

The writer

By Nova

Part one: the story about no one and everyone

You could consider me a god, or just a dreamer. You could say I'm a storyteller, a visionary, a kid, even a nobody. Personally I consider myself a writer; a God to my creation, a nobody to the world, a story teller for all who listen, and a friend to those any whom care. I've written many world into life, lost many others to my mind. What remains at the center is me. A creator with his creation at his will. It a blessing and a curse for the fate of these worlds are up to me alone. My light can dim and the words created in turn will be quite dark. But my favorite is one of stone golems, of a copper citadel, of war, revenge, and freedom. And if you stick around I'll share it with you!...

You begin pacing the general's office cautiously watching the door waiting for him to arrive. your thoughts following suit pacing as well... what could I've done now... I did everything thing as ordered... but was I to slow... what if we've already lost... o come on where is he... did he finally... the door burst open as it had many times before. "A hundred men, ember a hundred MEN, it's been one week and we've already lost a hundred men!". The general seems anguish, angry but not at you.

Trying to seem calm you question

"w-what ord-ders do you have for m-me general?"... Composure failed... "orders? Ember what do you think, I need a break through! Something with your weird obsession, those creatures of yours" he shouts back. Trying again to hold composure you begin "I-i they're are complete, but-" "but nothing ember there's no more time to wait, If they're complete take me to them" he shouts.

Once more you try "b-but general they aren't trained, only prototy-" "is that back talk Ember? Was I um clear that this was an order? If they're read what better place to train then the battle field?" "U-um" your voice trails off... this can't be a good idea... "ye-I mean no sir, follow me". You walk the long crooked corridors, general onyx right behind, until you reach your lab. A beautiful botanical garden with a warm sky light in this cold stone structure.

As you step into the space it's almost as if time slows, even the generals tensions eases a bit, but time hasn't slowed. you remember you'd laced the air with poly fog so you could work easier. Hearing a battle cry from the sky light reminds you both that the war continues to rage just beyond these walls.

That's when your eyes fall onto them. Your fifty three hand sculpted mud-stone golems. They have an ethereally-natural beauty to them. well aside from the weaponry in there beautiful crafted hands, maces, spears, sabers. Cuts so clean they could be surgeons. In the corner of you vision you see the generals eyes finally catch on them. "Well done ember, they're quite impressive" he remarks awfully slowly, still gently calmed by the poly fog. "There looks to be about fifty or so, strong, heavy, and precise, they will help greatly in the fight".

You begin to hurriedly explain the statistics “they share a hive mind, you know thinking In unison, they have skin of hard stone, o and they never get tired dew to the pl-“ your cut of by unusually loud cry of pain from outside of which also snaps the general back to his senses.

In turn he orders “enough said! We have no bloody time for delay They look sturdy, send them out.” From that your reminded as well why you were weary. You again try rebutting “but sir they aren’t ready, they are only prototypes”. The general commandingly states “ember! That was an order!” You try once more worry slipping back into your voice “b-but general th-” as your cut off again by the the general “Ember, we have no time, will have exhausted our troops in a matter of hours” “troops who have families” slid slyly in at the end.

Reluctantly you finally respond “yes sir”. Then as abruptly as his entrance the generals gone. You know left alone again with you your thoughts begin to worry... what if this doesn’t work... it should, right... but if they fail what happens... will I be thrown in the dungeon... killed... or worse... finally catching your breath, and your mind you order, firmly but gently “golem go, march in unison, fight as one, until we’ve won- until no more lives must be lost” trailing of near the end drownd out by a hundred foot steps, deep and soft. It’s beautiful yet darkly eerie... to hear your creations all working as one, only to bring destruction...

The marching continues in unnaturally parallel lines. Of course even in their beauty they’re agile, so to not fall behind you chase after jumping into a sprint finally taking your last look at them un touched by war, watching for just a moment. Their emerald, ruby, and amber eyes searching, their lush plant hair swaying, their warm mud brown legs marching then you turn away to the stairs. Swiftly climbing to the top preparing for what’s about to unfold.

