

~~I've never been much of a fan of the lifestyle I thrust myself into after I left home, but I also never attempted to change what I had sewn. It's not like it is much different from what I grew up doing? It's been a while since I've written for myself.~~

I think writing here keeps my sanity.

~~I wouldn't be able to keep appearances otherwise. What friends do I have left?~~

I buried my old journal like I did the rest of my past. I want to forget. I still have fucking nightmares every night nearly three years later. I can't remember the last time I actually slept all the way through the night. By Gods, it's like that wound never closed. I've been seen by doctors and they said it healed but it still feels cold. I feel cold.

Haven't been able to shake the cold in years and I think it has to do with Her. Maybe I did die that night. Maybe I never made a pact and instead I'm cursed.

Maybe that's something I should research?

Not sure I have the time for that.

Another day, another handful of silver. These cheapskate black market shitheads are paying me less by the day. I'm the one sticking my neck out and doing the work and all I get is copper to their platinum. Story of my fucking life, why in the Hells would I get a break from this shit?

Maybe it's time to move on again.

The Bird's Eye leaves something to be desired but I at least can get a meal without anyone sticking their noses into my shit. These jobs are dragging out more and more every day. Those upper-level jackasses better start paying what they fucking promise. Gotta start taking the shit jobs, I guess. I'm not one to move people but I'll have to if I want to stay in Starfi.

Most of the time I try to stay mostly out of sight and tend to keep my nose out of other people's shit. Y'know, out of respect. I get to feel at least a little relaxed at the Bird's Eye, so I especially like to keep my eyes to myself n return.

But...

When a giant purple Dragonborn walks through the door, looking like a lost dog, well. You get curious. What idiot walks into a Dragon's Den and acts like they own the place?

She seemed interesting enough so I bought her a drink. Why not? Welcome the newbie to the city. Her name is Balisha, she's... tall. Really tall. But she walks with a grace ~~the only ever seen in one other.~~

Balisha's got some good hearing, apparently, because she managed to hear silenced gunshots in the alleyway outside. She didn't seem to know what a gun was. It's not like I did before getting to Chemouth but... it's a little alarming she doesn't know about them and is in Storfi of all places.

Barkeep told us to look into it, I wasn't about to say no to some cash, so we went outside.

It was that dipshit half-elven clown that fucking shot me a year ago. Of course. As if the past 6 months weren't enough of a shitshow. Got revenge with an eldritch blast to his chest so I'm calling it even.

I still regret showing my abilities to them before really knowing them. They could still rat me out to the cops. I wouldn't put it past them.

I finally got a message about a job and, what do you know, that blonde elven shiteater got one too, so of COURSE, I had to team up with him and the Dragonborn I JUST met. AND it was a damned kidnapping job. Love that.

Elven, short, female. Pink hair. Wooden arm. Unspecified age. She was in the markets, Greg told us and then gave me some nasty Coburian blunt. And for once, Greg was right.

I convinced the elf I was a tour guide, dipshit half-elf with blue hair turned up at the drop off and tried to kill me.

There's a fucking bounty on my head. Because I can't get a break and just as I thought, I'm far better off leaving this fucking city and finding something else to do. ~~Maybe I should go home. Maybe I'm strong enough.~~

Pickup wasn't right and we were attacked. The girl turned out to be a magic user and turned into a fuckin GIANT ELK and gored 3 dudes. Mercurio and everyone else was involved so of course, they're enemies of the Org now.

We retreated to Broadstar Tower. There was a weird voice speaking, it was two at once, both masculine and feminine. Strange to see that coven of fey here dealing with some middle-class arms dealer. Whoever this is is very old and very powerful, and we probably shouldn't get involved with 'em.

The dude Mercurio sells to is a tiny fucking greaseball and I don't like him, but at the very least I didn't have to talk to him. He sent everyone but our good friend Mercy to a back room to chill out until he decided to kill us or something.

He had some fancy whiskey. Warm honeyed wheat preceded the sting of alcohol. It is fine shit. Went down like water too, and I'm probably lucky it didn't fuck me up instantly. Maybe... should've taken the bottle, but that elven girl (that stuck around us, for some reason) took it from me. She's older than she looks.

Reminder for later: A rival arms dealer. Black Ivy. Can get ya anything you want. Anything. No matter how hard it is to get, just gotta pay the price.

Almost forgot this.

Got a text after those pricks fled Damascus Park. Some fucked up coded common that translates to "you owe me". It came just after

Someone else texted:

"You failed. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"You have one chance to leave."

Whoever sent the initial coded message sent another.

"Don't forget you owe me"

Mercy took us back to his place to hide out. It's gross, but I'm not sure what I expected. He got some texts after he asked who the coded message sender was

"No one important"

"I know you're with Aezon."

Mercy replied, "Why is Aezon important?"

"Because he was there too"

Mercy asked for clarification, didn't get it. Who the fuck is this guy?

Mercy did some tracking on the Rune Caster number. It's from this continent but the signal is jumbled, we couldn't trace it.

