there were other people my age here.

RILLA

Gideon. You're the only boy here. I'm afraid you've got an overactive imagination.

GIDEON

But Aunt Rilla, I swear I did see him!

RILLA

You probably just tripped somewhere while you were running around the place. While I don't mind it, as long as you don't knock things down, you could get hurt. And there's no telling what Mr. Humperdink might do if he finds you running around like a maniac.

GIDEON

Yes, Aunt Rilla.

RILLA

That's a good boy. You know, deciphering the journal might be too hard for you. I might be able to scrounge something up for you to read for enjoyment. This is a library, after all.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

No, I'm fine. I'm still working on it. The only reason I was out in the stacks was because I heard something.

RILLA

It was probably just a creaking floorboard that Ian probably stepped on. There's nothing to worry about. There are only old books around here.

GIDEON

But I swear I heard something!

RILLA

It's just your imagination, Gideon.

GIDEON

I'll prove to you that it's not my imagination once I find that other boy again.

Rilla just shakes her head at Gideon's stubbornness and turns back to survey the books in the stacks. Despite his misgivings, Gideon, too, ventures back into the stacks. But as he runs around the basement, he doesn't find anything more interesting than old books.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Gideon is sitting in bed with the covers pulled around him as he yet again examines the journal. Rilla arrives at the threshold of the door.

RILLA

It's time for bed, Gideon. You're still studying that old thing?

GIDEON

Maybe it has a clue.

RILLA

You're really persistent, aren't you? Boys your age would have grown bored looking at that thing by now.

GIDEON

Well, I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

RILLA

If you still want to look at that thing, there's always tomorrow. It's lights out, now.

GIDEON

All right.

Gideon puts the journal aside on the bedstand and Rilla pulls his covers up and kisses him on the forehead.

GIDEON

I wish I had gone with my parents off to their dig. I wouldn't have caused any trouble.

RILLA

I know you wouldn't have. But you know how strict those rules are. Don't worry, they'll be back soon.

GIDEON

I hope so.

RILLA

Good night, Gideon.

GIDEON

Good night, Aunt Rilla.

Gideon settles into bed as Rilla turns off the lights and leaves. He turns his head to observe his windows.

The drapes on the windows have been left open. The sky is clear, allowing the moon to shine into the window. There is also a tree next to the window which gently sways with the wind.

Just as Gideon closes his eyes, he hears a loud scratching sound coming from the vicinity of the window.

GIDEON

Who's there? Hello?

The branches of the tree appear to morph into arms. Someone appears to crouch at the window ledge.

SHADOW

Boy, let me in.



GIDEON  
(getting out of bed)  
Who are you?

SHADOW  
Boy, let me in.

GIDEON  
I'm not letting you in. I don't  
know who you are.

SHADOW  
Let me in! You have my treasure.

GIDEON  
I don't have any treasure.

SHADOW  
Yes you do. Let me in!

The shadow reaches out as Gideon slowly edges away from the window. With a sudden movement, the shadow punches the window and glass shatters. Gideon screams.

And then Gideon suddenly wakes up in bed, sweating. He looks at the window, but it looks whole and ordinary.

EXT. MARBLEHEAD, NH - MAIN STREET - DAY

Gideon is tagging along as Rilla goes grocery shopping. The main street is teeming with other shoppers.

GIDEON  
Hey, Aunt Rilla. Look at this!

RILLA  
The candy shop? No Gideon, that  
will rot your teeth.

GIDEON  
Please, Aunt Rilla? I just want to  
go inside. And I don't eat sweets  
all the time.

RILLA  
Oh, fine. We might as well stop by  
the place since it's on our way to  
the general store.

GIDEON  
Thanks, Aunt Rilla!

Gideon and Rilla enter the candy shop which has a white-washed front and a red door with an open sign hanging on it. There is also a display window that has a train station that is made entirely of candy.

INT. SWEET DELIGHT CANDY SHOP - DAY

The bell at the front door rings as Gideon and Rilla enter the shop. Inside, there are several free standing shelves filled with glass canisters of candies. More sweets in wrappers line the walls in open glass jars.

At the end of the shop is a counter. The cashire, a slack-jowled older man in his fifties, is sitting on a stool near the cash register and reading the newspaper.

Gideon immediately gravitates towards the nearest shelf to marvel at the sweets. At the end of the row, he wildly gestulates to Rilla.

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla! Over here. I want to get some of these lemon drops. They're only fifty cents.

RILLA

Oh, all right. Not too many, though.

GIDEON

Yes, of course, Aunt Rilla. I even have a little of my allowance money with me so I can pay for them myself.

Gideon grabs a paper sack from a nearby alcove on the shelf and puts in some lemon drops. Then he heads over to the counter with Rilla. At the sound of their approach, the cashire lowers his newspaper.

MR. LOUGHTON

Good day, there, Rilla. You still working at that library?

RILLA

Good day to you, too, Mr. Loughton. And yes, I'm still working at the library. There's still a lot that Ian and I have to catalog.

(CONTINUED)

MR. LOUGHTON  
Keeps you employed, eh? In this economy, any work you can get is good, isn't it?

RILLA  
Yes, I suppose so.

MR. LOUGHTON  
And who is this over here?

RILLA  
This is my nephew, Gideon. He will be staying with me through the summer. Gideon, this is Mr. Loughton.

MR. LOUGHTON  
Through the summer, eh?

GIDEON  
(putting the sack of lemon drops on the counter)  
Yes, sir.

MR. LOUGHTON  
I see. I hope you're not causing too much trouble for your aunt.

GIDEON  
I try not to, sir.

RILLA  
Gideon is a pretty good kid. He's my favorite nephew.

GIDEON  
Aunt Rilla, I'm your only nephew.

RILLA  
Well, so you are.

MR. LOUGHTON  
(laughing)  
I'm sure you are.

Mr. Loughton takes the bag of lemon drops and weighs them on a scale that sits next to the cash register. Then he rings up the price.

MR. LOUGHTON  
That will be fifty cents, young man.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

I have it right here.

Gideon reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handful of coins. As he counts out his dimes, Mr. Loughton spots the strange golden coin that Gideon had found earlier in the library basement.

MR. LOUGHTON

That's quite the unusual coin you have there.

GIDEON

It's just something I found.

RILLA

Found what?

Gideon hands Rilla the coin after he hands the sweets shop owner five dimes. As he rings up the purchase, Rilla examines the coin, which has changed yet again to show a flower and a strange four-legged animal, and then gives it back to Gideon.

RILLA

It looks like it could be from some sort of game. I've never seen anything like it. But then again, I'm not expert in coins.

MR. LOUGHTON

Who knows. Maybe it could be a foreign coin. If it's a really old one, it might be worth a lot. Perhaps you should go visit old Petersen down the way and have it appraised.

RILLA

That sounds like a good idea.

GIDEON

No, it's probably what Aunt Rilla says. It's probably part of some game.

RILLA

Oh Gideon, where's your sense of adventure? It could possibly be part of a treasure from some Spanish galleon that got wrecked on the shore centuries ago.

(CONTINUED)

MR. LOUGHTON

That certainly sounds plausible. Marblehead was a port in trading back in the 1600s. Well, here you go, Gideon. Your lemon drops. I hope you enjoy them and come back soon, you hear?

EXT. MARBLEHEAD, NH - MAIN STREET - DAY

Gideon and Rilla exit the candy shop. Gideon opens his bag of candy and takes out a lemon drop and pops it into his mouth. He offers his aunt the bag.

GIDEON

You want one, Aunt Rilla?

RILLA

Thank you, Gideon.

GIDEON

You know, I don't really want to show my coin to Mr. Petersen. He would probably just laugh and say that it was a fake one.

EXT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY - DAY

The next day, Gideon and Rilla arrive in front of the Rathborne Library. They stop at the front yard when they spot Ian lurking in the bushes.

RILLA

What on earth are you doing?

IAN

What? Oh. It's just you two.

RILLA

I'm not sure if I should be annoyed with that tone of voice.

IAN

Look, I was expecting someone else, all right?

GIDEON

You mean Mr. Humperdink?

(CONTINUED)

IAN

Exactly. Mrs. Humperdink had come earlier to say that our esteemed boss was out today, sick with the flu. So we're on our own.

RILLA

And you decided to play hooky now?

IAN

No! It's just that after I got my morning tea, I thought I saw something outside. A lurker. An intruder. So I came out here to chase a shadow.

RILLA

I don't see anyone around now.

IAN

Obviously. My mind must have been playing tricks on me. Or I must have seen a bird flying out of the corner of my eye.

As Ian and Rilla proceed inside the library, Gideon pauses at the front steps as he notices a shadow moving in the bushes. But shaking his head, he follows the two adults inside.

INT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY - DAY

Gideon stops in the front room as Ian and Rilla proceed towards the steps to the library basement.

IAN

Oh, and if you're hungry, kid, Mrs. Humperdink left some cookies in the back kitchen.

RILLA

But Gideon just had breakfast!

GIDEON

Aw, Aunt Rilla. Can't I just have one? I'm a growing boy, you know.

RILLA

Oh, all right. Just one.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Yeah!

Ian and Rilla disappear down the stairs. As Gideon turns towards the kitchen, he hears a noise that sounds like it has come from outside. He turns and sees something dark flapping against the window. It's a blackbird, which lands on the ledge and eyes the boy with a strange, pale gaze.

GIDEON

What a wierd bird.

Gideon heads into the kitchen as the bird stares at his retreating back. The kitchen is a narrow room filled with old, humming appliances and linolium floor that had been put down decades ago. Gideon grabs a cookie from a plate sitting on the counter and begins to eat it.

As he chews the cookie, he takes out the strange coin from his pocket and once again, the coin appears to have changed. Now, on one side is the picture of a bird. The other side has the picture of an old man's face with a crown.

CAETANO

Pleh! These cookies taste like sawdust.

Gideon looks up to see Caetano sitting in one of the kitchen chairs and spitting out one of Mrs. Humperdink's cookies. Caetano tosses the cookie into a nearby trash can.

GIDEON

What are you doing here? How did you get in?

CAETANO

Boy, you're a slow one, aren't you? As I told you before, I come and go as I please. How I do that is none of your concern.

GIDEON

If you say so. And why did you throw the cookie away? They're pretty good. I mean, they're chocolate chip! You can't go wrong with chocolate chip.

CAETANO

I've tasted better.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Oh yeah?

CAETANO

I know a baker back in West Eleria who could literally make cookies and biscuits that would make you sing in delight.

GIDEON

Where's West Eleria?

CAETANO

You're ignorant as well as dumb, aren't you?

GIDEON

Hey! I am not dumb or ignorant. In school, I learned all about the countries of the world in geography. But I've never heard of West Eleria. Where is it?

CAETANO

(after a thoughtful pause)

Well, I suppose there's no harm in telling you. Come on.

Caetano gets up from the kitchen chair and begins walking out into the rest of the library. Gideon follows him as he stuffs the rest of the cookie into his mouth. They pass the main hall and head into a section of the library that Gideon has not been to before.

GIDEON

Where are we going?

CAETANO

The map room.

They reach a small room with a high ceiling with walls lined with specially built bookshelves that hold oversized books. On the table at the center of the room are several atlases of the world.

GIDEON

Wow, all of this is just maps?

CAETANO

Uh huh.

Caetano taps a finger against his mouth as he surveys the shelves. Spotting what he wants, he waves a hand and a book pulls itself off the shelf and floats to the table.