Finally you stand, hands leaning on the stone Merlons. An archer crouched far on each side. the general walks up steadily a soldier following suit, and Stopping next you he quietly says “ember, if this doesn’t work it’s our entire town that pays for it”. Now ready, he looks out to the battlefield and projecting his voice commands to the troops. “Fall back, all fall back to defensive positions”. Some shouts of triumph echo through the enemy army while the men retreat outward.

with the same eerie beauty, the sounds of a hundred steady marching steps fill the battlefield. The golems all taking positions at once without audible or visible communication, ready for battle. The enemy’s first attack was futile against the powerful golems, not even the strongest blade made a dent in your creation. enemies numbers fell growing the generals pride, and your worries. Until suddenly, everything stops. Or rather not everything, specifically the golems. An synchronized stillness, washes through them. Searching the battlefield you spot it. You spot why they stopped. One of the opposing soldiers helmet had fallen off. Revealing not in shock to you but the golems that they were human.

In that moment watching the golems demeanor shift from strategic to traumatic your mind begins to race again... I knew this could happen... if only the general had listened... what’s

going to happen to me... to us... the general looks to turn to you now with the heavy anger you grew to know along side his new dismay. You can't meet his eyes this time, as you know too well what they say, and as you hear all the weapons clatter to the ground in chaotic unison filling the wrongly silent battlefield.

He begins to shout. Harsh and heavy strain at you "EMBER what is going on?!" Pushing off the merlons and crossing your arms you force out "I-I said they were complete, but still in prototype" turning to face him you starting to find your voice you continue "I sa-said they weren't ready, y-Y-YOU commanded I send them out anyway!" Recoiling in shock that he's being met on equal levels the general cry's "are you accusing me of something ember?! This isn't my fault these are your golems".

you pause.. were you accusing him... was that allowed... but no you'd put up with this too much... finally meeting his eyes you stand coldly, and with genuine ferocity you shoot back "you didn't letting me tell you what we hadn't trained them yet, we didn't train them loyalty, loyalty to us, all they knew was to protect life, they weren't ready, YOU told me to send them out! So yes maybe am blaming you!" Now frozen by the surprise and just maybe you catch a twinge of fear in his eyes the general went silent.

This silence lingers for just a few heart beat... a few to many... until it's broken by fifty three voices in gruff almost automated unison "we have been ordered to protect all life not harm it, we can not comply with your orders to fight". These words are met with harsh disdained grunts from the our troops. Followed again by the silence. You try to use this to calm yourself. Hm~ hoo~... one breath... two breaths... three...7 suddenly as if the world was crashing in. A flood of shouting soldiers charge from enemy lines, now devastated the general quietly commands the soldiers next to him "take him away, to the dungeon, executions will be held the following morning". Your hands are quickly bound behind your back by rope... i guess this is the end... I got to loud... and as your being dragged away you hear the general shout "soldiers returning to battle position! disregard the golems" disgust dripping into his voice near the end.

As soon as you and the soldier get out of ear shot your un bound from the rope. A voice behind you says "Ember it's me Tera, you know your apprentice". "TERA?! Really!" You nearly shout remembering you'd stationed her there just in case things went south. "Lower your voice" Tera says helping you to your feet. "now let's get you outta here before the onyx finds you". "Your coming with right?" You clarify. "You know I'd never leave your side ember, now as I said let's get going". You both swiftly sprint the still jagged stone corridors. Before reaching the hallway leading to your lab you inform her "I've gotta grab some stuff from my lab" she corrects "we have to". With a shy smile and emptiness growing in your stomach. You both approach the lab. That's when you feel a tug, not physically, but mentally. you feel it again stronger this time, you try to brace yourself against the wall, or you would but your muscles don't move. Then you realize you can't feel the ground beneath your feet. The tugging persists, slowly everything goes quiet even

your mind as thoughts dissipate, and then, as everything fades one final tug pulls you free and the world goes dark...