Got another target. Another kid. Purple eyes. 4'2". Golden skin. Some sort of elf. Wood or High.

Message:

"3 days from now. Be careful. It's the Caiceran's kid"

Who the fuck are the Caicerans? Why the fuck are we targeting kids now? Whose so important that we kidnap kids now?

~~I can't help but wonder if it has to do with those guys from years ago.~~

We decided to stake out the drop-off point for the purple-eyed kid. I made myself look like a dirty human version of myself. Not my go-to, but it's not my usual so it should keep any bounty hunters' eyes off of me. I shouldn't keep running around in this disguise, though.

Neira turned into a cat because she can do that, apparently. ~~What kind of magic is lent to others? Barrett could do some strange shit but this is it a different being lending her power? Is it just of her own volition? She is an elf, so maybe it's just her blood?~~

We found an owl near the drop off point. Just. An owl. Neira began speaking with it... as a cat. And then the owl started speaking fucking common.

Said the kid's name is Saita Caiceran? Apparently his family is very important as far as elves go. Warned that we shouldn't let him get captured. Also said the family is here using their diplomatic advantages or whatever to have "meetings they shouldn't be investing in." We should be wary of the weapons they carry.

This is way out of our league but will we stop? No. We're fucking

stupid. And of course, the talking owl just happened to see through my disguise and mock me for it. haha.

2 more days until Saita is supposed to be picked up for whatever whoever wants him for. These are bad memories. I'm not going to fail again.

Morning of the second day before pickup. Wandered a bit with Neira. Ended up at the military docks in my human guise and Neira as a cat... We were in an alleyway planning out what to do and a fucking ball rolled by. Of course, the kid that came chasing after it happened to be our kid. And of COURSE, I panicked when we met with his mother. They seemed like a fine family, though the Lady was disgusted with my appearance. ~~Not that in my past I wouldn't have had the same reaction.~~ Looks like the family is staying somewhere on the Military docks. How does the gang expect anyone to get through this family's forces?

That barn owl from yesterday was keeping watch. What does he have to do with this?

We got some food from the market after that with Balisha and the others. She said her name was Shalia. That... rings a bell for some reason.

She spoke to me. "keep her around, Child."

I suppose I'll have to. If it's what the fates want. If I want help with my own goals.

Forgot to mention I told the Lady that my name was Elliot Lovell. Gotta keep track of who knows me for what,

went to the cops to inform them of the kidnapping against my better judgment. Blue Dragonborn named Ito tagged along. He says he's not a cop, but he's teamed up with them, so what do I know? He seems kinda like an idiot, but I'm not sure if that'll help or hinder us yet. Either way turns out the cops are Crooked and may be involved in these kidnappings in some way.

Cool.

Owl came to Mercys hideout.

It speaks all sorts of languages but seems comfortable in Infernal speech. It is Luce Stellare. It wanted information on Her. It says it was affiliated with interested parties. I didn't know what to believe. I'm not making another pact with something I don't know anything about. Not when I don't need to in a split second. Nobody but I need to know about when my Patron speaks with me.

It seems to me that this owl may just be that. But it would be an owl who is enchanted or possessed by some abyssal, celestial, or otherwise otherworldly creature.

Its name is Luce Stellare.

Those dipshits in the Sun Catchers sent out a PSA that they kidnapped the Caiceran kid before anyone else... how fucking stupid can you be? Do they even realize what a high profile case this is? Do they not realize that literally anybody who knows where their hideout is could run to them, wipe them all out, and take the kid for themselves?

I mean, we did exactly that and it ended up working in our favor, but by GODS you'd have to be a very special kind of stupid to do that. Anyway, their base is in flames now and a lot of those guys are dead. Almost feel bad about it, they were just too fucking stupid to know any better.

A lot of the time I damn the blood I carry, but in this case with the magic sent unto me by her, I'm thankful. Made a few of the cowards run so we didn't have to deal with them.

Little Saita can start fires. Seems like he has his own magic That he has to hide from his dad. "Because he's looking for something."

Fuck, I can't imagine why his dad would be involved with this, but... could he?

We returned the kid, almost got our heads blew off, was going to pull the Nobleman card but thankfully I didn't have to. Seems Lady Caiceran is a friend. Not sure about her husband though.

Balisha seems to have a Copper Dragonborn friend in high places, on the other hand...

Can't sleep. Thought the nightmares have slowed down. But they haven't, of COURSE, they haven't. It was different this time. No flames. No smoke. No screams. Not even a streak of blood.

I'm writing it down so I don't forget.

My eyes fluttered open. My head was pounding and my ears were ringing as I had just been in an explosion. My vision was grayscale and I couldn't tell what anything was, it was so damn blurred. I saw a colored figure—blue, move out of the corner of my eye. It jumped down off something. My vision cleared a bit every time I blinked. To my side, a figure of pink and green. I looked up and I was filled with overwhelming fear, I just saw a blurry winged figure. I blinked and my vision cleared. The creature was a Demon. Abyssal. A long tail and razor-sharp claws. I was on a rooftop in a city, and on the ground was a hulking demonic figure standing in front of some sort of... rift? Tear? Doorway? It swiped at me. Again, and again. It kept missing. I kept dodging. Someone yelled.

