

World of Infinitas: "Fly". (scenario)

- Approximately 4500 BC
Zarem era of Egypt. Southeastern lands of Zarem.
Great River.

(translated by Google... for now)

Act 1. Attack.

Five fighters of the vanguard units of the Rebellion are sailing on a boat along the Great River to the south. Their names are Laertes, Goson, Hyperion (commander), Abudesh and Amhar. All are dressed in light leather armor, with white scarves on their heads. Abudesh and Amhar hold bows at the ready, the rest are armed with spears or bronze swords.

Along the way, they need to free several villages from the army of Pharaoh Sekherkar. Together with them, at least ten more boats full of warriors are floating along the river.

The weather is hot, the sun is blinding. But the warriors do not give up and row with all their might. There are no settlements nearby. Left and right - continuous jungle. Judging by the map, they are approaching the lands of Abidu, where the pharaoh's troops should gain a foothold. But there are still many settlements that require liberation.

Laertes (swinging the oar, tensing his muscles):

"When will this ***** hot sun end.....

Goson (in annoyance):

- When will your hubbub end, Laertes. Honestly, I want to push you into the Great River to the crocodiles

Laertes (sternly):

- It's just that we've been sailing for an hour, and not a single village

Hyperion (loudly, while continuing to row):

Both shut up! Otherwise, I'll throw them both out!

Laertes and Goson are silent. They understand that an angry commander is worse than any bad weather.

Abudesh (Amhar):

- Look at both. So that the sekherkars don't **** us for an hour

Amhar (looks closely at the jungle):

- What do you think I'm doing here?

Abudesh:

- I don't know, but you need to look more closely ... and not dream. You look like you're in the clouds.

Amhar (snarls):

- And you look like you've been crushing a sheep all night I'm not telling you anything.

Hyperion (beside himself):

- May be enough? I missed the controversy here! Everyone shut up! Otherwise, I swear by all the gods, I will throw everyone out of the boat and swim forward alone!

Abudesh:

"Sir, it was Amhar who began to insult me.

Hyperion (terribly):

- Shut up! Didn't you hear what I told you?

At this moment, an arrow flies out of the jungle. In less than a second, it plunges into Amhar's forehead, punching through his skull. The warrior falls dead onto the boat, nearly knocking over his comrades.

Shouts of the vanguard commanders:

- Ambush! Ambush! It's the Sekherkars!

Hyperion quickly raises his wicker shield in front of him. Three arrows pierce him at once. The enemy was clearly waiting for the rebels and decided to strike.

Arrows are raining from everywhere from the side of the jungle. It looks like a real rain of death. Not everyone has time to hide behind shields. In the next boat - no luck. The shell hit the group commander right in the temple. The second hit the archer in the groin, causing him to recoil so that he knocked down his neighbor from behind. The third hit the spearman on the cheek.

- Raise your shields! Raise your shields, you stupid bastards! Shields!

Loud cries of commanders are heard from all sides.

Hyperion (in all throat):

- Everyone in the water! Everyone in the water! Otherwise we'll all be killed here!

The fighters quickly rush into the water, while trying not to fall under the arrows. And the arrows, meanwhile, are only getting bigger.

Hyperion notices from the corner of his eye that another nearby boat has come under fire. And apparently, not everyone managed to jump. Another commander was killed by an arrow. Two of his companions were already

dead.

After making sure everyone else from the boat has jumped, Hyperion rushes into the river after them. He knows how to swim well, and therefore knows how to get out. The main thing is to get to the other side of the coast, where there are no enemies. Shoot only from the right bank. But on the left - everything is calm Anyway, for now.

Hyperion swims with all his might, straining his muscles to the limit. He left his weapon in the boat, but he still had a dagger with him. If anything, it would definitely save his life.

Act 2. Survival

Hyperion miraculously gets ashore. Fortunately, the area is not swampy, and there is even sand on the shore. He looks ahead of him. Further - the jungle, severe and almost impenetrable. But at least there are no enemies here. The commander turns back. The surviving fighters slowly swim to the shore. There are survivors, there are wounded. The enemy seriously patted them, but did not break their spirit. All these warriors can be assembled into a single squad and continue moving.