(CONTINUED)



GIDEON

Holy cow. How did you do that?

CAETANO

Do what?

GIDEON

You know, make that book float off the shelf...

CAETANO

(shaking his head)

You humans have forgotten the power of magic. It's something you either already know how to do or you don't. Now do you want an answer to your question or not?

GIDEON

I do. Where is this West Eleria?

Caetano waves his hand again and the book flips open and the pages turn. It stops at a page that shows a picture of an unknown continent surrounded by seas with odd names. West Eleria is a peninsula jutting out into the Farro Sea from the western part of the continent.

CAETANO

There it is. The baker I know lives in this small village called Gunwhale.

GIDEON

I've never seen a map like this. And I've never heard of this continent. Or any of these oceans. Are you sure all of this isn't made up?

CAETANO

You trully are ignorant. This isn't on your human world at all.

GIDEON

Really? I don't believe you.

CAETANO

I could prove it to you, but I'm not allowed to take you there. You couldn't go there even if you tried.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

I suppose...

Something taps against the window in the map room. Caetano and Gideon look up to see that the pale-eyed blackbird had flown to the window ledge and was looking in. The bird taps its beak against the window.

CAETANO

By the Great Goddess! It's Him!

Caetano grabs Gideon and hauls him out of the map room and into the hallway where there are no windows.

GIDEON

What was that for? It's just a bird, right?

CAETANO

That's no ordinary bird, you idiot. That's Him.

GIDEON

Him?

CAETANO

Him. The Dark. The Shadow. The Depths. The Horror. The Evil.

GIDEON

But it's just a bird. How can a bird be evil?

CAETANO

He looks like a bird. But it is just a form his uses to spy. But he knows I'm here. Which is bad. Very bad.

GIDEON

I don't understand.

CAETANO

Of course you don't.

Caetano quickly walks into another room.

GIDEON

Wait, where are you going?

Gideon follows Caetano, but when he arrives in the next room, Caetano had disappeared. Instead, he finds that the bird had followed to this room's window and is cawing loudly.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Holy cow.

Gideon ducks back into the hallway.

GIDEON

Now he has me thinking that that bird is more than what it seems. It's just a bird. Just a bird.

Gideon walks back to the main room. The window there appears clear, but Gideon hurries towards the stairs and heads down to the basement where Ian and Rilla are working. But once he is out of sight of the window, the blackbird arrives to wait on the ledge.

Gideon arrives down in the basement. The light is on, but there is no sign of Rilla or Ian. He, however, notices a few books at the front table.

He pulls up a chair and takes the first book. The title of the book clearly states, "A History of West Eleria."

GIDEON

There's a history book about West Eleria? How could that be if it's on another world?

Gideon flips open the cover.

GIDEON

(reading from the book)  
A History of West Eleria by Gus Perya. Published the year of the Great Goddess, 3451. 3451! What on earth does that mean? This must be some sort of story book.

Gideon flips over the title page to begin at the first chapter.

GIDEON

(reading from the book)  
Chapter one. The history of the southern towns. This isn't so much a history as a travelogue of my wanderings across West Eleria. I first came to West Eleria when a strange little man showed me a slipstream, a rip between realities...

INT. A CAFE IN GUNWHALE - DAY

GUS

(v.o.)

...which means that this isn't my home reality. But that is neither here nor there. I wish to record my journeys here in case any traveler finds himself in this same situation.

WAITRESS

Here you go. That will be two denirs.

Gus Perya is an older, white-haired man wearing khaki, boots, and glasses. He is sitting at a small square table with a piece of luggage at his feet and a hat in his lap. He was writing in a notebook when the waitress, a stout and harried-looking woman, put a cup of coffee on the table. Gus pulls out two coins and hands it over to the woman before turning back to his notebook.

GUS

(v.o.)

West Eleria was first settled by a group of colonist originating from East Eleria, which used to just be called Eleria before this part of the country was annexed. There were few native peoples who were already living in West Eleria before the colonists came, but according to the scholars I have talked to, there had been disease that spread when the colonists had arrived and the natives died, perhaps due to the fact that they had no immunity to the disease.

Nearby, there are two ladies sitting at another table and gossiping as they sneak strange looks at Perya

LADY ONE

(whispering)

Will you look at that strange gentleman sitting over there? I wonder where he is from?

LADY TWO

(whispering)

Who knows. Ever since the Minister of the Interior overruled the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY TWO (cont'd)

Minister of Defense and managed to install a new gatekeeper, more and more new strangers have come to the city from who knows where. I say, before long, it will be chaos. But at least it doesn't appear that this one is causing any trouble.

GUS

(v.o.)

Once he colonists had settled down in West Eleria, they prospered. And despite some turmoil that had occurred from then until now, West Eleria had fully integrated into the rest of the country by the time that I have arrived.

As Perya continues to write in his book, a bald man with a long white beard and a yellow robe arrives in the cafe and spots Perya. This is one of the scholar-priests in West Eleria and the gossiping women appear impressed that the scholar-priest is seeking out Perya.

SERUS

Mr. Perya?

GUS

Ah! You must be Hen Serus. Please, please, sit down. I am honored that you have agreed to meet with me here in the cafe. Would you like for me to order a drink for you?

SERUS

That is very kind of you, Mr. Perya. But no thank you. I am fine. I was intrigued by your request and am quite delighted that a foreigner such as yourself are interested in the history of West Eleria. Very few foreigners have such enlightened minds.

GUS

I am pleased that you think so. Back in my home country, I was a bit of an amateur scholar myself. I wrote a history about the place names of the Isle of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GUS (cont'd)

Mann, which I am sure you have not heard of, simply because I was interested in the history and worried that the culture there was dying out from the incoming Industrial Revolution, but that is neither here nor there. I am very keen to hear about what you know about West Eleria's history. All I have learned so far are from children's history books that my landlord has kindly lent to me.

SERUS

Then you have contacted the right person. While you may have gotten the basic facts from those children's history books, they don't really tell the story of this country. Perhaps, since you are a novice, we should begin at the beginning. Not far from here is the Plain of the Forgotten. I can take you there and explain to you exactly why it is called the Plain of the Forgotten.

GUS

Oh, that would be wonderful. I mean, the very name "Plain of the Forgotten" begs so many questions....

RILLA

(v.o.)

Gideon? What are you doing, Gideon?

INT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY BASEMENT - DAY

The scene cuts to the basement library where Gideon is absorbed in Gus Perya's history about Western Eleria. At the sound of his aunt's voice, he quickly shuts the book and shoves it next to the pile of other books. He takes another book and opens it.

Rilla appears from the stacks with another pile of books.

RILLA

Well, apparently today is the day that I've hit the section that

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILLA (cont'd)  
needs the most pruning. Gideon, I see you're reading.

GIDEON  
Uh, yes Aunt Rilla. I was a little bored just sitting here doing nothing, so I thought I should read...um, this mechanical sourcebook.

RILLA  
Are you finding that interesting?

GIDEON  
I guess so. This is all about mining pumps and stuff.

RILLA  
Oh, Gideon. I know you want to be out and about and play like other little boys, but unfortunately I have to work.

Ian arrives with a book in his hand to add to the growing pile.

IAN  
Well, we can't have all work and no play. You know, there's a carnival going on at the fairgrounds at the edge of the city all this week. You could take young Gideon there after work.

GIDEON  
A fair!

RILLA  
I couldn't possibly...

IAN  
There's no harm in it. Why, I can take you there myself. I can provide the transportation. And I have an uncle who runs a booth there. He's an odd character who I think Gideon would like to meet. He operates a shooting range.

GIDEON

Really? A shooting range? That really sounds fantastic. Please, Aunt Rilla, we should go.

IAN

Yes, please.

RILLA

Ian, you're an awful rogue and possibly a bad influence. All right, we'll go.

GIDEON

Woohoo!

IAN

Great! I'll pick you two up this evening, say around six?

RILLA

Fine.

GIDEON

A fair! That sounds terribly exciting.

A strange creaking sound suddenly echoes throughout the stacks, making them jump from the sudden noise.

GIDEON

What was that?

RILLA

I don't know.

IAN

Geez. I think I know what it is. I left a couple books in a precarious position, and they must have fallen down. I have to go back.

RILLA

I guess it's back to work for me as well. Don't cause any trouble.

GIDEON

Don't worry, Aunt Rilla. I'm just here reading and waiting. I'm excited to go to the fair.

(CONTINUED)



RILLA  
Of course you are.

When Rilla and Ian head back into the stacks, Gideon pushes the mechanical engineering book aside and takes the history book again and turns back to the page where he left off.

GIDEON  
(v.o., reading)  
My very good friend, the Honorable  
Hen Serus, took me to the Plains of  
the Forgotten that very afternoon  
and explained its existence....

EXT. THE PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - DAY

A very peculiar carriage, designed in a florid iron gray, are pulled by a pair of steeds that look like a cross between a horse and a lion. The driver is a man dressed in a swirling black cape and wielding a whip, much like an animal tamer in a circus. The carriage pulls up to the edge of a wide field that is mostly comprised of grass, weeds, and a few wildflowers. It is surrounded by some thin trees, but there is no fence or signs. Gus and Serus debark from the carriage.

SERUS  
Come back in about two hours, my  
good man.

DRIVER  
Yes, sir.

The carriage takes off and the two men start walking along the edge of the field towards the first copse of trees.

GUS  
So this entire field is called the  
Plains of the Forgotten?

SERUS  
This field and beyond,  
actually. The Plains actually just  
start here and go on for  
approximately a hundred miles from  
here, all the way until the Eidolon  
Hills. There is a small hamlet  
north of here, in the middle of the  
plains, but situated on top of an  
underground reservoir oasis, but  
that is probably the only  
exception. The Plains of the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERUS (cont'd)

Forgotten has been completely uninhabited for the past five centuries. And most people don't even remember who used to live on the plains, if there was anyone on the plains. That is the primary reason why this is called the Plains of the Forgotten.

GUS

Ah, that makes sense. But I hear in your voice that you think that something else is going on. I mean, even if I haven't heard that, I would have been intrigued. All of this land is unoccupied. It's virtually inconcievable that no one would have settled on this prime land before.

SERUS

One would think that. Before the colonists settled in West Eleria, there were some people living on the plains. They were a strange race of nomads called the Rigu. There are some old accounts from the colonists that the Rigu were a tall people with dark hair and golden eyes. They mostly kept to themselves. The colonists would have settled on the plains if not for the fact that they heeded the Rigu's warnings that there were things living underneath the plains.

GUS

Things living underneath the plains? This gets more and more interesting. I've seen some fabulous things in West Eleria since I've arrived, but what would frighten people enough that they wouldn't settle on the plains?

SERUS

Translated from the Rigu language, these things underneath the plains were called monster worms. There have been tales about them, but so far in the archives, there hasn't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERUS (cont'd)

been any accounts of first eye witnesses to what these worms look like. But there are plenty of accounts of what they do. They cause weaknesses in the earth so that their prey would be sucked underground from the sudden change in the earth. Sort of like quicksand. That is another reason why it is called the Plain of the Forgotten. People who become prey are never seen again.

GUS

How horrifying. What makes them stay within the Plain of the Forgotten and not venture outside of that?

SERUS

No one knows although there is a tale by the Rigu that in the distant past, there had been a Rigu sorcerer who cast a spell to contain these monster worms. How true that is, who knows. There have been many researchers who have braved the plains to see if that is true, but so far, no one has found any evidence of it.