"Sorrin, look out!"

I saw two elves and a blue Dragonborn run towards the hulking Demonic figure. The ringing came back and I blacked out.

It felt right. The name. My name isn't Sorrin. But it felt like my name. I've never met a Sorrin. Not ONCE. Probably, right? Gods, I wish I had my old journal. Maybe I did when I was a kid. Maybe my parents did.

Who the fuck is Sorrin?

I didn't wake up after that. Not yet at least. In the black, a raven landed in front of me. It looked at me. Locked its head side to side as birds do, and fluttered away. Leaving behind a feather. I reached out to grab it, and I woke up screaming in a cold sweat.

I woke up Neira with my post-night terror screaming. I slid the feather into my research notebook. I don't think she saw. She pestered me about the nightmare? Prophetic dream? And we spoke a little bit. She

asked about what dreaming was like. I wish I was so lucky to not have to dream, sometimes.

She spoke to me again in the dream. "Try to Remember"

Remember what? Sorrow? The traumas of my past? Is this what She wants of me? Is this her way of showing me my end of our pact?

I think Neira finally went back to bed.

I need to get back to research. I need to learn more about the old Gods of these lands. I need to learn more about Her. The Lovell's knowledge only goes so far, and it's not like I can actively contact her like an old friend via Rune Caster.

Neira obviously doesn't like getting lied to. It's impressive that she can see through a lot of my lies. More impressive that she's stuck around. That any of them have. We could've gone our separate ways. I almost want to. But we haven't. She told me to keep them around. I won't go back on my word with Her, I trusted her with my life and she's given me everything I have today. But I don't see why they haven't tried leaving yet. Maybe Barrett was right about Fate, after all. Maybe she's done this for me.

A lot of what Neira has said resonates with me to a degree I wasn't prepared for. She consistently catches me off guard. Her wisdom is far greater than mine, but her life experiences... may not be all that different from mine.

She lost someone she loves very much. I'm not sure what she means by that. Whether they're gone from this world or simply missing. I'm leaning towards missing given her asking about if I've seen any specific individuals. Of course, whatever solace she seeks can't be found in me. The wounds of two years, hell, even longer, still feel open. Sometimes I still feel the searing flames of a blade catching me off guard on the back of my neck when I overestimated my own abilities. Sometimes I still feel the cold steel lodged in my heart. I still wonder if it actually beats.

She makes me think of Hollowguard. And how much I miss them. When she speaks, despite her particular brand of... weirdness... she is. It just reminds me of Brendryn. She's nowhere as ruthless or brash, but... something about her. The bad attempts at reassurance that honestly just worry us more. The "I don't give a fuck about whose watching" behavior. Like microwaving a pigeon that she caught and cleaned herself.

...Maybe this is what fate intended.

~~I almost wonder if the others. Balisha, Ho, Mercy... If any of them...~~

~~I wonder if Trevor is alive. I wonder if he's become better at alchemy. Or a better shot. I wonder if he got into tinkering after everything.~~

~~I wonder how Dad is doing. Or mom. I wonder if they think I'm dead. I wonder if they hate me for killing that man. There were witnesses. There's no way they didn't find out. I wonder how Lady Lovell took it. I wonder if she's okay. Is the town finished rebuilding? Have the Northern families done anything to help? As a proper guard formed in my absence? Have these technologies reached Ashridge yet?~~

~~Should I try contacting them? Maybe I am going crazy.~~

I got some bagels and cream cheese for breakfast, and then we were attacked at Mercy's hideout. Something felt off, and two blond elves appeared. They used weaponry from their bones and were able to summon demons as I can.

Fuckers were strong.

I was able to summon a demon, and eventually one of them fell to my blade thanks to my curse, but the other one quickly got wise and began running away. I still don't quite understand how it was able to happen, but I was able to keep the specter of the one I had killed around and sent him after his friend. Though, he did end up getting away.

We figured we couldn't stay around Mercy's hideout much longer, so we took the initiative to find a new hideout. Artiglio led us to a spot that Maeko had been using to string together her investigation. I doubt it was all that she knew.

~~I wonder if that's what I should be doing. I wonder if Maeko would be able to assist in finding those bastards responsible for everything in Ashridge.~~

I feel sick.

Neira wants to find her... someone. Her wife, I think.

I can't say no to that. I can't deny someone the same thing that I've yearned for. I hope that it's not too late for her. I hope that she can find that person so dear to her. What I've lost can't be found again, but for her there's hope. I think that's the least I can do for her.

She told me I don't owe her anything. She offered me a ferry ticket to leave the city and start my life again. She wants me to grow into something else, she thinks I'm worth saving.

I haven't felt this way in years. I'm still not sure about these people, despite what She's told me but... this all feels so familiar.

There is an air of dread lingering over me that I have not felt since the day Ashridge fell.

We went around to a few magic shops to try and prepare ourselves to search for Maeko. Of course, we couldn't afford anything but I ran a few errands to help Ito out on his... stealth thing.