Hyperion notices a dark-haired swarthy girl, swimming in a hurry to the sandy shore. She quickly rises to her full height and moves towards him. All her robes were soaked through, as were her long curly hair.

Hyperion (sighing with relief):

"Ah, Commander Hefhemut. I thought you didn't survive.

Hefhemut (wearily):

- We've been hit hard. But some of my soldiers survived. We were saved by a miracle. Bird is favorable to us.

Voice behind the girl:

- Commander Hyperion! Commander Hyperion!

This is Abudesh. Hyperion immediately recognizes him. Behind him are faithful comrades - Goson and Laertes.

They also managed to survive and not get hit by arrows. Only Amhara is a pity Everything happened too suddenly. He couldn't be saved.

Abudesh (loudly):

"Hyperion, we almost died there all at once....

Hyperion (understanding):

- Did you see who attacked? Sekherkar?

He was surprised to find that he himself did not know who attacked them. In addition to the evil minions of the pharaoh, aggressive tribes could live here. The dark-skinned fairies were the most vicious. It was rumored that they made an alliance with Zarem. They did terrible things to the captives. The skinning alone was worth it.

Goson (shakes his head):

We didn't see anyone at all. Someone was shooting from the jungle ... But we did not have time to see who.

Hefhemut:

- There, on the ground, our foot detachments are moving. What if it's them?

Hyperion (in disbelief):

- Do you think you got it wrong? We have a banner!

Hefhemut:

- Not anymore. Lost by the standard-bearer. An arrow pierced through his skull. When I jumped, I did not have time to grab the banner. Ten arrows hit at once. A little more and I would have been blown away.

Hyperion (angrily):

- Yes, to him ... And if we run into our own? Where is the guarantee that they will not crush us? We don't have a ***** banner!

Hefhemut (regretfully):

- Sorry, but it was impossible to save the banner.

Abudesh (understanding the situation):

- Yeah.... We are stuck now. But we do have war cries.

Hyperion (not appeased):

- Yes, * la, but the enemy too! They know our calls, and imitate them calmly. We will be checked again five hundred times.

Abudesh understands that it is better not to anger the commanders, especially now. But he decides to somehow dilute the situation. Any conflicts are clearly inappropriate here.

Abudesh:

- Gentlemen, we should be glad that we got out alive.

Hefhemut:

- All other commanders fell. Yaatesh was killed in front of me. Atontepa was killed when he tried to get out of the boat. We were the only two left.

Hyperion (trying to comprehend the situation):

- Your own mother... Bitch!

Hefhemut (in a calmer tone):

- Swearing now is not the place Better to try and get out.

Hyperion:

- Of course, we also ***** off the map

Hefhemut turns to the soldiers. There are already 15 of them on the beach. All the rest died or did not swim to the shore.

Hefhemut (loudly):

Who has the card?

The warriors shake their heads. It is clear that in such a turmoil, it definitely could not be saved, even if you really wanted to. Therefore, it remains to move from memory. Fortunately, the commanders more or less learned the path before falling into the trap.

Hyperion (swearing again):

- I knew it, bitch ... I knew it. They screwed up the map, screwed up the trap... And what haven't we screwed up yet? Only their own lives, perhaps

Hefhemut:

- Be grateful to fate that you are alive. And your warriors are alive.

Hyperion:

- **** off! Certainly...

Abudesh (again trying to reason with the commander):

- Commander Hyperion, listen.....

Hyperion (snarls):

Are you going to teach me more? I'll figure it out on my own... without you.

After this, he again looks at Hefhemut:

- Who is in charge now? Both of us, it turns out

Hefhemut (agrees):

- Yes, and we need to work together to get out and continue on our way. I remember a little how. Beyond the jungle, villages begin, and then Abidu. And I also know the stars.

Hyperion:

- **** off! And I know that the Sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening.