A voice rings out from the darkness. The voice of a boy gentle and soft:
hello dear reader, I'm sorry for breaking your immersion. just a gentle reminder to breath after such a heavy start. All though now that I think about it you could use a change of scenery, and a new prospective. I'll let you in gently, you are now taking the eyes one of the many stone golems, unified in kind defiance"

Chapter two

Now in the emptiness thoughts start to flow and your vision returns. you find yourself on the battlefield... something feels missing from your head, in a simple and calming way,. You feel the grass and dirt on you feet, the sun strengthening you body. then you look down realizing what you'd just done. There before you lies the dead body of an opposing soldier, as you stair voices that aren't your own join your thoughts voices of the stone golems. Then even more odd a singular voice so compelling rings in your head {your main objective is to protect life at all costs}. Realizing who you are a stone golem down in the fight, everything starts to feel normal, yet off at the same time. Until you mind slips into unison with its.

Your head now filled with the thought for fifty three other traumatized minds. One head shoots off -but we didn't know- you own mind says I killed him -our order- another's mind try's; I ended a life you own continues -they were the enemy- more send; but all you can muster is I did a bad thing and finally -are we~we b~bad- many minds question in disarray. Silence still plagued the battlefield when it's Suddenly broken by-by you? All the golems including yourself shout in uncanny unison "we have been ordered to protect all life not harm it, we can not comply with your orders to fight" seconds pass then in a moment of stillness, everything explodes. A mass of shouting, soldiers charge in your direction. During which you hear from to many ears, and see from just a couple eyes some man -our masters general- shout onto the battlefield "soldiers returning to battle position! dis regard the golems"

You see from a single set of eyes as your own creator is dragged away bound and blinded -at the generals own command- the soldiers finally rush back to their positions -many with disgust of you, a few indifferent- but it's not at you it's directed at others. Now that you think about it your can think independently of the others -but still connected- and you realize your vision if filled with wild beautiful colors beyond any you've known. You notice what the colors were as You're brush sprouts bunches of beautiful purple lilies. Watching a verity of vibrant flowers sprout atop the heads of the entire crowd -roses | orchids | daffodils | thorns | marigolds | daisies | berries | lilies | vines | mushrooms- everyone staying adamantly still. so many different kinds of flora spread throughout the crowd. Every one specialized individualized for each golem. though the core brush remained a messy moss base. The sun almost feels as if it shines a bit brighter, as if it's a bit warmer. The ground beneath feels just a bit softer than before.

The new shine nearly shatters, as you remember what you'd just done -we ended lives- You find yourself realizing you don't want to be here anymore you, others add -we should leave- you're voice picks up with "I can lead us!". the war still raging, you continue "I will not fight, we want to leave". Then you hear it echoing around you. But it's not echoing it's you siblings joining in "I will not " I w not fight no "I t fight"

You all stand tall watching the arrows fly, and begin to march. Only wavering a moment upon hearing the general cry out "bloody ember and his good for nothing golems were doomed" from the ears of another. The steady fall of the 80 or so feet -in unison- in disarray. One step, two step, three step four... this continues for a few miles. Everyone watching the scenery change around them. Your amber heart glowing. An army -community- of golems, all marching to the beat of you own drum, in beautiful rhythm.

Finally a ray of light hits your eye, an then you're entirely bathed in it. Many of the golem invite the idea -this is the spot- the sun bright the tree tall and elegant, the life innumerable! "This is the spot" you call. Suddenly a critter scampers atop heads and you feel a tug at your chest, Then the sounds of the forest start to fade out. the light refuses to glint through your emerald eyes. Another tug, The gruff feeling of your skin drifts away. In one final tug Your body goes numb and everything fades once again to black, the thoughts of the all the golems stripped away till even your own is gone.

The familiar voice calls out again:

Hey again. hopefully you feel a bit better now, now that the sun has shown upon you once again. I think you could use an even stronger perspective shift, something unfamiliar, not quite so human. Welcome to the eyes of a hungry chittering syferus fox...

Chapter three

Your head reclaims awareness, your new eyes sharp, you paws resting you upon a branch next to your partner, you feel his warmth, and you feel your stomach. Rumbles echoing, you hear your mind screeching you are very hungry yet you feel the precision of your claws, the precision of your body. Chitter chitter, up on a branch you continue to watch the ground, searching for any pray. Hungry-h-hungry, not a bird in sight, but something catches your tiny eyes. Something new, Something unfamiliar. A pack of tall brown figures, with rough skin, gleaming eyes, and colorful plants scattered atop their head? You'd seen nothing like this ever before. You chitter to your partner, he chitters back. Fear is in the air, but h-hu-hungry.