Mercy had a breakdown about how Ito could summon a horse. Also, Ito can summon a horse.

I got a message--a magic? one?--from Lady Caiceran. Inviting us to dinner as thanks for saving her kid.

We agreed to go and dressed in our finest attire.

There were even more guards than before at the building they've been staying at. We were searching for Maeko to help find Neira's wife but turns out the Lady had other plans.

First, turns out she's a druid. And a wood elf. And she knows of Neira's home town and that druidic circle.

She and Brassmir, someone Balisha knows, asked us about how his son was saved. We'd stop speaking whenever servants opened the room. She and Brassmir are on a first-name basis. The Lady's name is Miyra.

Another elf, someone of... mixed backgrounds? Like every elf except Drow. Zevran. He knows Maeko and seems to be someone to trust. He called Artiglio "Arty."

I gave her the truth. If only veiled. She still thinks I'm human. I told her that I'm involved in some underground stuff and how we found Neira (though... that was less truthful) and how it led to us finding out about the hit out on her son. She then asked how we found out the Sun Catchers had her son. We told her they... kinda just made it public. She asked about any paperwork found, and we didn't find anything.

And then she dropped the bomb on us. She thinks her husband is involved. In all of this. She thinks he orchestrated the kidnapping of his own fucking kid. And, you know what? I believe her. She asked if we knew anything about new weapons making the rounds. Mercy does.. He's lost buyers because of some new magical fucking guns.

The assassins. They apparently come back. And they can track us. From anywhere. They collected our blood from their weapons. And when they come back, they come back stronger. AND they're under orders from Lord Caiceran himself. Also, the Lord is far stronger than we can currently face.

...

Dinner eventually came out. Ito, in a feat of wisdom, tested it for poison. We found poison from a shellfish in Brassmir's, and a deadly nightshade poison in Lady Caiceran's. No other food was poisoned.

We're being framed.

The Lady then called for Luce Stellare? The owl. She asked it to relocate us. She gave it... her magic? He agreed. They mentioned that we were going to Suciea?

We ended up in Sucia

I'm not sure how many days have passed since I last wrote.

Zevran came with us and we stopped in a bakery. Luckily for me, I don't need to hide so much here. I think this is one of the few cities I've been in that I've actually seen other tieflings. I'm not really sure how to feel about it?

We hunted for anywhere that can offer us asylum and discovered information about the Osterium of Night. A small child came to me, trying his damndest to be a pickpocket, failed miserably, and I gave him 10 gold. Apparently the creep was told by someone that the key to the Osterium was "feeding the future of the owl."

After some hunting, we came across a temple in the eastern part of the city. It felt more like a library. They offered us a place in a supply closet to sleep. But we snooped around and discovered that the triple-owl statue in the middle of the room was magic of some sort, so they read to it, and its eyes flashed. "Feed the future of the owl." Each of the owls represented different phases of time. The smallest owl representing the future. The others read to it, different books, different excerpts of knowledge. I didn't want to step forward. I watched as they tried and failed, and I knew that we had to give it new information. I don't... I didn't want to share the information I have. I kept the book with me because it was a gift, and I... I don't know if I felt more like I was betraying some sort of trust, or if... I just feel weird about sharing anything about my patron.

I can't remember the last time I wrote here. Everything just happens so much.

It is the 8th month of the year 4263.

In 2 months I will be 23.

In 3 it will have been 3 years since I left.

Suciea is populated mostly by Tabaxi. Anahit is popular here.. An old watcher of wisdom. An Archfey. A patron of scholars. The temple dedicated to them hides a doorway to the Osterium of Night. The Osterium was created by Fey magic and is a safe haven.

It's possibly the only safe place for us to be. But I don't like it here.

The temple of Anahit was adorned in blues and was more of a library than anything else. When the door to the Osterium opened, we entered. A small owl by the name of Novello landed on my hand and I read out some rites from the book. It accepted, and it left.

An elven figure stepped out. Golden eyes and fiery red hair. Ashlyn'n. We'd get to know them... fairly well. They asked us to fight and weaken a test subject of theirs. An odd dragon-like beast with the power of... soap? Mizutsume, as it's called. Allegedly incredibly rare. We ended up killing it. On accident. I dealt the killing blow, and it died as it fell from the ceiling of its... cage? It was more of a netting surrounded by tall wooden poles and stones.

Ashlyn'n told us this:

"Think not of the dreams that you have while you are here."

As if I needed more night terrors.

I just don't know what to do anymore. It's nearly been three years and I've nothing to show for it. I still don't know who took that kid, they're probably not even alive anymore. What little research I've done has amounted to nothing. Why me? Why did she agree to this? What does she see in me?

Ashlyn'n had a job for us. A favor they owed some crazed old professor at a local college. Cal Panik. Another Tabaxi. Old. Probably crazy. Wanted us to pick up a few artifacts for him.

Anahit is a god of wisdom, one that used to be Fey.

Ralagar, The Destroyer, one of three betrayer gods. The rest whose names are lost to history. They wanted to merge the planes to become stronger?