Abudesh:

- I understand that provisions disappeared with the boats

Hyperion (angrily):

- Thank you, calmed down

Hefhemut:

- In any case, we must move! Next come the villages. We must go now and not stop. We have no food, only water from the river. We definitely cannot fish, as it takes time. And we don't have it. As soon as we liberate one village, we will eat there. If you're lucky, it will be by evening.

Hyperion (nods):

- Hope. And I also hope that there is food in the villages, and the Sekherkar didn't gobble it up.

Otherwise, we are a complete ***.

Abudesh:

"Is it true that there are eating flies in the jungle near Abido?"

Hyperion (terribly):

- Shut up already.

Act 3. Jungle

Only 17 survived - 15 fighters and 2 commanders. This is too little to resist the army of Sekherkar, but enough to free the villages from his henchmen.

The warriors are advancing rapidly. They lost almost all their weapons, they had to be content with what was left. At least daggers, bows and blades remained. Hefhemut was left with a bronze hatchet, which she shared with Hyperion. She herself preferred to use a bow and arrow, and of course her beloved khopesh.

As it turned out, they were closer to the village than they thought. In less than three hours, the Rebellion fighters reached the first village. It was located right on the banks of the Great River.

If there is any place to stay, then only here.

Abudesh was the first to go on reconnaissance, followed by Laertes and Goson. They described everything in detail. According to them, there was food and water in the village, and the huts were intact. Only one thing disturbed - the village was empty. There was no one there. From the word at all.

Hyperion (bewildered, after Abudesh's report):

- So, you examined everything, but you did not find people. And where do they go?

Abudesh:

We don't know, sir. Apparently the Sekherkars took them away.

Laertes (with a questioning look):

"But then why did they leave food and water?"

Hefhemut:

- We need to check everything. Thoroughly.

Hyperion (in agreement):

- So ... Warriors! All weapons at the ready. It could be another ambush. So let's move on together. Watch both! The troopers at the back nodded. It was foolish to issue loud war cries. Enemies could hear them. So it was necessary to move as quietly as possible.

Only this option can work if the enemy is still there.

Hyperion stepped forward cautiously. His fighters scurried in front and behind. Hefhemut went ahead with her bow at the ready. If anything, she will definitely have time to shoot an arrow.

Laertes brought up the rear. He had to make sure no one came up behind him. He, like Hefhemut, held a longbow in his hands. There were only seven arrows left in the quiver, but they would be enough if they collided with a small detachment of the enemy.

Laertes (quietly):

"I should have gotten myself into this ****..."

At that moment, he felt a sharp pain in his right leg. He looked down. There was nothing. But my ankle hurt. It was like someone had bitten her and then let her go.

Laertes quickly raised his right leg. The sandals were intact. But something is clearly wrong... The bite was strong enough. If it's a snake, he won't do well. There was no antidote. During the attack, they lost all provisions and medical supplies.

He carefully examined the ankle area. On it sat a small insect that looked like a fly. Only the wings were a strange color, bright purple. Laertes almost cried out in horror. He barely restrained himself from stamping his foot.

Goson (next to Laertes):

- Are you there?

Laertes (horrified):

- Look!

He remained standing with his leg up. Goson immediately ran up to him. But I didn't see anything. The ankle was empty. No bite marks. And there was no bite.

Ghoson:

Why are you standing up with your leg up? Did you want to dance? This is not a dance floor for you!

Laertes (with the same emotion):

- I saw a fly She bit me.

Goson (in disbelief):

- Don't talk nonsense. And put your foot down. Nobody bit you.

Laertes looked again at the ankle. There was nothing. No insect. No bite. And yes, the pain is starting to go away.

Laertes (sighs):

- Apparently it seemed.

Goson (in annoyance):

- It seemed to him. Let's go quickly! Otherwise, Hyperion will devour us with giblets.

Act 4. Village

Everything, as the warriors said. There was no one in the village. But the food remained.

Apparently, the inhabitants prepared a large wooden table for themselves. Meals were modest: bread, vegetables, fruits, wooden bowls with local juice. True, they didn't eat it ... Or they didn't have time. There was no order on the table. Almost everything was scattered. Some fruits lay on the grass under the table.