GUS

So is it safe to even walk on the plains?

SERUS

No, it is dangerous. The only safe paths are the paved ones that have been present since five centuries ago. This field here has been fenced off with this alder trees. Alder trees are typically a sign that people have been using the land for research. But that doesn't mean it is safe. The only way you could travel the plains outside of the paved paths is in the company of a native Rigu. But the Rigu are few and far between since their population had decreased with the arrival of the colonists. And they are nomads

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERUS (cont'd)  
besides, so it is very difficult to  
find one even if you wanted to.

GUS  
I see. So this entire field is  
safe for us to walk on?

SERUS  
Not necessarily.

Serus bends down to pick up a rock. He motions towards it to draw Gus's attention to it before throwing it towards the middle of the field. The rock hits the ground and bounces once.

For a few seconds, nothing happens.

GUS  
Well, it must be safe.

The ground suddenly pops and the earth beneath the rock turns into the consistency of quicksand, dragging the rock down beneath.

GUS  
Holy mother of God.

SERUS  
As you can see, even after some  
researchers have supposedly cleared  
this land, it is not entirely  
safe. The worms are in the ground.  
They almost never come to the  
surface.

GUS  
You know, that little demonstration  
makes me glad that when I got here,  
I didn't come out of the gate in  
the middle of these  
plains. Otherwise, I would have  
been completely sucked under  
without a trace!

SERUS  
I think you have the Gate Makers to  
thank for that. They were the ones  
who created the gates to West  
Eleria and had the foresight to not  
put them in dangerous lands. But  
if you want to have a better look  
at the history, we will have to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERUS (cont'd)  
walk up this path, past that hill  
over there.

GUS  
All right.

Serus and Gus walk a few steps down the path when they here a strange sucking noise rumbling behind them. When they look back, they see that the land near the part of the path that they had walked on before is sinking.

GUS  
Holy mother of God!

SERUS  
This way! Hurry!

GUS  
But isn't that going further into  
dangerous territory?

SERUS  
No, it might look like it, but...

RILLA  
(v.o.)  
Gideon! Did you see where my purse  
went?

INT. RILLA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Gideon slams closed the book about the history of West Eleria that he had sneaked home with him and shoves it under the pillow in his bedroom. He hurries out into the hall.

GIDEON  
I don't think your purse went  
anywhere, Aunt Rilla. You left it  
on the sofa in the living room when  
we came back from the library.

RILLA  
(from her bedroom)  
Thank you, Gideon. For some reason,  
I'm such a scatterbrain tonight.

GIDEON  
I'll be waiting downstairs, Aunt  
Rilla.

(CONTINUED)

Gideon walks down the hallway and down the stairs to the first floor of Rilla's house. In the living room, Gideon peeks out the window.

GIDEON

Well, it doesn't look like Mr. Donovan is here yet. He said his car was blue. But there aren't any cars on the street.

Suddenly something hits the window, making Gideon yelp in surprise. The object looks dark as it falls to the ground.

GIDEON

Good grief, what was that? It looks like...a ball of some sort. I wonder who threw it.

Outside, a blue car comes up the lane and pulls in front of the house. A car horn is heard.

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla! Mr. Donovan is here!

RILLA

(from her bedroom)

Oh my goodness! I'm almost ready, Gideon. I'll be down in a moment.

Ian gets out of the car and walks up to the front door to ring the bell. When the doorbell rings, Rilla hurries downstairs to open the door.

IAN

Evening, Rilla. Gideon. You look a bit flushed. I hope I haven't come too early and rushed you.

RILLA

Oh no! You're right on time. I was just running late.

GIDEON

I can't wait to see that shooting range at the fair that you mentioned, Mr. Donovan.

IAN

You'll see it soon enough. You'll find that my uncle, who is in charge of the booth, is quite the character.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Oh, and here's your purse, Aunt Rilla. I found it in the living room, just as I had thought.

RILLA

Thank you, Gideon. I guess we can go?

IAN

Right this way.

Rilla and Gideon get into Ian's car. As they drive away, the scene briefly focuses on the dark ball that is lying just outside of Rilla's house. It shrivels as if it's animated by something from within. A crack appears, revealing something golden inside.

Ian drives them to the edge of town where a large, brightly colored fair has been set up. Ian parks in the nearby lot and the three of them walk over to the entrance.

IAN

Oh no, please, let me pay the admission for everyone. It's my treat.

RILLA

Well, if you insist.

IAN

I do.

GIDEON

So where's the shooting range owned by your uncle?

IAN

You're an eager kid, aren't you? We'll get there soon enough.

Ian pays the admission and they walk through a lighted arch proclaiming that it is the entrance to the fairgrounds. Ian motions for Rilla and Gideon to follow him through the crowd of people who have also arrived to have fun at the fair.

After passing several other booths, they arrive at a fairly large, grand booth that has several moving mechanical targets which the players, with toy guns, try to shoot for a prize. A player in front of them tries in vain to hit the moving targets, which look like black birds, but miss. In the end, he walks away in frustration.

(CONTINUED)

The proprietor is an old man with a white beard and a smart brown suit. He looks remarkably like the man who wrote and traveled in West Eleria, Gus, but no one else realizes it.

IAN

Hey, Uncle Ron!

UNCLE RON

Ian! What a pleasure to see you, my dear boy. I see you've brought a date with you, hm?

RILLA

I'm not his date. Ian kindly offered to bring us here. Especially my nephew, to see the fair.

GIDEON

To see your shooting range, Mr. Donovan.

UNCLE RON

Ah! You must be the nephew. You can call me Ron.

GIDEON

I'm Gideon

IAN

And this is Rilla, Gideon's aunt.

RILLA

It is very nice to meet you.

UNCLE RON

Likewise. I'm sure you're all eager to see the rest of the fair. I can see to young Gideon and show him the ropes at the shooting range. So Ian, you can take Miss Rilla out to see the rest of the fair, hm? You could go see the ferris wheel, you know. It's very romantic.

RILLA

Oh, but I'm completely fine staying here with Gideon at the shooting range.

(CONTINUED)



IAN

I'll be glad to take Rilla around to see the sights. Come on, Rilla. If you're not keen on the ferris wheel, we could always go to the house of mirrors.

RILLA

Goodness. That sounds rather horrible, actually.

However, Ian pulls Rilla away from the shooting booth to show her around the rest of the fair. Ron gestures to Gideon to take one of the toy guns.

UNCLE RON

Since you're a friend of Ian's, playing at Ron's Shooting Booth will be on the house.

GIDEON

How is this supposed to work? Do I just shoot this?

UNCLE RON

Yep. You just take the gun and shoot at the moving targets. Shoot five of them and you get a prize.

GIDEON

What sort of prize?

UNCLE RON

Well, any of those fabulous items over there, of course.

GIDEON

Okay.

UNCLE RON

See here? This is how you're going to try to do it.

Ron picks up one of the toy rifles and makes a show of getting the target into sight and then shooting it. He shoots five of the moving targets without any problem.

UNCLE RON

See? There's no effort to it.

GIDEON

If you say so.

(CONTINUED)

Gideon picks up the rifle and attempts to shoot at the moving target. He shoots one in the bullseye.

GIDEON  
Golly, well look at that!

UNCLE RON  
Indeed it is! Excellent shot, boy!

At this point, some of the passing fair goers notice Gideon's lucky shot and begin to crowd around the shooting range booth.

UNCLE RON  
Well, that's one down and four more to go! You can do it.

GIDEON  
All right, here I go.

Gideon shoots again. And then three more times. All times, he hits the mark. And each time, the crowd cheers him on.

GIDEON  
Wow, I really did it! I didn't know I could be a good shot. Maybe it's beginner's luck.

UNCLE RON  
Or maybe you're just good. This means you win a prize, Gideon! Take your pick.

FAIRGOER #1  
Hey, I want to try.

FAIRGOER #2  
Me, too!

FAIRGOER #3  
It can't be that hard if a kid could do it, right?

UNCLE RON  
That would be one dollar per try, gentlemen.

FAIRGOER #1  
All right, here you go.

As Ron gathers up money from the other fairgoers as they all give the shooting range a try, and fail at it, Gideon ponders the prize rack at the side of the stall. There are several large stuffed toys, candy, and a variety of other knickknacks.

GIDEON

I'll take that one right there.

UNCLE RON

This large blue bear?

GIDEON

Yes.

UNCLE RON

Well, here you go.

GIDEON

It doesn't look like anyone else is hitting the targets.

UNCLE RON

It takes special skill, boy. I hit the targets because I own this place and I've practiced. You have a special talent.

GIDEON

Oh, I don't know about that. I'm pretty ordinary.

UNCLE RON

Well, let me take you around this place. Fred!

A gangly youth who had taken over getting the ticket money from Ron quickly turns to acknowledge Ron's greeting.

FRED

Yes sir?

UNCLE RON

I'm going to take young Gideon here around to see the fairgrounds. You're in charge for the next hour.

FRED

Yes sir.

GIDEON

You're putting him in charge?

(CONTINUED)

UNCLE RON

He's been my assistant for several years. He knows what to do. Anyways, I know exactly where you should go next. The dunk tank.

GIDEON

The dunk tank?

Ron and Gideon walk through the crowd and reach a booth called "The Dunk Tank." There is a hawker with a basket of balls calling everyone to have a try at hitting the target. Most of the booth is in fact a large pool of water and there is a clown sitting on a plank above the water. To the clown's right is a target where people attempt to hit. The target is rigged to the plank so that if the bullseye is hit, the plank will give way and the clown will fall into the water.

UNCLE RON

With your skill at hitting targets, you should give this a try.

DUNK TANK HAWKER

It's only a nickle a try, young man!

GIDEON

I don't know. It was probably all beginner's luck at the shoot range.

UNCLE RON

Well, you'll never know if you don't try.

GIDEON

All right.

Gideon pulls out a nickle from his pocket and gives it to the hawker for a ball. He gives the stuffed bear to Ron to hold for him while he tries to throw the ball.

ONLOOKER #1

You'll never make it, kid! No one's been able to knock that clown off that perch the entire day.

UNCLE RON

Be quiet! You're giving the boy a complex.

(CONTINUED)

ONLOOKER #1

I'm just telling the truth.

DUNK TANK HAWKER

It might be the truth, but that doesn't mean that someone won't be able to make the jackpot.

Gideon rolls his eyes at the byplay. After a moment, he throws the ball. It hits the target, but it is just at the edge of the bullseye. The plank wobbles, but holds and the clown makes faces at the audience.

DUNK TANK HAWKER

Nice try, young man! You want to try again?

GIDEON

Nah, I'm good.

UNCLE RON

That was really good, Gideon. Maybe you should give it another try. You did hit the target, just not the bullseye.

GIDEON

(shaking his head)

No. I was really saving my money for some of the fair food. I heard that there was cotton candy.

UNCLE RON

There sure is. I can take you to the cotton candy booth. I think it's near the hot dog stand. But anyway, that was really good throwing. Are you sure you don't want to try again?

GIDEON

I'm sure.

UNCLE RON

All right. That whole dunk tank thing for some reason reminded me of some of my travels out in Africa.

GIDEON

You've been to Africa? What's it like?

(CONTINUED)

UNCLE RON

Mostly hot and uncomfortable. It's very primitive in the bush. But there are some fantastic things in the African savannah. I went on safari with some experienced hunters who bagged an elephant, a lion, several gazelles, and even a giraffe.