Pan, Bahamut, and others are slowly becoming less relevant. It's hard to believe the stories I read as a kid are true.

Duke Airian is a Coburian Duke who went missing. Isn't he a whole ass dragon? How do you lose a whole ass dragon?

Panik thinks Falazure is a betrayer god? An evil draconic deity of yore. Related to Necromancy.

We got to babysit the crazy old cat man for a bit. He brought us to a cave where we spent far too much time trying to figure out a puzzle that was far easier than we made it out to be. We are not smart people. We found an old talisman. A playing card made of Oak. The ace of hearts.

The resident idiots. Balisha, Mercy.. I don't remember who else decided it would be a fun game to try and touch or destroy the artifact. When a bolt was shot back at them I heard a giggle and melodious chimes in my ear. The voice said:

"They're rabble-rousers aren't they? ... You already have a patron don't you...?"

It continued to tell me about it... how it's a demigod or something? And that it wants to ascend? And that Anahit is a "gatekeeper" for new deities and they need me to collect their cards for them to ascend??? And my dumb ass AGREED???? BECAUSE I'M AN AGENT OF CHAOS I GUESS??

Veles.

Veles.

They want me to find their next card. The 2 of Hearts. "The Gem."

We keep the cards inside a bag, we cannot touch them. Bad things will happen.

Back to the Castle.

Panik wants us to go to the northern areas of Suciea to find the next talisman. We were given some elk riders to get through the forest rather than horses. "Two woofs" is our hint??

We got to some ancient, elven looking ruins. Apparently my Elk is named Lilise.

TWO WOOF. TWO WOOF. CAL PANIK LITERALLY MEANT TWO WOOF. THE KEY TO OPENING THE DOOR TO THE ARTIFACT WAS LITERALLY MAKING THE SOUND DOGS MAKE. TWICE. WHAT THE FUCK? WHAT THE FUCK? WHAT KIND OF DEFENSE MECHANISM IS THAT? IM GOING TO KILL HIM.

FUCKING SPIDERS???

The interior of the destroyed temple... magically preserved it seems, was... pristine. White stone. Pillars reaching up high and morphing into beautifully carved, infinite seeming tree branches. It was stunning. Though could do without the spiders.

Haven't written in a bit. Found boot prints when leaving the temple. Managed to scare off whoever was following us I guess? Dropped off the elk and there was a Tabaxi there, tried to be polite to me by not showing his fangs I guess? Not a fan of the custom, so I bared mine at him. Turned out to be a fucking pickpocket. There's a large bounty out on those cards apparently. I think this is the last time I make a deal with an other-worldly being. Too risky and not enough clear reward.

Didn't even finish the entry. Orange Tabby Tabaxi. Gold front tooth. Followed him back to The Bear's Paw where we strong-armed our way in and had a bit of a standoff. Ho tried to fuck with him but his cronies seemed pretty sharp. Luckily the blue oaf distracted him and everyone else enough to nab the card from him. I... also got his number... and he told me I had a nice ass.

I bit.

Got him out on a date. I do admire a decent thief, and I think I can learn a thing or two.

And the party egged me on. And. Threatened to shoot me if I didn't make a move. And his friends did the same. And.

His name is Bright Cliff. He goes by Thunder. He thinks I have a nice ass. I... am not used to this? I do not know what to do???? I still lock up like I did???

I'm so fucking STUPID.

I'm an IDIOT. I tried to be flirty and he got in my face and ?????????? Hm. no.

Slept on it a bit. The attention... like this... is... unfamiliar. I locked up. The last relationship I had ended... badly... because of me. And... Thunder... probably wanted to just hook up??

Either way. He's an ally. I'll try to not get in his way. And uh. Make sure he doesn't get too attached. That's not what I want. Not now. I need to sleep.

I miss them.

Ashlyn'n wants to train us. Everyone but Balisha had to read books. Mercy is kinda pissed about it, but I'm not exactly sure the guy knows how to read. They wanted me to make some bread, it's something that I'm kinda good at since I did it so much growing up, but Veles popped in for a chat and made my body go catatonic. Asked me where the artifacts are. Dropped 'em off to Cal Panik so I didn't get my ass whooped by Ashlyn'n, that's where. Exploded the bag of flour in my face after that.

Why do I make deals with entities I know nothing about?

I guess the party noticed it... Neira mentioned that I said that we should open up... and trust each other. She coaxed it out of me. Do I fear Veles more than the Raven Queen? Not... really? But do I know Veles can get to me much faster and more visceral than Her? Yes. And I don't like it.

I wish I could talk to Her.

The cabin that the Osterium of Night transports us to is somewhere near Ashridge. Rolling grassy hills with multicolored wildflowers as far as the eyes can see? Mountains looming in the distance? Sounds like home to me. There's a part of me that wants to go. I know I can't.

Ashlyn'n is having me read about death acceptance. And funerary rights from around the world. On the nose a bit.

I know that there's nothing I can do but move on. Nearly three years have passed. I should be over it. I should be able to get on with life. I should be able to at least send a letter to mom and dad to let them know I'm alive. Send them money, anything.