The pesky jungle insects have already clustered over a couple of bowls. Apparently, they wanted to fill themselves up with local dishes.

The whole village consisted of several dilapidated huts. In the center stood a long wooden tower, in which, obviously, the elder lived. The maximum number of inhabitants hardly reached 30 people.

The only question is why the village was empty.

Hyperion (examines the table and huts):

Apparently they wanted to eat.

Abudesh:

- But they didn't.

A few warriors from behind began to whisper to each other.

Hyperion (raising the hatchet):

- Quiet... There may be enemies here. Umar, Lysander, Imran, Abuid... Cover with shields. The rest - look at both.

The shield-bearers are accepted to carry out orders.

Hefhemut:

- Looks like there won't be an ambush.

Hyperion (with incomprehension):

- Sure?

Hefhemut (nods):

- Nobody's here. I am a tracker... I can smell.

Hyperion:

- And what about the food?

Hefhemut:

- Do you think they decided to poison us? They didn't even know we were coming. It is obvious.... The villagers were about to eat, but something distracted them. Poison is clearly not to blame here.

It took ten minutes to fully explore the village. Soon everyone clearly understood that there were no enemies here. No one was waiting for the warriors in ambush. There were no Sekherkars here, as well as inhabitants of the village.

Usually, if the Sekherkars captured a village, they would definitely put their banner there. Here, no banner was found. If the pharaoh's soldiers were here, they left the village long ago, taking everything with them.

The soldiers inspected every hut, including the elder's house. No one... Not a soul. Usually in villages of this type, domestic animals were often bred. But they weren't here either.

Very soon, the warriors gathered near the elder's house to discuss future plans. Clearly the threat has passed... For now.

Hyperion (looking at the soldiers):

"So, there are no Sekherkar here. But that doesn't make us lucky. Enemies may return. We know what these fanatics are capable of. My order is to fortify the village. Find everything you need for combat in the hunting hut. Bows, arrows, spears, spears.... Everything you need in battle.

Hefhemut:

- In the morning we will continue our way to Abid. You need to eat and sleep. I don't think the food left by the villagers hastily is poisoned.

Hyperion (toward Laertes, Goson and Abudesh):

- And you will go on patrol today.

Laertes (incomprehension):

- Why me?

Hyperion (terribly):

- Because I said so! And do not argue with the commander!

Hefhemut:

Is everything clear to everyone?

Fighters:

- Will be done!

Hefhemut and Hyperion (with one voice):

- Freedom for Zarem!

Fighters (in chorus):

- Freedom for Zarem!

Laertes feels the sharp pain in his ankle again. He glances down at his leg, but just as then, he sees nothing there. The pain disappears as suddenly as it appears.

Act 5. Night in the village of ghosts.

Hyperion knows that his comrades will not let him down. He sent Laertes, Goson and Abudesh on patrol because he trusted them. Yes, of course, he was harsh in words, and sometimes behaved like a real despot, but deep down, he appreciated his warriors.

Only now the commander realized how serious the losses were. Hyperion knew that the operation was on the verge of failure. They were to be the first to liberate the villages and wait for the approach of the main forces. But now things didn't go according to plan. The ambush put all their endeavors in jeopardy.

At the moment, Hyperion is lying with his back to the wall in the elder's house along with everyone. It was already dark outside the house. Most of the soldiers had to sleep on the floor. There weren't enough beds for everyone.

Hyperion, like the others, lay down against the wall. No one went to bed that night without a weapon. Each of the fighters has a weapon at the ready. Someone has a dagger, someone has a blade or an axe. Think up the enemy to attack in the middle of the night, he would get a good hit.

Before falling asleep, the warriors smeared themselves with special mosquito repellents. These were ointments made in northern Egypt. One touch of this potion on the skin got rid of annoying insects.

However, sleep does not go to Hyperion. He lies on the floor with his eyes open and thinks about the situation.