GIDEON

Wow.

UNCLE RON

It can be dangerous, though. The locals there have stories of people being eaten by lions or gored by rhinos. After a couple months in the bush, you really appreciate things when you get back to civilization.

GIDEON

That's where you learned how to shoot, right?

UNCLE RON

I got a lot of practice shooting there, but no, that's not where I learned shooting. I learned to shoot when I was a boy, about the same age as you. I lived in the backwoods in the south. My family sometimes hunted deer for meat. And the wolves if they were lurking around the farm.

GIDEON

Oh.

UNCLE RON

I guess you could call it a hard life, but as a kid, you wouldn't know any better. Oh, that looks like Ian and your aunt.

Ron and Gideon arrive at the cotton candy stand where Ian and Rilla are standing next to it. They both jump apart guiltily as if they had been kissing. They are each holding a cone of pink cotton candy.

(CONTINUED)

UNCLE RON

There you two are! I thought you two were at the House of Mirrors. Or did you decide to take my advice and take the ferris wheel?

IAN

Hey, Uncle Ron. Fancy seeing you here. And no, we went to neither. We just walked around enjoying the sights. And I thought you were working at your booth?

UNCLE RON

I left it in the care of my assistant Fred while I took Gideon around since this is his first time at a fair.

GIDEON

It was pretty fun. I won this bear.

RILLA

How wonderful. It looks almost as big as you are, Gideon.

GIDEON

Yes. But that doesn't mean that I will forever be this size.

RILLA

Of course not. You're a fast growing boy. Here, you can have my cotton candy. Careful, it's very sticky.

GIDEON

Thanks, Aunt Rilla.

UNCLE RON

So have you two been to the Ultimate Twirl?

GIDEON

What's that?

UNCLE RON

It's the ultimate ride at the fair, of course. Come on, kid, you haven't seen half of this fair yet.

INT. FIELD SHACK, EDGE OF FIELD - DAY

Serus and Gus run into a field shack located just over the hill on the edge of the Plains of the Forgotten and slam the door closed.

The shack itself is dimly lit. There is only one window. There is very little furniture, but on the walls an array of strange looking weapons are hung on hooks.

At a table, a tall figure in a dark uniform is polishing one of the bladed weapons.

GUS

Goodness. You don't think that thing could get in here, could it?

SERUS

Anything could happen. I noticed that it had strayed onto the path once or twice. Perhaps those myths about some curse keeping them within the boundaries of the plain are just that. Myths.

ORION

No, the myths are true. The paths, however, were not the original paths so they hold no domain over the worms.

GUS

Who are you?

SERUS

This is Orion. Orion, this is Gus Perya. He is one of the visitors, but he is a scholar as well so I wanted to show him around and tell him a some of Eleria's history. Unfortunately, we ran afoul of a worm.

ORION

(shaking hands with Gus)

Mr. Perya. It is unfortunate that one of the first things you have experienced in your travels here is the worms.

GUS

Oh, my impression isn't all that bad. The city is an interesting

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



GUS (cont'd)  
place, reminding me of cities I've  
lived in back home. But we have no  
creatures like that dreaded worm  
back where I'm from.

ORION  
I'm sure you don't.

SERUS  
Orion is one of the caretakers. He  
patrols the borders of the Plains.

GUS  
It must be very dangerous work.

ORION  
It is. But I had an advantage over  
some of the others who are natives  
from the old Eleria. I am only  
part Elerian. My father was of  
Elerian blood. But my mother was  
half foreigner and half Rigu.

GUS  
Rigu? Wasn't that the kind of  
people you told me about who knew  
where the worms were?

SERUS  
Yes. The Rigu had an extra sense to  
tell where the worms were lurking  
underneath the ground.

ORION  
Serus is correct. However, I have  
diluted blood, so my senses aren't  
as acute. But still, it is an  
advantage no matter how small.

GUS  
I see.

ORION  
And I see that you two have rushed  
in due to a worm.

Orion puts down the weapon that he had been polishing and  
walks over to the window to look out onto the plains. The  
movement of the earth stops near the field shack and then  
retreats back to where it came from.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

You're safe enough here. The path to this field house isn't one of the older paths that are guaranteed to be safe. It has been made by researchers who knew nothing about the worms so it is not entirely safe. Those who are foolish enough to travel on it risk being devoured by the worms. We have a few tragedies because of it every year.

GUS

How horrible.

SERUS

However, Orion is here so he can guide us back to safe land.

ORION

Yes. You are lucky.

GUS

But I'm intrigued now. I mean, no one's been to the Plains of the Forgotten since the beginning. And only the Rigu knew enough to navigate the Plains safely. What's there now?

ORION

If you're curious, I can take you to one of the safe havens a few days travel from here in the middle of the Plains.

GUS

That sounds fascinating. I think I will take you up on that offer.

SERUS

It sounds like a foolish thing to do. But I suppose there's no talking you out of it. Foreigners do seem to like adventure. Even if it's dangerous.

ORION

I have to warn you, though, even though I have a planned trip to the hamlet, you're going to have to stick close to me. There can be more danger in the Plains besides the worms.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

I've seen enough danger just coming to this world.

SERUS

Meanwhile, I may need to get back to town. I told our driver to pick us back up in a little while.

ORION

Fine. I'll guide you back. And you, Mr. Perya, if you want to come with me on the trip through the Plains, you will meet me at the edge where you arrived in this area tomorrow morning at dawn. If I don't see you there, I will not wait.

GUS

I'll be there.

EXT. THE PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - DAWN

Gus Perya is waiting near a tree at the edge of the Plains of the Forgotten at dawn wearing travelers clothes, a backpack, and carrying a walking stick. From the shadows, a tall figure approaches. It is Orion.

ORION

I see you're here. Which is surprising. There have been others who have wanted to travel with me, but have chickened out at the last minute.

GUS

As you can see, I'm not chickening out, Mr. Orion.

ORION

Good. Let's go, then. Dawn is one of the few moments in the day when most of the monster worms are sleeping. We should get as much travel as we can in before noon.

GUS

After you, Mr. Orion.

The two men start off into the interior of the plains. They quickly pass the trees that mark the borders of the plains

(CONTINUED)

and head into the grassy plain. By noon, they have reached a creek with a small copse of trees. They sit down in the shade of the trees to eat lunch which mostly consists of bread and cheese.

GUS

Serus told me that the trees serve a purpose at the edge of the plains, marking the boundary of where it is safe and where it isn't. Is there any significance that we've stopped at these trees?

ORION

Mostly, the trees are here because it means that there is also water nearby. But yes, it also does mean relative safety. The worms prefer free earth. They dislike, for some reason, the earth that has been contaminated by roots. You must also consider the fact that there is also running water nearby. The worms also dislike running water.

GUS

The Elerians must have known about that fact, too. They could have used it to colonize the Plains, but they didn't.

ORION

They didn't because there are too few water sources around. And typically, people wouldn't even think of planting trees in an effort to purify the land. People usually chop down trees to make houses and build fires.

GUS

That sounds true.

ORION

I have never met a full blooded Rigu despite the fact that I have some of their blood in me. But my mother, before she died when I was very young, told me some stories that she had heard from her people. It was said that in the far reaches of time, near the beginning, the Plains were entirely

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ORION (cont'd)

covered in forest. It was virgin territory. Unspoiled. Even then, there were some Rigu lived there. But they weren't nomads then. They settled in one place in advanced cities while the Elerians back east were still dwelling in caves. But then, for some reason, the worms came and the trees disappeared and the Rigu were forced to move.

GUS

How sad.

ORION

It is a sad story, but I try not to dwell on it since it has happened so long ago and I know no true Rigu. There are a few other caretakers who do have some Rigu blood, but they are, as I've said, few and far between.

GUS

Right. Exactly how many caretakers are there, anyway?

ORION

Well, from last accounting, I believe...

A scream interrupts Orion and the two men immediately jump up from their relaxed place underneath the tree to see where the sound is coming from.

A few yards away, they see a figure caught by the foot by something on the ground. It is not a worm. Instead, it is a strange crab-like creature with six segmented legs.

GUS

Oh my God. What is that thing?

ORION

Stay back, Mr. Perya. I'll handle this.

Obediently, Gus stays back at the safety of the trees as Orion rushes forward, pulling out an odd gun from the back of his pocket. He shoots twice as he runs. The six-legged creature flails about for a moment before collapsing onto the ground.

(CONTINUED)

But before Orion can pull out a knife to cut the figure, a female caretaker, free from the creature, the woman does it herself and stumbles towards Orion as the ground underneath the creature suddenly erupts and swallows the creature whole.

The two caretakers run back to the safety of the trees and the creek.

ORION

You almost got killed!

LIRA

Well sorry, big boy. I can't seem to help myself. Lucky you were around, weren't you?

ORION

Lira, you take too many risks. This place isn't the sort of place someone like you should be in.

LIRA

You're too paranoid. And I can take care of myself. Most of the time.

GUS

Your eyes. And your eyes...you must also be Rigu. Or at least part Rigu.

LIRA

Apparently the foreigner has my blood pegged! Yes, I'm part Rigu. Although I'm not related to this dumb lug. That's one reason why I got promoted to caretaker. Another reason is the fact that I can gut a man in ten seconds, with my eyes closed.

ORION

Don't be crude.

LIRA

Sorry. Just don't pay any attention to me. But at least I'm not dragging along some foreigners in this crazy country like some demented tour guide.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

Lira!

GUS

No, no. That's fine. So you have lady caretakers here? How fascinating! From my observations back at the city, I didn't think ladies were allowed to do anything except take care of the house and the children.

LIRA

Yep, Elieria certainly sounds like a bastillion of equality. Fortunately for me, because of my Rigu blood, the Elerians don't even consider me quite human so they quite happily let me do all this dangerous stuff which would probably be the end of me before too long.

ORION

I can't believe you joke about death that way.

LIRA

At least I'm not as serious as you. This is a tough life, Orion. Life is too short to drop dead just because of stress.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

RILLA

(from the hallway)

Gideon? Are you still awake? It's already ten o'clock. Time for light's out.

GIDEON

Yes, Aunt Rilla.

Gideon closes the history book and puts it back on his bed stand. He turns out the lights and settles into bed. When he closes his eyes, a faint howling sound shakes his window.

Gideon turns his head to see what is the matter, but the drapes are closed. He turns in bed and tries to go to sleep again.

(CONTINUED)

The window shakes again. Finally fed up with the noise, Gideon gets up to pull the drapes aside.

GIDEON

I'm sure it's just the wind. Maybe  
I forgot to shut the window  
properly. Ack!

On the other side of the window is a dark hideous shadow, attempting to grasp at him through the glass. Quickly, Gideon wrenches the drapes closed and hides under the covers in bed.

SHADOW

(hissing)

I know you're in there,  
boy. You're in there, hiding. But  
you can't hide forever.

GIDEON

(to himself)

There's nothing. Nothing out there  
but my imagination. I'm just  
having a nightmare.

Suddenly, something that is glittering on his bed stand catches his attention. Gideon reaches out to take it. Even in the darkness, he can see that it is the coin that he had found earlier in the basement library. The etchings on the coin has changed again.

On one side is a bird. On the other side is a worm.

GIDEON

Oh, it's changed again. I wonder  
what all these symbols mean.

SHADOW

Come to me. Come to me. Come to me.