But I can't. I choke up at the thought of seeing any of them, of having to visit any of our landmarks. I can't stand the thought of what their responses would be to my return.

I wonder ... if She knows what happened to him. He was Her champion or something, right?

Zevran wanted us to rob a museum for some important artifacts for him. 50k pp split between the party if we succeeded. Failure if ANYONE dies, Failure if we get caught. I disguised myself as a Tabaxi with grey and black fur, green eyes, and a scar over my left eye. I helped the others disguise themselves too.

The bag in the museum was labeled as "provided by Cal Panic" because... of course, he didn't do any of the work yet got all the credit. Not that I'd know but... academia, I guess.

After an... outburst between me and Mercy that cleared the room... faking... marital problems of all things... the group was able to lift the cards from their case. We left quietly, and... were followed. Me and Mercy split up and I think he's convinced we need marital counseling. A Tabaxi seemed to have followed us for quite some time, I tried to lose him by switching out disguises but he followed us until I dropped a ball of darkness in an alleyway. Not sure who they were, don't care to find out.

We made it back to the Osterium fine. The drop off went smoothly.

Been a while since I've written. We're on the run. We have been. Honestly, it's nothing new but... I'm wanted for worse crimes? And this time I didn't even DO the crime. It's a new feeling.

Didn't catch what she said, but Balisha asked Ashlyn'n about something, and lied about where she heard it from? Ashlyn'n caught the lie. Noted.

Balisha had some dreams, I guess. Asked me about my patron. She mentioned a fox made of diamonds. "Sognare Andare," it told her to ask Ashlyn'n about.

This has something to do with Lady Caiceran, maybe?

Balisha had another special training session with Ashlyn'n. Fought a shadow version of herself. It turned into a small dragon and howled with nightmarish ferocity. It grew fingerlike appendages from its back and they morphed into wings. Nightmare fuel.

The Gods test me.

My voice is inconsistent. Sometimes I wonder if I know who I am at all.
I'm so tired.

Mercy wanted to go to an Artificer's guild that Zevran told him about. Wants to augment his weapons. A beautiful building with some kind of runes surrounding it on fences and the walls themselves. Known as the Tormentum Forum.

A Tabaxi about 10's height with silver and black fur yellow eyes and two scars across the bridge of his nose is known as Cloud Mountain. His humanoid assistant? with black skin and glowing glyphs around his eyes, and hair that breathes like fire entered the room and introduced himself as Vincent Noblesse. Artificers. Both of them. In exchange for our help finding something in some catacombs, they'll let Mercy take a paid internship.

Why do I care for him so much?

They want us to meet them back at the guild at 7 am sharp. Everyone complained except for me. I guess having a countryside background does come in handy sometimes.

Mercy said he's been sending money to his family. He has a family. He's from Chemouth. I knew that.

Cloud said he studied up north with Dragons.

In a potion shop, a smallish human woman came up to us. Cute. Green eyes. Freckles. Claimed to be a Cleric of Kelemvor, and that she overheard that we were going to the catacombs and that she wanted to do some research there, that she's a student at the local university. It checked out. Maybe I'll be able to learn something from her. She seemed to be into Mercy. Her name is Leerle Shadeshout, and I think he could woo her if he... stopped being an idiot clown for a minute.

Notes: Kelemvor is a neutral deity of death. He wants to uphold justice and balance. His holy symbol is a scale of which is held by a skeletal arm.

I don't feel right.

We heard the voices of the dead screaming for us to leave. Neira and I. I heard the voice of the Raven Queen herself tell me to stop her before we even left. How naive could I be? Why couldn't I see through her lies? Leerte is a fucking cleric of Bhaal. The lord of murder. And we let her live.

I still don't feel right.

After Balisha knocked Leerle out with a final shot, all the undead she summoned stopped. We took most of her items away from her. She had a book on the gods of death and their lore. It was an interesting read for a minute. Until Vincent tortured her.

I'm

Not exactly a stranger to the practice, but. This was horrible. He healed her as he burned her. There was almost a physical coldness coming from him as he did it.

She had a letter on her, it reads as follows:

"Lee,

Look for the half-elf known as Viper. The Signore Luce wants him removed for his transgressions. Don't ask why and you'll get your prize on the month start.

-Raythetyl"

She had an old pendant on her, a holy symbol of some kind? Neira knew what it was. Old druid stuff. Something was pulled out of it, violently.

She also had one of the cards on her. Suspended in a little... bubble. Queen of Hearts. She said she found it in the woods. Went through some puzzles, and then an owl happened upon it and said it wanted it. Leerle won in a battle of wits against it and got to keep the card. Don't like that talking owls seem to be visiting all sorts of people.

She said she didn't... totally lie when she said she was a cleric of Kelemvor. She was. She said she was performing a ritual with some other students between Runia and Estad around the Flokham Mountains when three Dragonborn burst in and said they were defiling... something to do with Bahamut. Balisha perked up at this. Seemed to know what

Leerle was talking about. The Dragonborn ruined the ritual, and all the students except her ended up dying. She narrowly escaped and lost her connection to her god. She eventually found the symbol of Bhaal and regained her magic.