Hyperion (in a whisper):

- Yes, to you

A soldier lying nearby (through a dream):

- Mm.... Hamira.... Hamira.... Umm.... Hamira....

Hyperion turns to the fighter, looks at him. The soldier is still very young, not even 20 years old. The commander does not know who this Khamira is to him. But he clearly understands that she is dear to the warrior, and more than anything in the world - he dreams of returning to her.

But will it work this time?

Despite the venerable age of 29, Hyperion did not have a family. Having lived almost to old age, he never bothered to get a wife. He spent his whole life fighting Sekherkar and his vile warriors, for whom the word "honor" meant nothing.

Hyperion (thoughtfully):

- When it's all over.

He remembers himself when he was still serving the pharaoh. As a mercenary from the distant country of Caria, he came to Egypt in order to kill for money. Soldier of Fortune. This is how such warriors were called in Zarema.

But one day, Hyperion was assigned more and more terrible tasks. For example, to destroy an entire village of disobedient pharaoh. At one fine moment, the mercenary realized that it was time to end this. This happened when they, along with other "sea warriors" (as the inhabitants of Canaan called them), came to the settlement of the Ammonites.

Hyperion remembers this very well. Before his eyes is a cluster of huts and a large tent of the local leader. He sees Sekherkar's warriors burning down a peaceful desert village. He sees women being pulled out of their houses and raped right on the sand. Hyperion can still hear their screams. Cries for help. Help that never came to them.

Again that godforsaken village, again those terrible executioners of Sekherkar under red banners.

His commander ordered to kill all the inhabitants, which the soldiers did. One of the chief's daughters was dragged out into the street. A sinister-looking obnoxious bastard named Taltech led her by the arms. She was naked. There are multiple cut marks on the body.

Taltech (smiles evilly):

- Hyperion! I've already had some fun here... Go on, finish her off. Earn your gold!

Hyperion (horrified, looking around at the eerie scenes of destruction):

- What.... We have already destroyed this village. What... what else do you need?

Taltech (throws the unfortunate woman to the ground with all her might):

- Come on, kill her. I've already done my job. I don't need her anymore.

Hyperion stands still. The blade is in his hand, but he lowers it. He clearly understands that he cannot fulfill the order. Taltech is not just his commander, he is a relative of the chief scribe of the pharaoh, and this can lead to trouble.

Taltech (threateningly):

"You weren't taught to obey, mercenary?" Come on, kill her. I gave a direct order!

Hyperion continues to stand still. He can't do anything. His entire body turned into a statue.

He looks to the left. Everywhere robbery, robbery, murder. Here are some warriors dragging an old man out of the hut and cutting him into pieces. Hyperion looks to the right. And it's not the best picture. Clothes are torn off the young hermit. One of the fighters hits her in the face with all his might.

Taltech (pierces the mercenary with a look):

- Looks like you're deaf or blind. I gave you an order, mercenary! Didn't you hear me?

But Hyperion does not obey. He continues to stand motionless. His lips twitch nervously. Eyes run to the side.

Without thinking twice, Taltech takes out a blade from its scabbard and brings it down on the unfortunate girl's head. Blood spray falls on the face of the warlord. Several - on the armor of Hyperion.

Hyperion (horrified):

- No! For what?!

The enraged Taltech sheathes his sword and quickly approaches the mercenary. He is very tall, about 2 meters. He stands in front of Hyperion and looks down. The warlord's eyes are red with unbridled rage.

Taltech (contemptuously):

- And you, I see, is a darned coward! Nothing ... I'll tell the pharaoh that you violated my order. Something will get you. They will take you through Zarem without rags, and so that every inhabitant will spit in your mug.

Hyperion (looking into the eyes of the commander):

- You kill women and children. These people were civilians. Where is the evidence that they threatened the

pharaoh?

Taltech hits the mercenary in the face with all his might. Hyperion takes the hit. His lip is broken. But the dignity remains.

Taltech (threateningly):

- Yes, you are a traitor with us! The one who disobeys the orders of the pharaoh is the enemy of Zarem! You.... But the commander does not have time to finish. Hyperion stabs him in the neck with his blade with all his might. The head of the enemy flies off to the side.