GIDEON

No!

SHADOW

Yessssss!

The window shudders one last time and the glass shatters, sending a ferocious wind into Gideon's bedroom. The boy screams as the shadow laughs.

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla!



SHADOW

You can't hide, boy!

Gideon's bedroom door slams open, revealing Rilla wrapped in a bathrobe and holding a fireplace poker.

RILLA

What is this about?  
Gideon? Gideon? Are you okay?

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla! I'm here. Be careful,  
it's...

The shadow, in the form of the wind, takes up a chair and hurtles it at Rilla. Defensively, she smashes her poker against it, but the force propels her across the threshold of the room.

SHADOW

You can't hide, boy. You're coming  
with me!

GIDEON

No!

But the shadow-wind appears to have surrounded Gideon and his bed and appears to have sucked it out of his own reality.

EXT. PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - DAY

Gus, Orion, and Lira are in the middle of the Plains of the Forgotten, walking towards their destination, a hamlet that is located above an underground oasis. They are currently in a field of knee deep grasses. Orion is leading. Next is Gus. And Lira is bringing up the back.

GUS

Aside from the few trees that we  
saw back at the creek, there's  
hardly any cover here on the  
plains. It would be difficult to  
hide.

ORION

That's true. But with the plains,  
it also means that we will be able  
to see anything that might be  
approaching us.

(CONTINUED)

LIRA

Actually, I wouldn't worry too much about that. There's more danger beneath our feet than anything in the air.

ORION

That's if you don't know where to step.

GUS

I guess it's a good thing that I'm following you, eh?

After a few more moments of walking, some clouds race over the sky, covering the sun. The sudden wind is strong, blowing over clothes and bending the grasses flat against the ground.

LIRA

Looks like there might be a storm coming up.

ORION

Yep.

GUS

But we didn't see any of these clouds all day! How can the weather just change like that?

ORION

It's just the nature of the plains. The weather here can be unpredictable. Sometimes, one could say that it's a danger in itself.

LIRA

Yes. We'll need to find shelter soon. It's fast looking like it's going to turn into a particularly bad storm.

GUS

That looks impossible. There's nothing but flat land ahead of us.

ORION

True. But there may be some reinforced underground caves around here.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

Caves? How do you figure that?

ORION

Well, our destination is built above an underground reservoir. And underground reservoirs usually mean that there's some caverns around here somewhere too.

GUS

But what about the worms?

ORION

That's why we're looking for reinforced caves. If the cavern has some iron ore, we should be safe enough as we wait out the storm.

LIRA

Over there. I see a bare patch of ground.

ORION

Yes. I see it.

The three travelers hurry over to the bare patch of land that Lira had spotted. Past the tall weeds and grasses that had mostly hidden it, there is a long flat stone with a strange symbol marked on it with white chalk.

ORION

Just our luck. Someone has come this way before and had thought to mark out a shelter.

The sky gets even more darker with clouds and it begins to rain, wetting the stone. Orion and Lira haul the stone to the side, revealing a dark hole and uneven stone steps leading downward. Lira leads with way with a magical flame at her fingertips to light the way. Next, Gus follows her. Orion is last as he pulls the rock over the opening to close up any indication that they have found a cave.

LIRA

The walls appear to be made of iron ore. We're safe enough for the night, I think.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

Yes. I agree. The storm is probably going to last for the rest of the day and possibly through the night as well. So we might as well make ourselves comfortable.

At the bottom of the stairs, the trio finds that the cave is well worn and dry. They take off their packs and begin unpacking their blankets and taking out a few rations. Lira places her light in the center so it appears like a campfire.

GUS

At this rate, it's going to take us forever to reach that oasis that you talked about.

ORION

Oh, it won't be that long. If the rain stops by tomorrow morning, we'll be able to reach the hamlet by tomorrow afternoon.

LIRA

And thank goodness for that. It's been a while since I've slept in an actual bed.

GUS

You're one of the guardians of the plains. So you must be wandering around this place for most of the time.

LIRA

You've got that right. And sometimes it can be a thankless job.

ORION

And a dangerous one.

LIRA

Like you're one to talk.

Above the cave, lightning strikes on the ground and the sound reverberates in the cave. The electricity also charges the surrounding ground and the iron ore in the cave walls begin to glitter.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

What was that? And why are the walls glowing?

ORION

It does that every time there's a thunderstorm. You shouldn't worry.

LIRA

Absolutely. You should be glad that it's a thunderstorm. It's charging the walls, creating a barrier between us and anything else that might want to penetrate the cave. The iron ore itself is protection, but the charge from the lightning makes it even more unlikely that creatures like the monster worms will try to come close to this area.

GUS

I guess that's a good thing.

LIRA

A very good thing.

INT. RATHBORNE LIBRARY BASEMENT - NIGHT

Gideon has been transported into the basement of the Rathborne Library. For a moment, he lies on the floor with his eyes closed. When he finally opens his eyes, he notices his surroundings. Close by, on the floor, is a small lamp.

GIDEON

Good grief. I'm in the library. How did I get here? Hello?

No one answers Gideon. However, in the distance, a thunderstorm rages in the night. Gideon picks himself up from the floor and takes the lamp to investigate the stacks.

GIDEON

Hello? Anyone in here?

The only sound is Gideon's shuffling feet. He moves towards the exit of the basement. He climbs the stair. The doorknob to the main room turns easily in his hand and he finds himself in the main room.

Something hits the window nearby. Gideon turns to see that it is a black bird with eerie white eyes. Gideon screams and hurries towards the foyer and the front door.

(CONTINUED)

He opens the door and rushes outside. At first glance, the neighborhood appears tranquil and quiet. But a noise makes Gideon turn his head to see that there are a flock of black birds watching him from the lawn next door.

Gideon begins to run down the street, towards Aunt Rilla's house. The black birds take flight to chase after him. Just as the black birds take flight, the ground beneath them erupts as something underground tunnels, heading in the boy's direction.

GIDEON

No, no, no. This can't be happening. Help!

Gideon finally reaches Aunt Rilla's house. All of the windows are dark as he pounds on the door.

GIDEON

Aunt Rilla! Anyone! Please, it's Gideon, I'm out here! Let me in! Please! Please....

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Gideon suddenly jerks up, waking up from bed. The history book that he had been reading, slides down his lap and lands on the floor.

RILLA

(from the hallway)

Gideon? Are you still awake? It's already ten o'clock. Time for light's out.

GIDEON

Yes, Aunt Rilla.

INT. CAVE BENEATH THE PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - NIGHT

Gus, Orion, and Lira have settled down for the night and are trying to sleep in the supposedly safe cave beneath the Plains of the Forgotten. The magical light that Lira had conjured had been turned down until it is a dim amber light.

There is no sound in the cave except, perhaps, of some deep breathing and some dripping water from some of the runoff from the rain coming down from above.

A faint hissing sound can be heard echoing in the deep chambers of the cave.

(CONTINUED)

Lira suddenly sits up from her blankets.

LIRA  
What's that?

Gus grumbles incoherently and reflexively tries to drown out the noise by turning over to his side.

ORION  
What is what?

LIRA  
I heard a sound.

ORION  
I didn't hear anything.

GUS  
It's probably just the rain leaking in from above. Just go back to sleep.

This hissing sound reverberates through the cavern again, this time a little louder.

LIRA  
Did you hear that? It sounds like it's coming closer.

ORION  
Maybe Mr. Perya is correct. It is nothing but rain.

There is more hissing, now unmistakable. Lira jumps out of her sleeping back with a dagger in hand. Orion also gets up and pulls out a long bladed weapon. Gus stumbles out of his blankets, unsure of what stance to take.

LIRA  
I told you there was something. It's in here with us. And it's not just the piddling rain.

ORION  
It sounds like a snake.

GUS  
I don't know how it is in West Eleria, but I've never heard of a snake that sounds like that.

(CONTINUED)

There is a hiss and a roar and a shadow suddenly leaps out at them. The three travelers take a defensive posture and Gus starts screaming. But with nothing attacking them, Lira and Orion lower their weapons.

A small cat-like creature stands next to Lira's small light, hissing in delight.

ORION

It's time to stop screaming now,  
Mr. Perya.

GUS

Uh, what? Oh.

LIRA

It's a cave fel. I heard that they  
were very rare. Possibly extinct.

GUS

Cave fel? That looks like a cat to  
me.

ORION

A cat? I don't know of any such  
creature that you're speaking  
about.

GUS

Well, I guess what I was saying was  
that what you call a fel is what my  
people would call a cat in my  
world.

ORION

Huh.

LIRA

The fel looks quite small although  
it already has the markings of a  
juvenile.

Lira crouches down and gingerly pats the cave fel on the head. The creature rubs its head against her hand and begins purring. Now confident that there is nothing that is attacking them, the travelers settle back down into their bedding.

GUS

Markings of a juvenile?



LIRA

Yes. You can easily see them across the back and the tail. Then again, I don't really know anything about these creatures aside from the stories that I've heard.

ORION

I've heard that the young ones are very small and the coat color starts out as one uniform color. But as they age, markings begin to appear. The juveniles have those markings. And they become more intricate as they age. They're also supposed to become bigger. Sometimes as large as a house.

GUS

As large as a house? You're pulling my leg, aren't you?

ORION

No, I am certainly not.

LIRA

Well, who knows if they truly become as big as a house or not. I have heard that there is a town in the north which has a museum. And supposedly, they have a skeleton of a cave fel that fills up their entire basement. But I've never been there. And this is the first time I've seen one in the flesh.

ORION

Well, there's one good thing about the fact that we only have a juvenile in our hands. If it was a young baby, it's mother wouldn't be far behind.

GUS

And if what you say was true, its mother would be as big as a house. I wouldn't want a creature that stsize getting angry with me.

LIRA

In the stories that I've been told, though, the cave fels were one of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LIRA (cont'd)  
the few local creatures on the plains that could be easily imprinted, if you had the right sort of personality. So I wouldn't be too worried. The stories also say that the large adult cave fels were known to imprint on people, too, despite their natural ferociousness.

GUS  
So maybe this cave fel is imprinting on you?

LIRA  
Possibly.

ORION  
Although there is a caveat to the story.

GUS  
There are always caveats, aren't there?

ORION  
Yes. But it's not one that you would think of. The cave fels only imprinted on the Rigu. They avoided true Elerians for some reason.

LIRA  
Ah, then perhaps that explains it. Both Orion and I have Rigu blood. And you are a foreigner, so of course, you lack Elerian blood.

GUS  
I suppose that's true. But one wouldn't think that me, by virtue of being a foreigner, would not repulse a creature that is native to this land.

LIRA  
Who knows. There are so few true Rigu about these days so who knows the truth of it all?

EXT. OUTSIDE OF RILLA'S HOUSE

Rilla is busy weeding out the flower bed in front of her house. She is dressed in gardening clothes and is wearing a wide-brimmed hat to shade out the sun.

Nearby, sitting on the porch steps, is Gideon who is simultaneously flipping the strange coin that he had found and reading the odd history book.

RILLA

Whew. Strange how the weather goes from chilly to scorching. Could you do me a favor, Gideon, and get me a glass of water?

GIDEON

Sure thing, Aunt Rilla.

Gideon pockets the coin and puts down the book to go inside the house to get a glass of water. Rilla continues to work on the garden, but a brief breeze goes by and the shadow of a bird flies by. A page of the history book turns by itself.