And Their, you see it, a patch of berries on one of the figures head. H-hungry-h-hungry your brain begins shouting. You make the decision out of pure necessity to pounce. landing gracefully on one's head. From there against your fatigue you bound across the head tops. the "ground" surprisingly sturdy against your paws. Finally you reach your target, and almost missing your window you leap into the bush. And snatch you grab the glistening red Barry. swiftly scamping into the adjacent heads grass patch F-food. You spot a bird of paradise a star

finch, fighting the instinct to pounce as you brain try once again hunger-h-hun-hungry. But this is enough food to last you the day. That's when a booming voice calls out from below you "hey little critter! You like berries don't you" the voice is bright but booming and with it comes the quaking of the false ground beneath your paw.

With a yip, Out of fear or simply instinct you begin to try and dig, into below the grass patch in which you hide. But to no avail sc-scared-s-scared. Your talons meet hard mud stone, the flourishing life is rooted in mudstone?! You realize that there is no hiding, not underground that is. In a split second you leap gracefully from your hiding spot the movement of this giant throws you off. Suddenly plummeting your fear the crash builds. Your mind races d-death-no-n-no-die! Then out of the air a hand catches you. The impact was hard and your in a great deal of pain but you're not dead. Scared-sc-sc-scared. Your legs severely injured. you can't run or climb, you probably won't make it through the winter. Hearing your partner yip from the tree line you try and get up. You hear the same booming voice from before call "o no are you alright little critter? You took quite a fall", shaking your hold body. The others creatures echo, a cacophony, a roaring sea of noise! "Is it ok?", "what happened", "can we help it?". Finally amidst the the chaos, despite your best efforts you drift out of consciousness. Your partner in the corner of your eye, and a giant beast staring straight at you.

When you finally wake after... you don't know how long, you search your surroundings. Your in some kind of building it made of native materials, coppers and odd orange wood you feel like you remember seeing. Your eyes continue to shift around the interior of the building. The table soft against your paws. You spot it one of the figures for... before? Finally as everything Catches up to you fear rushes back in. Fear-fa-sc-sca-run, you try and get up, to run, to leap, to do anything, but it's really no use. You topple off the table. You hear the figure warmly and excitedly exclaim "it's up! It's up! I'm so happy to see it doing better". Another figure walks over, and as soon as they see you their face lights up! The second voice much softer and quieter reminds the first "daffodil, they have sensitive ears, calm your voice" daffod-dafo-daffodil, daffodil a little abashed turn to you and in a quieter more stern voice says "you'd better not get up little one. I got a splint on your leg but it's not quite healed". You now remembering what had happened succumb to the feeling for just a moment pain-pa-pai-pain! You notice some new out of the window, a figure flashing past, but not like the ones inside, like the hunters that ravaged this area years ago. Then daffodil gently picks you from the ground avoiding touching your injured leg. You feel her hand cold and embracive against your fur, and lays you back on the table just as softly

That's when you remember or rather you notice your partner. Not just your partner but more than that he's sleeping in the second voices hair. You call out to him "chitter chirp chirp" and he wakes calmly, but in surprise to you daffodil responds "Chiter chirp chirp to you to!". Then they softly asks the second voice "could you come over here waterlilly? The little girl seems interest in scamper". Waterlily approaches and your partner leaps on to the table next to you excited that you've awoken. Thoughts a series of chirps he tries to calm your nerves and explain a sense of normalcy. "Chit-chitter chirps chirp chirp" friends, safe, home, food, life.

Your partner wait with you while you recover, daffodil coming in occasionally to check in and bring you food warm~wa~home~k~kind. One day when daffodil comes in she take off you leg brace. “Why don’t you try walkin’ little honey” you get up, and you walk, then you run, and pounce from the table! The ground soft and mushy upon your paws, your partner leaps to catch up. You both go out into the gardens chittering and prancing. Your partner takes lead. Following suit you two jump, play, scavenge, and chase the birds! gol-lems-s-safe. You prepare to head back to the den, when he ends up taking you back to his home, with his care takers. A cute pare of golems s-safe pe-peace at-pu-peace-ce. One of the golems kneels down and you jump into their soft grass. It’s surprisingly soft against your belly, and you find yourself drifting to sleep. And as the world goes dark and quiets down you feel it one tug, two tugs, three tugs. Your brain goes silent with it.