This moment is seen by many warriors, including mercenaries following their leader. Hyperion killed the commander of the detachment, a relative of the great scribe Pharaoh Sekherkar. For this, he is supposed to be executed through a copper bull. Or maybe worse.

But the mercenaries are loyal to Hyperion. None of them will arrest him. And if the Pharaoh's warriors go for it, they will all die.

Hyperion (addressing all the soldiers who sacked the village):

- Is it right? Kill the innocent! Is this what we were taught?

Shouts of anger erupt among Sekherkar's supporters. Hyperion killed the commander. They want to avenge him. Some threaten the mercenary with violence on the spot.

But Hyperion's associates are not going to hand him over. They immediately draw their swords, pull out axes and clubs from their bosoms.

Hyperion remembers perfectly well what happened next. His mercenaries killed all the pharaoh's warriors.

However, this did not help the unfortunate inhabitants of the village. Even before the massacre of Taltech, the executioners of Sekherkar massacred almost everyone.

Since then, the mercenary commander has become a renegade. In Zarem he was recognized as an enemy. Rumors reached Sekherkar of the assassination of Taltech and the uprising of the "sea warriors".

It took a long time before Hyperion joined the rebellion against the sinister pharaoh. He understood that there was no other way. Of course, a warrior could leave these lands with his comrades-in-arms and hire himself to some king of Tin or Kath-Patuki.

But what happened in the ammonite village made him change.

Now he was no longer a soldier of fortune fighting for gold. From now on, he is a rebel - a mighty warrior and commander of the army of resistance to the brutal regime of Sekherkar.

And his main goal is to help the locals in overthrowing this monster.

Hyperion winces. For a few minutes he fell asleep. He remembered everything that happened to him. I remembered his whole path from mercenaries to rebels. Now the commander saw new comrades-in-arms in front of him. Some of those with whom he had served during the attack on the Ammonites had already died. But he found new brothers, new comrades-in-arms, for the sake of whom he will do anything.

For a moment he remembers the face of Abudesh and the faces of several other warriors. During the ambush, dozens of vanguard soldiers were killed. But not in vain. They died a heroic death in the name of Free Zarem, in the name of fighting for a just cause. And their names will not be forgotten.

Hyperion (looks again towards the sleeping warriors):

- Nothing ... we will show them all more Rest assured....

He says these words aloud, but very quietly so that no one can hear him.

At that moment, something pulls at Hyperion again. Strange buzzing. He turns abruptly back to the wall of the house. That's where he heard the sound.

Hyperion looks at the strange-looking insect. And it's really weird... After all, the mosquito ointment was supposed to scare everyone away. But not this ... a fly with bright purple wings.

The warrior stares at her, and she at him. Or so he just thinks.

Hyperion (continues to look at the fly):

- Who else are you...

He admits that he has never seen such insects. In his life, the mercenary did not encounter anything. But not with this.

One day, while traveling to Nobata with the warriors of Sekherkar, he met a mysterious insect that the locals were so afraid of. They said that after his bite, they immediately die. He even saw it. In its appearance, it resembled either a fly or a horsefly. But Hyperion finished him off without letting him bite.

Now he saw something very strange and unnatural. The wings of this fly were too bright. Vivid purple. The fly seemed to understand what he asked. She twitched and darted forward in the blink of an eye.

A little more, and she would have hit Hyperion's face. The warrior recoiled. A little more, and he would have drawn the blade. But he understood that it was not worth waking up the soldiers in vain. Especially because of some kind of fly.

The insect flew around his head and disappeared into the darkness. At the same time, it emitted a strange squeak,

very similar to a mosquito.

Hyperion (after making sure the fly is gone):

- Strange.... Very strange....

Act 6. News

Abudesh and Laertes walk quietly through the jungle. It's already deep night outside. All warriors are asleep.

Goson patrols the area around the camp. Abudesh and Laertes decided to scout the area to find out where they were. If they reached the village, then this means that Abidu is already close.