Gideon comes back out with water to give to his aunt.

RILLA

Thank you, Gideon. It's a hot day today. The only problem is, if I wait for it to be cloudy, it would be raining.

GIDEON

Yes, I can see that. When do you think Mum and Dad will be coming home, Aunt Rilla?

RILLA

I'm sure they'll definitely be back before the fall. They're on the lecture circuit, aren't they? The colleges and universities usually start their academic year in the fall, like every other school.

GIDEON

That seems so far away. Months and months away.

RILLA

Perhaps so. But look on the bright side, Gideon. You should take

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILLA (cont'd)  
advantage of all the opportunity  
that summer brings.

GIDEON  
I suppose so. But I wish that Mum  
and Dad would come home sooner.

RILLA  
Oh, my dear. I'm sure you do. But  
you know how work can be. They  
won't be back until the fall,  
unless for some miraculous reason,  
they finish up early. But knowing  
your parents, I don't think they  
would take that as an excuse to  
leave early, either. They'd simply  
start on another project. So  
you'll have to be patient.

GIDEON  
I guess.

RILLA  
Don't sound so glum, Gideon. Hey,  
I'll tell you what. We can do  
something fun later this  
afternoon. As soon as I finish  
weeding this patch here, I'll go  
wash up and we can go anywhere in  
the city that you like.

GIDEON  
I don't know, Aunt Rilla. You  
don't have to go through so much  
trouble to cheer me up. As you've  
said, Mum and Dad won't come back  
until they're ready. And I've been  
mostly content, reading.

RILLA  
You're so serious, Gideon. For a  
little boy, you sure do read a  
lot. Not that there's anything  
particularly wrong with that, of  
course, but most little boys do  
take a bit more active advantage to  
the summers. Ah, I know! We could  
visit the tallest building  
downtown, the Rigu Building. It  
has an observation deck on the top  
floor.

GIDEON

Rigu? That's strange. I thought I've heard of that name before.

RILLA

You've probably have. The Rigu Building is pretty famous. You probably have heard it from your friends who went to see it with their parents. Come on, it'll be fun. We can go there when I'm finished and then maybe get a pizza at the local pizza parlour.

At that moment, a blackbird flies overhead, cawing. Rilla ignores it, but Gideon reflexively looks up.

GIDEON

Okay.

EXT. PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - DAY

The stone with the marking moves and Gus, Orion, Lira, and Lira's new pet cave fel, emerges from the cave. The sky is still a bit cloudy, but the morning sun is peeking out from behind the clouds. The grass is still wet.

GUS

Well, it looks like the storm has passed.

ORION

Yes. And if this keeps up, we'll make good time to the village.

LIRA

Hopefully we'll get there before sundown. Strange things roam the plains at night. And it wouldn't be a good idea to be caught without shelter during that time.

GUS

What sort of things roam in the night, aside from the worms and, well, whatever creature it was that had attacked you yesterday?

LIRA

Many things. But you probably don't need to know, unless you encounter them.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

Are you saying that ignorance is bliss?

LIRA

Well, since you're playing tour guide, wouldn't it be better that he doesn't know what he's getting into? If he does, he'd demand that you take him back to West Eleria right away.

GUS

Hey, I'm right here, you two. You don't have to talk about me as if I'm not here. And I'm not some yellow-livered coward who would run at the slightest sign of danger.

LIRA

Yellow-livered?

ORION

It's probably one of those sayings that foreigners have.

LIRA

Oh.

ORION

Anyways, there are many dangers on the plains. Some of them are more likely than others. You've already seen two of the more common dangers. Another common danger is the alu.

LIRA

Yes. I've encountered three of them just this year alone. Which is three more than what I've wanted.

ORION

Three? That's surprising for you. In that you're still alive.

LIRA

Hey, the alu are pretty stupid. It's fairly easy to get around them if you know what you're doing. How many have you encountered?

(CONTINUED)

ORION

Well, one in the past two years.

LIRA

That must be some record.

ORION

Or maybe I'm just careful in avoiding them.

LIRA

You just tell yourself that. You were just probably lucky.

GUS

What's the alu?

LIRA

It's a creature with many legs and many fangs. There are some people who say that the alu are related the monstrous worms, but who knows. The only similarity between the two is that they have long sinuous bodies that could easily dwarf a man.

GUS

Oh. So these alu also live underground?

ORION

No. They live on the plain, hiding in the grasses. They remain above ground no matter what weather it is, because they're protected by a hard armor casing. It's not easy telling where they are. You just either have the sense for them or you don't.

LIRA

However, it's very easy to get past them if you know the trick.

GUS

And what trick is that?

LIRA

Cutting off its head. That kills it.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

Oh great. Now that sounds really easy.

EXT. MARBLEHEAD, NH - MAIN STREET - DAY

Gideon and Rilla walk down the main street, heading towards the Rigu Building, which is a tall office building with twenty floors.

GIDEON

Wow, that does seem really tall, Aunt Rilla. It must be a million stories tall.

RILLA

It's not quite that tall, Gideon. Perhaps twenty or thirty stories. But that's pretty tall, nonetheless.

GIDEON

I've heard some of my classmates say that it's kind of scary up on the platform.

RILLA

It is high up. But I'm sure that there's a protective railing up there so you shouldn't worry at all.

GIDEON

I hope so.

Rilla and Gideon walk into the Rigu Building and enter a marble foyer. There is a front desk where a man in a uniform sits.

BUILDING GUARD

Good morning, ma'am. Good morning, young sir. How may I help you?

RILLA

We're here to see the observation deck, sir.

BUILDING GUARD

That's an easy enough route. Just head down the hallway to the elevators and take it to the observation deck. You can't miss it.

(CONTINUED)



RILLA

Thank you.

GIDEON

Thank you.

BUILDING GUARD

You're welcome.

Gideon and Rilla walk down the hallway and wait for the elevator. When the door opens, a smartly dressed businessman exits before they enter. They take the elevator up to the observation deck.

The observation deck is made of concrete with iron railings. There are a few observation telescopes interspersed every couple of yards around the observation deck.

GIDEON

Wow, this is really high up, Aunt Rilla.

RILLA

It sure is. Look, we can practically see the entire city from here.

GIDEON

From this height, everyone looks like ants.

As Gideon and Rilla point out landmarks to each other, a couple, obviously tourists, enter the observation deck. They look exactly like Orion and Lira except they are wearing modern day clothing and modern haircuts.

ALTERNATE ORION

The observation deck is pretty impressive, isn't it?

ALTERNATE LIRA

It's pretty high up. I'd hate to think of how people who are afraid of heights would react to this.

ALTERNATE ORION

That's for sure. Why don't we get a picture taken over there? You can see the cathedral steeple and the shipyards from that point.

(CONTINUED)

ALTERNATE LIRA

All right.

ALTERNATE ORION

Excuse me, ma'am, but could you do us a favor and take our picture for us.

RILLA

Of course! How would you like the picture?

ALTERNATE ORION

We'll stand over there. Try to get our heads in the same picture as the church steeple and the harbor.

RILLA

I'll try my best!

Gideon stands next to Rilla, observing the couple.

GIDEON

You seem familiar. Have I met them before?

RILLA

Just move a little to the left. Yes, that's great.

ALTERNATE ORION

I'm sure that's not it, kid. We're tourists and we just got in last night.

RILLA

All right, one, two, three, say cheese!

As the camera flash goes off, the scene switches.

EXT. THE PLAINS OF THE FORGOTTEN - DAY

Gus, Orion, and Lira are running through the plains. The small cave fel is running alongside Lira. Behind them is an enormous hydra with five fanged heads, roaring and snapping.

ORION

I told you that that was a bad idea!

(CONTINUED)

LIRA

How was I to know that the  
abandoned well had been taken over  
by a pest?

GUS

That's some pest. It's going to be  
the death of us.

As they run, some thing comes into view on the horizon. It  
is a clutch of weather worn hutches, the village of Irdis.

ORION

Over there!

LIRA

Thank the gods!

GUS

That's a bit premature, isn't it?  
We might still die yet before we  
reach it.

LIRA

Don't be so pessimistic. And save  
you're breath. Cause we better get  
there before it gets us.

A few moments later, the three travelers and their new pet  
cross an almost undetectable barrier that flashes as a  
bright line along the ground. They don't notice it and keep  
running.

When the hydra reaches the barrier, it runs smack into an  
invisible wall and falls back, roaring in frustration since  
it has lost its prey.

The party glance back and slow down when they realize that  
they are saved.

ORION

We made it.

LIRA

I always had heard that Irdis had a  
force field that kept unwanted  
things out, but I never really  
thought that it was true.

GUS

A force field?

(CONTINUED)

LIRA

I suppose you could think of it as a magical barrier. Things here don't work the same way as your world.

GUS

I already figured that. What is that thing anyway? All you did was to drop a pebble into that abandoned well to check for water and that thing just came out.

ORION

It's a ten-headed hydra. The number of heads vary depending on subspecies, but one thing is for certain, they're very aggressive and very dangerous. Everything is a potential meal to them, considering the scarcity of such on the plains.

GUS

Sounds reasonable, since the only thing out here are worms anyway.

LIRA

Well, look on the bright side. That thing got us here faster.

ORION

Since we're here, we might as well stock up again. And I, as well as Lira perhaps, have some business here that will keep us here for a day or two.

LIRA

In other words, that means that you'll have to stay put while we're away. It's dangerous beyond the borders of Irdis.

GUS

Hey, you will not have any argument from me. After seeing all those things lurking out in the plains, I'm not going to take any unnecessary risks.

The party arrives in Irdis and approach the main street. There are a few inhabitants walking around, but other than a few curious looks, pay no attention to them.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

There's the inn over there. We'll get some rooms there first before seeing to other things.

The inn is a larger building closer to the border of the city. They walk inside. There's already a large gathering of people inside. When they walk in, the cave fel hisses softly in warning before hiding behind Lira's legs.

The inhabitants of the inn stop talking to turn to see who has come in. Their appearance is far more ominous than that of Orion or Lira. They are the elusive full-blooded Rigu.

LIRA

(under her breath)

Well, that's unexpected.

INT. MARBLEHEAD DELI - DAY

Gideon and Rilla are sitting at a table at the Marblehead Deli, a restaurant and cafe on the main street not far from the Rigu Building. A waitress, who looks like the waitress who had served Gus in West Eleria, arrives at the table with their orders.

GIDEON

That was really fun. I wish we had taken a camera with us like that man and his wife.

RILLA

We can always go back next time with a camera. How's your burger?

GIDEON

Good! Mum and Dad never takes me out to these kind of places.

RILLA

They don't? They can't really be cooking at home for you, are they? Your mother and father don't strike me as the home cooking type, let alone cooking anything. I didn't even think your mother even knows how to boil an egg.

GIDEON

She doesn't. I remember one time she tried to boil some eggs. The egg whites turned out fine, but the yolks were still raw.

(CONTINUED)

RILLA

How did that happen?

GIDEON

Who knows. Dad sometimes says that the laws of physics just shorts out whenever Mum tries to cook anything. If anyone tries to cook, it's Dad. He can do some of the simple things. He can even make pancakes, which I'm trying to learn from him. But if it's anything more complicated than that, we go out to eat.

RILLA

So if your parents take you out to eat, where do you eat if you don't ever try the deli or a greasy spoon?

GIDEON

They're more family style places. Mum says that greasy spoons are not healthy.