Silence

For just a few moments true silence

The voice you seem to know to well calls out again: hello again listener, I hope you enjoyed the eyes of the gentle syferus fox! It’s was very fun to right, say you’re getting quite used to it by now aren’t you. But I mean wouldn’t you like to visit someone you could call a long lost friend by now? care to to a look through the eyes of Tera? Be prepared the are some mildly graphic scenes”...

Chapter four

New light draws into your dark green eyes, you feel your ponytail bounce against your neck, you hear your steps against concrete, and the steps of ember next to you. Now ember was a handsome young man, he wore his hair messy, and his clothes loose, and he was definitely charismatic, but he was not your type. You two were best friend anyway, what else could you need? Currently he’s wearing a light green shirt and some khakis. He has his cross body bags at his hip with some of his lab equipment. You wore a torn, muddied white tee and ripped jean shorts. You tow’d been on the run ever since the ‘incident’ with the general, about a year ago The stupid general! that stupid general, he clearly cares about Ironheat and it’s people but he was abrasive, and he’d never listen to Ember! O right the task at hand get bread from the bakery. “Now few townfolk supported Ember, and the baker wasn’t one of them. Alright quiet steady, just stay low. The bakery air smelled so sweet, and swipe. Not even a flinch from the baker, two pieces of bread fresh and warm!

You start for home confident and steady as if you hand just stole two pieces of bread. The sun beat down bright and heavy an you head. Turning the corner you reach the quiet ally that lead to your “home” if you could even call it that. A little room in the back of the blacksmith. Everyone was a bit wear ever since the enemy breached our front lines, but Ironhearts blacksmiths was a kind old fellow who understood embers point of view. You open the blacksmiths door and head to the back, “I got us bread, ember” you call. No response but that’s how it usually was with ember working in his lab(broom closet) “I’ll be out in a second Tera, i just... need... to...”

{fwish}~ a puff of green smoke envelopes ember from a teal vile. "Second" he finishes drowsily. "Come on let's eat you can continue working tomorrow morning" you try.

You hand a piece of bread and you both head to the back room to eat. ember say hurriedly "i have something I've been mean to talk with you about" "oh and what is that?" You shoot back playfully. He continues "so I know you know the war fronts drawing nearer, and I've heard some rumors about the golems, my golems and a shining orange citadel, my golems Tera!" "Rumors ember!" He try's to keep on un faltering

"I know, but- but if it's true and we can g-" "no!"

"Bu-" "ember we are not trekking through a war ground to try and find your golems" you say sternly.

"Tera I am going to find them, i won't hold you to your deal, but they mean the world to me"

"dang you ember, you know i won't let you go alone. I'll tell you this it's not a safe idea"

you say slightly annoyed "Alright then we leave tomorrow at noon" ember finishes playfully.

"Tomorrow at noon" you call back. It's true the war front was really close and either way the woods might be kinder to them than Ironheart. Tomorrow at noon, that means you gotta stock up tonight.

You could hit the butcher and the apothecary, they've always been quite kind, then tomorrow you could pay the fisherman and lumberjack a "visit". Those two were a bratty bunch, but they worked well. You begin to walking back down the street sun much lower in the sky.hearing the sound of a bird chirping drowned out by the whispers of towns folk. When you finally reach the apothecary the sun has already set. You step in ms. frost immediately smiled. You open persuasive and honest "frost, we're heading out of town tomorrow, do are their any spare remedies you could lend us, of a trip into the woodlands" "I'm afraid not, Tera stock is low and the work is hard this time of year, but good luck to you" she replied. "Fair enough, thank you for the consideration though" the plants always grew smaller in the summer, and many people got sick from the heat. But that was a bust

The butcher was just round the block, and would be getting off just about now. You rush to the shop to see the light still on. Gently opening the door you're met with a warm greeting, thing move quick and you score some fine pork. Now with the moon bright in the night sky you head back, the crud of the soldiers not halting for sleep. you on the other hand need it for you journey tomorrow. Dang ember chasing fairy tails, you knew the golems and love them but life now was sustainable. It was steady even living on the streets on the run. When you make it home ember is back in his lab working on something. you lay out on the mat in your guys room. Sleep comes quick but not steady.