The rest of the rebel army will soon follow. General N'Tlenke, from southern Kush, has never failed. It was he who was entrusted to lead the army against Zarem. He had already won at least three victories against the malevolent minions of Sekherkar.

N'Tlenke moves on both sides of the Great River. If you're lucky, the allies will overtake the detachment of Hyperion and Hefhemut. The main thing is that they do not take them for the pharaoh's henchmen.

Abudesh (in native, Hyksos language):

- Amhar is a pity ... He was a good guy. Now they can't wait for him. Neither mother nor father. And I did know him. He lived near our village near Moab. We certainly didn't grow up together. But they knew each other. And now... it's gone.

Laertes (with sorrow, in the same language):

- He was good ... He just drank often.

Abudesh:

- Drank and fucked. And then he fucked and drank again.

Laertes (smiling weakly):

- He was a nice guy...

Abudesh (agrees):

- Sekherkar will answer for it. Responsible for the unleashed war. For the massacre arranged in fraternal countries. For murder and poisoning. Will answer for everything. Nobody will forgive him for this.

Laertes (angrily):

- Do not forgive.

Suddenly, he feels the sharp pain in his ankle again. He nearly falls over, tripping over a piece of wood. The pain was really intense.

Laertes hastily lifts his right leg up. Look at the site of the bite. And nothing. Nothing again. Not a single trace.

Abudesh (excitedly):

- What are you doing?

Laertes (nervously):

- Nothing.... Everything is OK.....

Abudesh (pulls on a comrade-in-arms):

- No, no, not okay ... Something is bothering you.

Laertes distinctly remembered how the strange insect had bitten him. This was before they entered the village.

And yet it was not a hallucination. Laertes did not see anything. The warrior knew it was real. And it scared him.

Laertes:

"You said something about devourer flies.

Abudesh (smiling):

-Yes, these are legends.

Laertes (with horror in his eyes):

- And if they exist. In general, why are they called absorbers?

Abudesh:

- Yes, one guy from the southern lands said that Zaremians began some kind of excavation. Something related to the very Obelisk that the pharaoh uses. Remember Santorini?

Laertes nodded. At the same time, the pupils in his eyes widened even more.

Abudesh (continues):

- So, that dude said that Zarem priests did something with the flies found in the excavations. Well, in general, bullshit. Well, and ... more ... the local tribes knew something about these flies. I don't understand why this is all ... And what is it. But the southerner said that it was necessary for the war with enemies, and this is connected with the Obelisk. Pharaoh declared war on the whole world. Everyone who lives outside of Zarem is against him now. So Sekherkar comes up with various ways to take revenge on his enemies ... More precisely, those whom he recorded as enemies.

Laertes:

- What are flies for?

Abudesh (shakes his head):

- I do not know for sure. But perhaps for attacks on enemy forces.

Laertes (almost trembling with fear):

"Does anyone know what these flies look like?"

Abudesh:

- Are you laughing? That guy was just saying what they are. I don't understand what it's all about. And I don't know how exactly Sekherkar is going to use these buzzing creatures for war. It all seems to me to be the ramblings of a drunken reveler.

From somewhere to the right, a rustle is heard. Abudesh and Laertes draw their blades in a flash. Perhaps while they were chatting, someone noticed them.

Not even a moment later, Goson jumps out of the bushes. In his hands is a long bow. The arrow lies on the string. Looking at his comrades, he smiles strangely.

Goson (in Zarem lang):

- Your hubbub is heard on the other side of the River. Don't find?

Laertes and Abudesh breathe a sigh of relief.

Abudesh:

- Fuhhhh, damn it, I thought it was some scout of Sekherkar.

Goson:

- Yes, you are yelling like that, you don't need scouts with you. And why did Hyperion send you on patrol? It would be better Khabib with Adam. At least you can rely on them.

Laertes:

- Go to ass, ok?

Gosung just chuckled at that.

Abudesh:

- So what are you doing here? You must protect the camp!

Goson:

- And I went a little further. Do you know that we are almost close to Abidou?