The Dragonborn were green, copper or brass, and white. She said the green one had an extremely deep voice.

Balisha seems to be willing to do a favor for the woman who just tried to kill us. Personally I don't love the idea and I'd rather not support her. But.

I can't blame Balisha I guess. After we watched Leerle be tortured, after her earnest confession... I feel bad for her. She was wronged. She went down a dark path. I know the feeling. Balisha seemed like she was wronged by those Bahamut worshippers too, going as far as to call them a cult.

What Leerle did was abhorrent. She may not be forgiven, she likely won't be. For her sake, I hope she changes. I doubt it will happen. If she steps out of line, crosses me again. I will end her there and then.

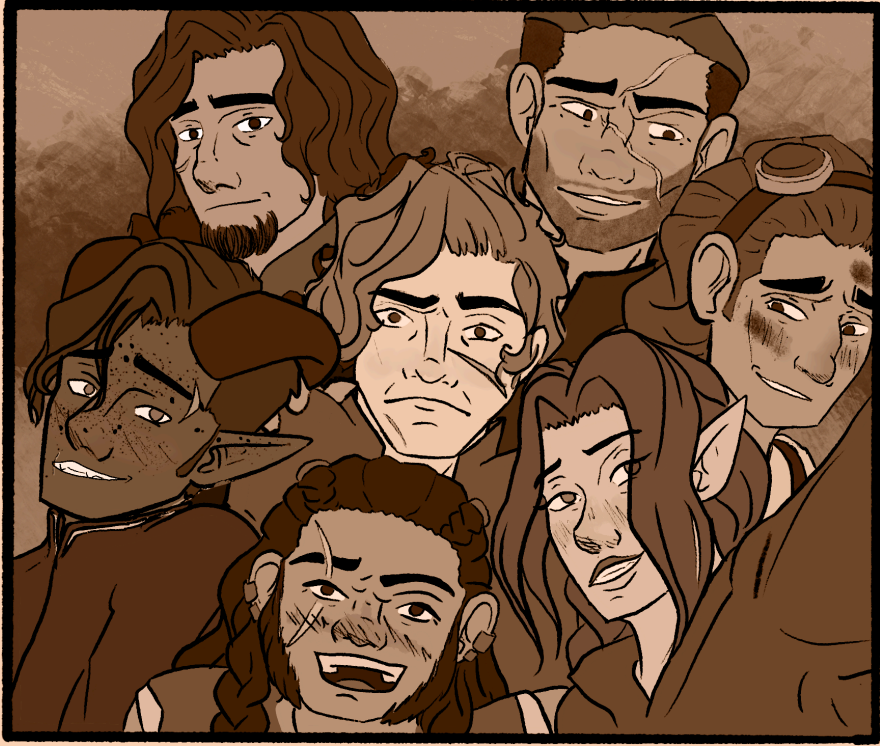
Before she left the circle and gave up... whatever knowledge she did. The book I gave back to her, she wrote in 7 names and below them, "NEVER FORGET."

Vincent. Is someone I'd rather avoid. Dude's fucking nuts.

Notes: Leerle said the Sognare Andare is a "crackpot invention from a few centuries ago to learn about the past without time travel." She mentioned that it also... made people stronger mentally? And that it was banned from churches of death gods because of the practice of absorbing and... I guess reexperiencing history in a way? It was taught in her church that history is learned through writings, landmarks, and whatnot.

The druid necklace was found on a grave robber in the west of Coburia, near the Feyfire Mountains. A gravesite of an old, powerful druid next to a pond and some willow trees (unusual for the area?)

Neira is from near here.



Hollowguard
©4260

I went on a supply run, bird-Neira in tow, and there was an elf waiting outside of the Osterium. Neira stayed out for a bit and to my surprise, had spoken to the guy.

Decided to check the news while I was out and saw that tensions were still high because of the attempted assassination on Lady Caiceran. Conflicting stories, apparently. Also appears that another kid was nabbed.

Guy waiting outside is a tall elf. Bronze skin, tight clothes, green jacket. Chestnut hair, mustache, goatee, and bright blue eyes. Says his name is Dreali Yaelrin, a druid of Stella Verde. Neira immediately trusted the guy, and honestly, he seems to check out. He wants us to complete a job for him, rather, his boss. We debated. Lesvena. Griesia's Vice city. That should be fun.

I finished off that whiskey from Storfi and replaced it with vodka and rum.

Hto, Neira, and Balisha helped me clean up the mess we left at the Catacombs. I sent 10 pp home.

The other day I asked Neira on a walk out in the plains. She's magically inclined and a fairly capable healer. She knows much about magic.

Leerte mentioned that she would bring us back if we died during ~~the~~ fight Mercy's botched assassination attempt. I figured I would ask Neira what she knew about that. It's stupid to say but it gave me hope. I never considered it a possibility. Would it be wrong to bring someone back from death if killed in battle? If they've been dead for several years? If they were the last in a bloodline, or if they were young? How young is too young to die and would it be within their rights to try and live a full life?