RILLA

I suppose not. But you should be able to treat yourself occasionally.

GIDEON

Perhaps, but I'm sure Mum and Dad wouldn't agree to it. Maybe I'll go with you to the Deli whenever I'm visiting.

RILLA

Of course! Besides, I definitely have a fondness for greasy spoons. Especially for the fries. Mmm.

GIDEON

I like the fries, too.

At that moment, Gideon glances over at the direction of the door and he spots Ian and Fred strolling into the deli.

GIDEON

Hey, that looks like Mr. Donovan and his uncle.

(CONTINUED)

RILLA  
What? Ian's here?

GIDEON  
Yeah.

RILLA  
How did he follow us here? I swear,  
Ian is like a stalker sometimes.

GIDEON  
I don't think he's stalking you,  
Aunt Rilla. It doesn't look like  
that they even realize that we're  
here. The waitress is taking them  
to a table at the other side of the  
deli.

RILLA  
Good. That means that he can't see  
us.

GIDEON  
Why are you so worried about Mr.  
Donovan seeing us? I thought you  
liked him.

RILLA  
It's complicated, Gideon. Just eat  
your fries.

INT. INN AT IRDIS - DAY

The Rigu at the inn continue to watch the newcomers at the entrance. The cave fel makes an inquiring sound and paws at Lira's leg. She picks up the animal.

LIRA  
(whispering)  
They're staring at us. What should  
we do?

ORION  
Do what we always do. Find the  
innkeeper and order up some rooms,  
if they have any.

GUS  
Why do you two seem so worried? I  
thought sentinels or guardians like  
you came to this village all the  
time.

(CONTINUED)

LIRA

Yes, but whenever I've stopped by Irdis, they certainly weren't here. I didn't think that many of them existed any more.

GUS

There's what, only twenty of them?

ORION

Only a foreigner would say "only twenty."

Orion finally breaks out of their paralysis and walks towards the other end of the main room where the inn proprietor sits at the other side of a counter. The gaze of half of the Rigu follows Orion while the other half stay trained on Lira and Gus.

ORION

Good day, Haverell. We're stopping by for a couple days on business and need a couple rooms.

HAVERELL

I would love to help you, but I only have one room left. You can take it if you and your friends are willing to share.

ORION

As this place is the only inn in town, we don't have any choice, do we?

HAVERELL

Well, look on the bright side. At least you don't have to pay for the cost of more than one room.

ORION

True.

Haverell writes up an inn contract for Orion to sign and pay for.

HAVERELL

So I recognize Lira. But who's the other man? He doesn't look Elerian.

(CONTINUED)



ORION

He isn't. He's a foreigner who thinks he wants some adventure so he's tagging along with my rounds until I take him back to West Eleria.

HAVERELL

Ah, those foreigners. They just don't the risks, do they? Sooner or later, they'll be taken by the worms.

ORION

This one's not that bad. He hasn't complained about the primitive conditions of the trip. And he hasn't been frozen in fear from all the things we've encountered out in the plains. He might ask a few more questions than is good for him, but he seems like a good sort.

HAVERELL

That's good to hear. Sometimes some of the other guardians come here with some visitor in tow and they complain all the time how this place isn't the civilization that they're used to.

ORION

I can imagine that. Now a question for you, Haverell.

HAVERELL

What is it? I hope you're not asking for a discount.

ORION

(in a lower tone)

It's not that. But what are they doing here?

HAVERELL

They? You mean the Rigu?

ORION

Yes.

HAVERELL

I don't know, to be honest. It was late last night when they all

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAVERELL (cont'd)  
showed up here. They seem polite enough and had the money to pay for room and board. But they seemed very close-lipped about what they're doing here. Which is interesting, isn't it? I didn't think any of them existed any more. Except for maybe half-breeds like you and Lira.

ORION  
I didn't either. I got my Rigu blood from my father who was a half-breed himself. I've never met a full-blooded one. But what have you found out so far?

HAVERELL  
Well, I keep my ears open. From what I've gathered, the lot of them live farther up north, in the wilderness and wastes where most Elerians don't even bother to go. And they would have stayed up there for the foreseeable future, too, if it weren't for something, one of their seers or mages I think, who told them that there was something happening in the south that they needed to look at. What that thing is, I haven't found out yet.

ORION  
Thank you for the information, Haverell.

Orion and Haverell's conversation is interrupted by an abrupt yell and a cheer. When they look over to the rest of the room to see what is happening, they see that the Rigu have gathered around Lira and are tentatively patting the cave fel's head. The cave fel doesn't seem particularly pleased at all the attention, but it is tolerating it.

Gus wanders away from the crowd and heads towards Orion and Haverell.

ORION  
What's happening?

GUS

I'm not sure. One moment, they were staring at us as if we were the enemy and then suddenly they were all around talking in the Rigu language and pointing at the cave fel. They also seemed rather impressed with Lira.

ORION

I see.

As they look on, the conversation among the Rigu can be heard. It is all in their own language. A few of the Rigu fling themselves at Lira's feet. She is taken aback and steps back with the hissing cave fel in her arms.

LIRA

No, no! Really, you mustn't do that. I'm not really who you think I am.

GUS

(to Orion)

What's going on? I can't understand a word they're saying.

HAVERELL

I can't either. Can you, Orion?

ORION

I learned the Rigu language, but their accent is pretty heavy. Probably because they're from a different tribe than my father's blood. But it's pretty obvious. They think Lira is some sort of savior or gifted one because she has tamed a cave fel.

GUS

That isn't surprising, considering the facts that you've told me. Cave fels are pretty rare, aren't they?

ORION

Yes. But that also means that some of the men feel free to propose to Lira.

(CONTINUED)

GUS  
Propose? You mean get married?

ORION  
Yes.

Lira hurries over to them after managing to sidestep another proposing Rigu.

LIRA  
Help! I never thought anyone would want to marry me and now I'm knee deep in suitors. I don't know what to do with them all.

GUS  
I know what a lady in my world would do in such a situation. She'd marry one of them.

LIRA  
But I don't want to get married to some random man I don't know. They only want to marry me because of this.

The cave fel makes a disgruntled noise.

ORION  
According to Rigu custom, that isn't done.

LIRA  
What do you mean "isn't done?"

ORION  
You know what I mean. All of those suitors will be relentless until you choose one of them. A lady who has a cave fel for a pet is a prize to them.

LIRA  
That's horrible. What if I say I'm already taken?

ORION  
They might not believe you.

LIRA  
I could just say that I have a boyfriend back in West Eleria.

GUS

That's certainly conveneient.

ORION

But they might not consider this boyfriend of yours real because he's Elerian.

LIRA

What if I say that I've already chosen you?

ORION

That's ridiculous.

LIRA

Why?

ORION

You know why. We're just all wrong for each other. Everyone can see it a mile away.

GUS

I don't know. I think the two of you together can be believable.

HAVERELL

The foreigner is right. Besides, what could hurt? You two know the score. Just say that Lira has already chosen Orion and that will get them off your backs.

LIRA

That sounds like a sensible plan to me.

ORION

Sensible? It sounds like an idiotic plan.

Lira heads back to the crowd as Orion shakes his head, still disagreeing. Lira tells the Rigu that she has already chosen Orion and that she is not available. The news makes the excitable Rigu even more frenzied. The proposing Rigu, one by one, shouts a challenge in their native language.

They begin pushing the chairs and tables back to create an open space in the main hall of the inn.

(CONTINUED)

ORION

Oh gods. This is going to be the death of me.

Lira walks back to them.

LIRA

Sorry. I thought the declaration would make them back down.

ORION

After this, you're going to owe me big time, Lira.

LIRA

What...

Orion drags Lira towards him and kisses her before rolling up his sleeves to face the first challenger.

GUS

What the heck is happening?

HAVERELL

A good show?

LIRA

Apparently the Rigu has decided to challenge Orion for my hand. They don't think he's worthy because he's only part Rigu. Which is stupid, because I'm obviously only part Rigu, too.

GUS

Well, apparently that doesn't particularly matter to them, does it? They're probably willing to overlook your bloodline because of that.

The cave fel meows in response.

One of the Rigu roars and a chair comes flying out of nowhere and crashes into a wall.

Haverell pulls out a bottle and some glasses.

HAVERELL

Anyone want a drink?

INSERT SECOND SCRIPT "ESCAPE ROOM"

INT. THE HEXAGON ROOM

A young woman dressed in a long gown is busy trying to open the door to the hexagon room, but it won't budge. The hexagon room is a stone room with six sides. There is a small bed and wash stand to one side as well as a wardrobe.

ARLITH

Damn it! Who would have thought  
that getting kidnapped would be so  
much trouble.

Arlith bangs on the door.

ARLITH

I know you're out there,  
scumbag! You're not going to get  
away with this, you know!

Arlith storms away from the door and immediately heads to the window at the opposite corner. She pulls away the curtains to reveal the fact that it isn't night or day. It isn't even looking outside at all. Outside of the room is an oily neon green substance as if the entire room is in such a soup.

ARLITH

Damn and double damn! Where the  
hell have they stashed me? Some  
weird dimension? Inside some  
magical bubble? Maybe even hell  
itself?

She pulls the curtains back to hide the ugly exterior and sits on the bed, frustrated.

ARLITH

Once I get out of this place,  
someone's going to pay. Someone's  
going to pay dearly.

As she muses, her eye catches on the rug that is lying on the floor on the front of the bed. She swings her feet and flips the rug over, revealing a wooden trap door.

ARLITH

Ah ha! Let's try this.

After some effort, Arlith manages to lift the trap door, revealing a stone stair heading down into darkness.

(CONTINUED)

ARLITH

This whole place has a strange feeling to it. If I were truly kidnapped by one of my father's enemies, this whole thing wouldn't be so strange. The kidnapper would be gloating to me that he was trying to extort a ransom. Except there's no one here. Maybe this whole thing is some sort of bizarre game or experiment that some crazed wizard is running.

At her words, the mirror on the wash stand begins to flicker and a face appears in it. Arlith screams at the sudden vision. In the mirror, the face is distorted so it is difficult to tell anything about it except there are eyes and a mouth.

THE MAGE

As much as I hate to admit it, you're correct.

ARLITH

Who the hell are you?

THE MAGE

Tsk, tsk. Such language from a princess.

ARLITH

I'm technically not a princess. I'm just the bastard of a king.

THE MAGE

That makes little difference to me. You have royal blood, specially the blood of the royal line Riga, so you fit my purposes.

ARLITH

You're a horrible being if you think kidnapping a person and running them through an experiment is ethical.

THE MAGE

Who said anything about me being ethical? I just want to see how things turn out. See, I've got this new spell. And no, I'm not going to tell you what the spell

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



THE MAGE (cont'd)  
is. That would totally ruin the experiment. But since you've discovered the first portal, you're entitled to a little information.

ARLITH  
A little? Why don't you tell me all of it?

THE MAGE  
That would be cheating. And to be honest, while I'm running this simulation, I'm not really the one in charge of this. If you want someone to blame, find the Director, if you can. But I will tell you this: you are in a structure where the connections to the rooms are not what they seem. You need to use all your wits and intelligence to escape this place. You will be granted one companion to help you escape. And every time you and/or your companion unlocks a puzzle, another piece of information about this experiment will be given to you.

ARLITH  
That sounds ridiculous. What if I refuse to play?

THE MAGE  
Then your companion will die. You are the one that we are testing. And we want your full compliance.