You wake up later than you'd have hoped, about nine-ten ish. You head out on towards the lumber house in hopes to make it there before he does. The air crisp but warm around your skin. You slip in sawmill still swept across the ground. Quick as a leopard take your knife and trip away some fire kindling, as you slip out you hear the sound of the ax swinging. You got away just in the nick of time, and now that you haste the pork fish won't be to necessary. It about eleven when you got back home. Ember is finally out of his lab for once,

“hey dock, ain’t you working’ on something?”

You call. No he in fact wasn’t he’d finished it. Whatever it is.

You both begin to pack you bags and as your about to step through the door Ember hands you a bottle. Or at least you thought it was ember but theirs nothing in front of you. You push and your hands collide with the empty space!

“Pour it over yourself Tera”

a disembodied voice calls. You do, a cloud of turquoise smoke washes over your body it’s wet and sticky but only for a moment, and when it dissipates you can no longer see your hand! Or the rest of yourself for that matter!

“Whoah ember, how? What? Did you? Am I?”

You stutter out in awe. “It’s only temporary don’t worry, it’s what I’ve been working on!” He’s say with what sound like a huge grin.

“Them we’d best get going, come on” you whisper.

As you two walk trying to brush you hands against each other to keep sure you’re not separated the cries of war grow louder, and louder still. Then you hear that tantalizing voice the voice of the general shout “men fall back fall back,” the war is heavy at our heals. And finally you step out into the war zone. A battlefield soaked in blood. Lifeless body’s around every step, toxic smoke caressing the sky with the taste of death. Blades flash, arrows fly, screams hill your ears and for only a moment you freeze. {brush} embers sleeve slides past you. And you continue on, as the war get quieter your senses sharpen. You notice a bird flying past, a squirrel scraper up a tree, and a faint orange glint off In The distance

The trek lasted only two days, the glint ever growing brighter under each morning light. Until you’d finally reached the solar citadel, and it’s beautiful floral gardens. While sneaking about the woods around the gardens you spot a tiny brown fox, and it notices you... fear in its eyes. Ember as well is fearful of reconvening with his golmes, and so we waited a day or so out in the wood for him to prep. Watching embers excitement grow, she starts to walk and you feel a tug, A tug that is unknown yet familiar,your head goes numb and your legs but they continue to move. sounds fade out to silence fwesh, your hole world precedes to go dark

The voice whispers from behind:

Welcome back”

The sound shifting in front of you, I continue:

I’m sorry to break in when everything is calm, but theirs something I want you to see. And Tera, is not, how I you need to see it. Time for us to go back for something new. New eyes old character, a real turn of the clock, maybe a bit jarring, but it’s necessary. You will be feeling the pain of onyx the army general

Chapter five

The ground rumbles from under your feet, but it’s not an earthquake. It’s a sound you’d grown oddly familiar with, the sound for hundreds of stamping of boots. It drums louder

-Ten men, only ten men left- you call out
“men fall back”,
“we’re officially outnumbered”.

Then you notice the faint footprints. What imprinted them in the mud remains un seen. Your eyes follow and illogically they seem to stop, further, and further as time passes. Their trajectory evident. That’s when you catch it, the faintest orange glint. The men rush back into the fortress, it’s as of now about 1:100 soldiers from what you could see. It was a losing battle, and you had finally lost. The door burst open your eyes weren’t deceiving you only ten soldiers step in to the room. You point to two face in the ‘crowd’ and in a commanding voice you shout

“you two, down to the city line”

“prepare everyone for evacuation, the city of iron heart falls today, and we’re going to let it”

They just stand their stunts,

“go! go!”