The most powerful druids were capable of bringing someone back from death, and in some cases even if they've been dead as long as a century.

Ashlyn'n stopped by this morning. We mentioned the mission we plan on taking and they said that the leader of Stella Verde is a "baby god." I suppose she's recently ascended? They also mentioned that they're stupid and that all gods are stupid. I think Ashlyn'n has something against the divine.

Dreali dropped us off in front of the Draig Sailix - very tall, very glass. Fountain in the front. Statue on top is of a willow tree and a dragon wrapped around its base. Stone, but looks damn real.

Lead us through a casino. Ended up in another room near the top? Looks like a greenhouse. Stone latticework, trees holding up the ceiling. Night sky? Kinda reminds me of that temple where we got one of the cards.

Dreali told us to wait and he got his boss. A lady with a... bold and brave sense of fashion. Tai. She asked us to go on a hunt for her, and explained her reasoning is... specific I guess? She wants a "different approach" to hunting? But also because Zevran and Maeko recommended us. Their mistake.

We're supposed to find some kids. Rhun and Airian McLoughlin of the House of Airgead, twins, and to-be lords. Alleged to have been hunting just outside of Wechesbu and Osterbury and simply vanished. Looks like they called us in part because of my experience hunting out there. Too bad my hunts didn't turn out very well.

Balisha messaged Zevran's rune caster while he and Maeko were boning and I just think that's awful.

Mercy's been selling arms since he was 13. Said he's had a deathwish since 18. Man, we sure do have a lot in common.

Tai is the Willow King. She is a god. We could've asked for literally anything. Why were we okay with asking for money? Are we fucking stupid?

Neira returned the old Stella Verde pendant to Tai. The most powerful druid. A mortal? ascended to godhood. She asked us what we wanted in return. Neira asked for our families. I had to bite my tongue. Tai replied with "this isn't enough for multiple. Only one."

Mercy and Balisha know where their families are. They're in jail. We can get them out.

Neira looked at me.

I couldn't just do that to her? She's been looking for her wife for so long. I may not know where everyone is, but I have other avenues to find those who I'm looking for. I shook my head at her. She deserves to know where her family is. She deserves to have them back.

"Mine?" she asked.

"Yours." I could barely get the word out.

Neira's wife is located in the Icebreath Mountains. She is not only safe but working for Tai for information on where Neira is. We will get information on where Neira's brother is after we find Rhune and Airian. Dead or alive.

We reentered the side room and Neira broke down sobbing. I knelt down next to her. The relief she must've felt knowing that her wife was still alive. But she cried, she said, because she felt selfish. Like she did something wrong. She isn't. She didn't.

As much as I want to see Hollowguard again, I couldn't do that to her. And besides, it isn't up to me whether or not some of them come back. It'd be selfish of me to interrupt whatever lives, or rest, they have. I'll have to ask her about these possibilities. I'd have to do some research.

I had Dreali transport us to Ashridge. I know the place well, I can get us a safe house. It's near where the twins went missing.

The good news is that Ashridge hasn't been burnt to the ground. Eliza is alive, and she looks fairly good. I haven't ran into any others yet, but Mercy has this idea in his head that we can drop bombs on the heads of some hobgoblins terrorizing the area as usual. He asked if I knew any Dwarves so we could get some bombs built. Brendryn isn't much of a tinkerer but maybe she can help me contact Kaleb.

We stopped by Brendryn's place..

I'm not sure what to make of things anymore.

So little has changed since I left, and yet... I don't feel like I belong anymore. Maybe it's because Hollowguard disbanded, because half of them are dead or missing.

I guess it's both in my case?

...

Did I die for real? Brendryn and Kaleb insist that I was gone. Was I? The last thing I remember is going cold. I woke up. Kaleb was the one who found me. My dad patched me up. I went to the bar when I was able. I got into a fight with a guy and...

That's when I made my pact. I had magic I didn't before. And it took a year for me to understand exactly what I had done.

I wasn't sure at first, who I made a pact with. I'd go as far to say I didn't realize I had made a pact at all. But she spoke to me and more and more, I had to come to terms with it. I'm not sure where I stand even today with my Patron.

Once Stavond is dead, is that the end of my pact? ~~Am I left defenseless? Will I even stay around?~~

The party seems to be reacting as well as I could've imagined. Ciara... didn't take it well. It's a miracle she's even still alive considering she went up against Stavond again. Kaleb and Brendryn ~~are~~ they know

that I have odd magic. That I didn't before. They don't know who my patron is.

But

It's odd to see them so concerned about the Raven Queen. She's.

~~It's part of the cycle~~

I should speak with Lauralie

I spoke with mom tonight. It was good to see her again. They got a cat, named it mittens. Said they had a habit of taking in strays. They found her in the fields, and nursed her back to health.

Dad is doing well.

The more I think... the more I fear for the future. I didn't acknowledge it before. I was in total denial but I'm fucking terrified.