ARLITH  
You and your director are the real bastards, placing someone's life into my hands.

THE MAGE  
That's the whole point.

ARLITH  
What if I fail this experiment of yours? What will happen then? You'll kill everyone?

(CONTINUED)

THE MAGE

Oh, I don't think so. The Director probably has something far worse in mind.

ARLITH

You son of a bitch.

Arlith grabs a chair and smashes the mirror with it. But despite its destruction, the Mage's laughter still drifts through the air.

Arlith raids the wardrobe, finding extra clothes and a satchel filled with various items. She grabs the magically lit lamp on a dresser drawer and stares down at the stairs revealed from the trap door.

ARLITH

I guess here goes nothing. It's escape or a fate worse than death.

Arlith descends the stairs.

INT. THE DUNGEON

Arlith walks down the stone stairs. The light she is holding falls into the interior illuminating iron bars, straw, and chains. At the end of the room is a body bound up in chains. Other than that, there does not appear to be any exits other than the one above to the hexagon room.

ARLITH

Oh my gods.

Arlith hurries down the stairs to see to the person who is chained up. It is a man, muscular and naked with many scars criss-crossed over his chest and back. But the scars are old. And other than the fact that he is unconscious, he appears unharmed.

ARLITH

What is that damn mage doing, kidnapping people? He certainly doesn't look like he's here of his own volition.

As she draws near, the man groans and his eyes open.

VAYN

Who are you?

He tugs on his arms, but the chains rattle.

(CONTINUED)

VAYN

Witch! Let me out at once. Or there will be hell to pay.

ARLITH

Wait a minute. I'm not the one who put you here. I'm a prisoner here, like yourself.

VAYN

Likely story, witch, considering the fact that you're up an about.

ARLITH

No, no. I'm really a prisoner here. A mage kidnapped me and put me in the room above yours. I managed to find a door leading here to the dungeons and came across you.

VAYN

I still don't trust you, but I'll go with what you say for now. Who are you and what mage are you talking about?

ARLITH

A mage. I don't know who he is. But he claims he's working for some director who kidnaps people and puts them in this enchanted building for some sort of experiment. All I know is that I'm supposed to find a way out of here. If I don't play by his rules, he's going to kill my companion.

VAYN

Kill your companion?

ARLITH

I guess it's whoever who accompanies me on my escape. Which would probably be you if I get you out of those chains.

VAYN

That mage sounds insane.

(CONTINUED)

ARLITH

I thought so too. So who are you?

VAYN

You never answered my question about your identity.

ARLITH

Oh, that. I thought most people knew who I am. But maybe you've been taken from a country far from mine. I'm Arlith of Riga.

VAYN

Arlith of Riga? I've heard of you. You're one of the Rigan king's natural issue.

ARLITH

Yes, my father does get around a lot, doesn't he.

VAYN

Never mind that. You're Arlith of Riga. It's said that your ancestor's blood runs the hottest in you.

ARLITH

Maybe. But it's useless in this situation. As you can see, there's no water around.

VAYN

Then we'll have to go find some water. But first, you'll have to free me.

ARLITH

But you haven't told me your name.

VAYN

Vayn of Tragornia. And yes, before you ask, I am that Vayn.

ARLITH

I'm not questioning you. What I am questioning is, how the hell did the mage manage to kidnap you? I've heard that the Tragornians could shape-shift into sea dragons.

(CONTINUED)

VAYN

I have no idea. One day, I was minding my own business and the next, I'm here. And trust me, I've tried to escape ever since I woke up. There's something on my ankle, a dampening spell of some sort.

Arlith crouches and looks at his ankle and finds that there is another manacle on it. But it is different than the plain metal ones on his wrist. There is strange writing on it. When Arlith tries to touch it, it shocks her with an arc of sparks.

ARLITH

Ow! It's definitely bespelled. Too strong for me, especially without my element around.

VAYN

So now will you free me?

ARLITH

Yes, of course.

Arlith finds a hidden catch on the manacles and releases him. Vayn stands up and Arlith quickly averts her head.

ARLITH

I guess I should find some clothing for you.

VAYN

I'm pretty happy as I am, but if it appeases your modesty, I'll don some pants if you wish it.

ARLITH

You're a bit of a vain cad, aren't you?

VAYN

It's all in the blood, my lady.

Arlith turns to walk up the stairs. She stumbles over a loose stone. When she looks down, she finds that her foot has pried away the loose stone, revealing a metal key hidden in the cavity. She picks it up.

ARLITH

How curious.

## INT. THE HEXAGON ROOM

Arlith and Vayn have both gone back up to the hexagon room. Vayn had found some clothes in the wardrobe and is now wearing brown pants and a white shirt.

ARLITH  
I wonder what this key is for.

VAYN  
You could try the door.

ARLITH  
Wouldn't that be too obvious?

VAYN  
Well, at this juncture, we can't afford to overlook the obvious. If that doesn't work, then we'll figure out what to do next.

ARLITH  
I suppose so.

Arlith heads to the door in the hexagon room and puts the key into the lock and manages to turn the key with an audible click.

ARLITH  
You're right, it's open!

She pulls open the door to reveal a dark hallway. Vayn picks up the light and follows her out into the corridor.

The corridor is constructed entirely of stone. There are several doors on either side. At the end of the corridor is a spiraling staircase going both up and down.

VAYN  
Where should we go first?

ARLITH  
I don't know. My gut is telling me that we should head to the nearest exit which, if my orientation is right, would be towards those stairs and possibly up. However, my head is telling me otherwise. Because the mage had hinted that this structure is not what it seems. Maybe the exit is not as obvious.

(CONTINUED)

VAYN

But we won't know until we try.

ARLITH

Yes.

They walk to the stairs and go up. But it is blocked by a locked door.

ARLITH

Damn. That's a dead end.

VAYN

Well, it just means that we need to find a key. Let's go down.

They walk down the stairs, but that is blocked by another locked door as well.

ARLITH

Perhaps we should try one of those other doors.

They venture back to the corridor. The first door they try is a plain wooden door that looks exactly the same as all the other doors. But it opens easily. Arlith looks in.

ARLITH

Oh my. Perhaps this will be of help to us after all.

INT. THE ROOM OF ARTIFACTS

Arlith and Vayn walk into the room of artifacts, a cluttered room with bookshelves filled with books and various jars of strange materials with faded labels. There's a work table also filled with strange contraptions.

Vayn walks to the table and picks up one of the gadgets.

VAYN

I've seen something like this before.

ARLITH

What is it?

VAYN

It's a weapon which can kill from a distance. I should probably take this.

(CONTINUED)

ARLITH

Oh look! Here's something that looks like a telescope and a microscope made into one. You can switch magnifications with this dial here.

VAYN

It's mostly strange, possibly unusable stuff on the shelves. And all of these books, unfortunately, can't tell me anything since it's written in a language I can't read. Can you?

ARLITH

Sorry, no. Maybe it's in some strange mage language. I think that's all we can find here. We should try the other rooms to see if we can find any other useful stuff.

INT. THE BLUE DINING ROOM

Across from the room of artifacts is the blue dining room. The stone walls, floor, and ceiling of the room are tinged blue. Dark blue curtains hide a window. In the center of the room is a large round dining table set for eight. On the side of the room is a large cabinet filled with china. Beside it is a sideboard, heaped with food.

ARLITH

Wow, food.

VAYN

It could be poisoned.

ARLITH

Great. That kills the appetite. How are we going to feed ourselves if we're going to be trapped here for a couple of days?

VAYN

Well, we'll have to figure out if any of this is poisoned, then.

ARLITH

Hm. Here's a jug of what appears to be water here. Let me see if I can use it to examine the food.

(CONTINUED)



VAYN

How on earth will you be able to do that?

ARLITH

Well, water acts as my focus which amplifies my powers. Oh never mind. It's all theory stuff anyway. I might as well just do it.

Arlith reaches out so her hands touch the jug of water. She closes her eyes and her whole being begins to faintly glow. She opens her eyes and her eyes emit the same glow. She looks at the food intently. After a moment, the glow fades.

ARLITH

The food appears to be safe to eat.

VAYN

That's good.

Vayn picks up an apple and bites into it.

VAYN

This tastes like an apple.

ARLITH

I'm glad to hear of it.

Arlith picks up an apple as well and begins to eat. She wanders over to the window and pulls aside the drapes. The swirling neon green force field is the only thing visible outside.

ARLITH

Ugh. We can't go out this way either.

VAYN

What do you suppose that is?

ARLITH

The mage said something about a force field. Whatever it is, it's a spell that's preventing us from taking the easy way out.

VAYN

Well, back to the drawing board then.

Vayn glances back at the basket of fruit.

(CONTINUED)

VAYN

Hey, I swore that there were six apples in there. We each took one so there would only be four left. But now there's six.

ARLITH

So there is. Maybe it's a magic basket of fruit that's self-replenishing. Which is a bit of a relief. It means that we won't have to go hungry.

VAYN

I guess there's that, too.

ARLITH

I don't think there's anything of interest in this room. There are two other doors we have yet to discover.

VAYN

But we have yet to really search this room or the other room we were just in. We could have easily missed something.

ARLITH

You're right. We should do a search.

There is a brief montage of Arlith and Vayne scrupulously examining everything in the blue dining room and the room of artifacts. They find a small silver key hiding behind one of the plates in the cabinet. There is also a larger steel key found behind one of the books in the room of artifacts.

ARLITH

These must go to those locked doors at the stairs. We should go try them out.

They try the stair doors with the keys, but they do not work.

VAYN

I guess it's back to searching the other two rooms, isn't it?

## INT. THE TRUNK ROOM

Vayn and Arlith enter the trunk room, which is basically and empty stone room devoid of everything, including windows, except for one large steel trunk sitting at the end of the room.

ARLITH

Is it just me, or is this whole setup creepy?

VAYN

You're just noticing this now? I thought this whole kidnapping and experimenting things was creepy from the get go.

ARLITH

Yes, yes, I know all that. But the rest of the rooms seemed relatively normal, you know? This one just has a trunk. What if it's one big trap?

VAYN

Does your powers tell you if it's a trap?

ARLITH

No. It's just this whole situation that's messing with my head.

VAYN

Me too. But we've got to explore all possibilities. And I don't sense that there's anything bad. It looks like the trunk is locked.

ARLITH

Let's try the keys. And if that doesn't work, well, can your weapon do damage to inanimate objects?

VAYN

I have no idea, but I kind of want to save it for the last resort.

ARLITH

Well, that sounds sensible. Here, try these.

(CONTINUED)

Vayne tries opening the trunk first with the steel key. There is an audible click and the trunk lid springs open as if it were on springs. Vayne and Arlith look inside the trunk.

VAYN

There's nothing here but this.

ARLITH

That looks like a hammer. What are we going to do with a hammer?

VAYN

I don't know. But here, look. There appears to be writing on this, but it's too small to make out. Perhaps your microscope device would be able to read it?

ARLITH

Maybe. Hold on a sec. Let me set this here. Ah yes. Wow. This is strange.

VAYN

Strange?

ARLITH

The script isn't in some foreign language. I can actually read it. It says, "Strike all that is gold."

VAYN

Hm. I wonder what that means. Have we come across any gold?

ARLITH

No. Iron, steel, silver. Some brass and copper things back in that artifact room. But no gold, I think. Do you think it's a clue?

VAYN

Maybe. perhaps we should take this with us, just in case we do come across something gold.