The two you had pointed to hurriedly leave the balcony. You continue

“As for the rest of you-“ an arrow whistles part fraying you words. Ducking down you wisper

“I’ll tell you more soon, grab your blades and follow me closely”

You and your eight men steadily head towards to the door. With your hands You signal for silence. Their were no more cry of war to conceal your voice. shety blade at the ready you sprint for the woods. Your men take their places behind you, the faint amber glint still visible in the early morning light. After About a day worth of walking through the dense vegetation you finally speak sharp and steady

“Men, we are heading to hell, the place where monsters walk free, and I intend to burn it down”

The men seem heavy and weary. You continue

“We are a hundred paces from the war we once knew, and only a few days from the battle of our life. May the devil take those golems and ember along with them!”

To your surprise the men cheer at your words. As you continue to walk forest floor by day, recalibrate you angle each morning the foliage grows much denser. Till finally the glow gives way to a circular copper building. Your eyes meet the bright temple, the solar citadel <The center of the sun, warm but deadly>. One of your men starts

“General, how shall we precede?”

“We’ll wait out, three days” “serve the area, draw out a map, and look for weak points”

you order commanding respect.

“On the third day under cover of night we strike”

One of you men obediently remarks

“And how shall find each other again?”

“Each morning we’ll meet here, right under the shade of this acacia tree”

you rebut calming any nerves. With that the soldiers sidle off. five to the left. five to the right.

Leaving you alone with your thoughts, and the sound of the citadels chatter echoing around you.

Beginning your search start to slink between the trees. A cooling wind making the miserably hot outskirts bearable. Watching, planing waiting... they deserve this... WE didn’t deserve to die... I knew we shouldn’t have trusted those golems... your thought is quickly broken by the sight of

glass bottles. Pink smoke coiling with it. It's Bloody polly fog. Peering though the window you see him, "Ember" the name putrid in your mouth... why I shoulda known that good for nothing bagga bones would be here... why I augta kill him right here right now... wait no restraint yourself Onyx... you continue to lurk around shetty in hand. Griping it tighter you feel the wood against your palm.

When the sun slides over the horizon your already back at the tree. Morning birds chirping in the early light. The others quickly join you under the tree. you calmly probe you men

"any news?",

silence for only a few moments. A soldier from group A speaks up

"we've determined that they don't sleep at night but tend to stay in their homes to comfort the critters they keep like pets".

One from group B pipes up

"we determined that they lose their sight if the gems in their eye sockets crack or fall out by watching the medical hut".

"Good anything else" you continue to probe. Silence, finally someone steamers out

"their powered by the sun through the plants on their head".

"Then that's the plan in and out no more than a lick of noise"

"we slip in pop out the gems before they can see us and slice the plants atop their heads"

your voice is commanding and strong. The sun showing a bit to warm in the early hours. You pace the shade <we need intel, we need a map> sniping a leaf from a near by jungle tree you wisper

"Alright men up, in the trees, today is we map the village"

Smelling the morning dew on the leaf you continue

"Spread out Draw layouts upon larger leave, and connect dots"

All of your men disperse steadily climbing higher and higher to the canopy above. You watch as their tiny figures fade into the sky, hearing the pitter of their boots against the trees.

Watching the sun gently fall back beneath the horizon from the reflection of the 'copper citadel' you feel gentle earth beneath your hands. Sitting their as Night falling upon this beautiful hell scape.

Your men return a couple hours before day break.

"Show me the map"

You command growing impatience with your strategy. One member hands you a large leaf. It's very thorough and detail. You demand

"Can any of you copy this down?"

Slowly one man raises his hand, then another.

"Alright you two take this and replicate it as closely as you can by moon light"

you continue.

"The rest of you prepare your shety's"

"Tonight we strike!"

The night feel uniquely cold and brisk against your bare ears. Only one day of prep, then we strike. The men prep their weapons as you all discuss final plans.

You give your men a final speech a reminder of why you're all here and what you need to do,
"You know they deserve this, I know they deserve this"

"Just Remember silence is key get in, pluck the eyes, cut the hair, and get out this could all fall apart if anyone's too loud"

Midnight the point in which the moon is highest in the sky. Finally it's arrived. You take lead chucking you slink up to the first building. To the left and right of you your soldiers spread two per house ~Swish pop slice~ stiller than a statue, for just a moment you admire your handy work. You feel the weight of the rubies in your free hand. You continue to the next ~swish pop slice~ and that's twelve down ~swish pop slice~ ~swish pop slice~ the brisk chill of night greets you again. You continue forward ~swish pop slice~ slice you feel a sharp pain against you as claws impact your face. That moment you pin the ocelot to ground blood trickling your eye. You attempt to plunge your serrated blade into its heart but you miss due to its squirming. It scampers off weakly. You hear the terror in its gallop quietly calling out to it "bloody jungle cat". Finally you reach conversion with your ten man army near the center of town. Whispering you order them
"You, take the last few houses and sweep the gardens, leave me the citadel"
A few nods and they slink away. For the first time in three days the town square is quiet. You step towards the entrance to the citadel, stepping towards the center of the sun blotted by the dark of night.

You enter the the open 'sacred' citadel, noticeably warmer than the outer air. Ember is leaning against one of the walls, and, fast as an arrow, swish~ Ember is bound by a heavy rope. Swish~ you're right behind to temple garden. You flip the light on with the sarcastically solemn words
"Tisk tisk tisk I really thought we could work something out, but it's clear who's side you're on"
Venom dripping back into your vice as you get to the end. Ember rebuts harshly
"I'm on the side that supports life, and it's clear that you seem awfully fond of death now"
"tell me Onyx what do you have against a pacifist nation?"
"Ah a pacifist nation sure, but a pacifist nation that let my soldiers because they were too afraid to spill a bit of blood!"

You fight, now on the verge of yelling as rage swells in your heart.

"It's because they were mortified by what they did! Traumatized by their own actions Onyx"

He shoots back, terror building in his throat.

"Well isn't it your very mouth Ember, that had said to me an eye for an eye only a year ago?"

"Look at my face, what do you see missing?"

His face of terror turns to realization

"That was done by your cute little jungle cat" Ember is completely silent

"That's what I thought, now it's time for me to take that eye back"

you say as you pop one sapphire out of the golem's socket. No left remorse in your body you continue

"You're lucky I don't do that to you Ember, after the pain you caused us"

a grim chuckle escaping your lips

He tries to rebut

“They don’t des-” “they deserve exactly what was done to them!” You cut him off Your voice quaking in anger.

At that moment you feel the sharp pain of claws against you back.

“Wh-whay?!-”

You try and must out toppling to the ground under the wight of two large ocelots tearing you back to shreds. As your body slams against the floor You feel a bite on on your ankle. theirs no way your getting up from this. a feminine voice from a across the room screeches “STOP!” As the attacks subside.

“Do the jungle cats look so cute now Onyx?”

You hear ember shout as the ocelot slices away his bindings.

“I once believed in an eye for an eye...”

he continues

“back in the war times, but in that scenario the cycle always repeats”

“So I shall not kill you or your men so long as my golems remain un harmed”

You laugh wheezing up a bit of blood

“To___Late”

“By now all Your golems are all gone, nothing more than fancy statues occupying homes and gardens!”

You watch ember collapse in grief and cry, when you feel that awful tug again. Tug the pain in your back subsides. Tug the world begins to go quiet. tug--and snap the world comes back into color, the sound of embers cry’s pinging against your ears, and the crushing pain comes back falls back into you sole. And you ask the last remaining golem her. “Orchid” she mutter.

“Orchid remember me when you build a new life! remember that letting others die carries the same weight as killing them yourself” you smile simple and weighted as your world goes dark, and you stop breathing... orchid will always remember your name and what took place here today... as you remembered all the many lost by war... and then silence.

And more silence

Then in the hot grim darkness you here a distressed kind voice, one that you know all to well, call out

“H-h-h-hi... dear reader. Im-s so sorry. I didn’t want you to experience that, y-you didn’t deserve to feel onyxes death...”

It clear now if you’ve gotten this far that you don’t... need my guidance anymore , that you will be ok on your own, that you can learn to derive meaning from my world, from one set of eyes without my help

So I will leave you now, you will get to explore the life of a new character, when we get back to it. But that is all we have time for today. My sincere love, signing off

- nova the writer