Abudesh and Ghoson look on with incomprehension.

Laertes:

- Well, I guessed.

Goson:

- You don't understand... I walked along the left bank of the River. Went out to the ravine. There is such a cool view opens ... On Abidu. We are close to the city.

After these words, Goson becomes gloomy.

Abudesh (understanding what his colleague will say next):

- AND.... did you find something there?

Goson (nods):

- Found. Firstly, a corpse lies next to the ravine. This is one of the fe`nts. Well, secondly.... There is no one near Abidou. There are a couple more villages nearby. They are also empty. The fires don't burn.

Act 7. Penetration.

The hut to the right of the elders' house.

Two warriors lie opposite each other. One collapsed against the wall, the second - next to him, looking at his comrade. One is called Adam, the second is Khabib.

Khabib snores a little, and Adam has to kick him all the time to stop him. Snoring attracts unnecessary attention, which the squad certainly does not need.

Suddenly, Adam sees something crawling up his back. Obviously it's an insect. Its wings are bright purple. But where does it come from? Both of these fighters were smeared with special potions.

Adam quickly grabs a flashlight. It needs a match to light it. He scratches it across the surface of the device. A small flame lights up in the lantern. This will last for several hours. Hyperion ordered not to use the oil in vain, but Adam had no choice.

The warrior aims a flashlight at Khabib's back. A stern bearded warrior from distant deserts continues to sleep, feeling nothing. And on his back a hefty fly has been flaunting for several seconds. Everything would be fine, but its size is too large, like that of a gadfly. And bright purple wings. This is what haunts the hermit's comrade-in-arms.

Adam (horrified):

- Khabib...

But the hermit continues to sleep. He snores lightly. Nothing can pull him out of the realm of Morpheus. In addition, he was terribly tired the day before, especially after the massacre on the river.

Adam remembered how an arrow flew over Khabib's ear and almost cut it off.

Adam (looking closely at the insect):

"Why don't potions work on you.... Abder said it works for everyone....

The fly slowly walked along Khabib's back, approaching his clean-shaven head. A little more, and she will get to the ear.

Adam (horrified):

- Khabib...

Khabib snores again. He is still in the realm of dreams. The fly continues to crawl towards his ear. Adam realizes what she's aiming at, and that makes it all the more scary.

Adam (with the same emotion):

- Khabib...

He tries to hit her and crush her on Khabib's body. The warrior hopes that his comrade-in-arms will not be harmed by the impact. But nothing comes out.

In a second, the insect disappears into the hermit's ear hole. A few drops of blood remain on the sink.

Act 8. The corpse and the valley.

Goson (pointing to the dead body):

- And here is the same corpse that I was talking about.

Laertes and Abudesh stand behind. They look at the body. This is clearly a fe'enti, the most bloodthirsty of all Sekherkar's mercenaries. The dead man is naked. The skin is ebony, all covered with tattoos. Both ears are pierced with gold earrings. One of the earrings literally pierces the nose. The eyes are open, as is the mouth. No signs of life. Only the smell, nauseating and almost suffocating.

Weapons are very close. Obviously, the mercenary tried to fight someone, but lost.

The body of a dark-skinned man lies on the grass, illuminated by moonlight. Right behind him begins an abyss leading down into a ravine. And beyond the ravine stretches a beautiful valley.

What surprises the warriors around is the absence of bloody wounds on the corpse. And the body looks pretty fresh. If not for Ghoson's statements, everyone would have thought that the f'enti was just sleeping.

Laertes (continues to look at the dead black man):

- How is this possible?

Goson (in disbelief):

- Do I know? There is not a single wound on him. But then the fool will understand that he is a blind man.

Abudesh:

- Did you feel his hand?

Goson:

-Maybe I should touch him for the dick, bro?"

Abudesh (nervously):

- No! I learned the basics of healing from a healer friend. And that one we had was seasoned ... even studied with a healer from Harappa. So here.... If you touch the left hand, to the blue ... to the blue stripe. And if you squeeze it, you can hear a knock. And if there is a knock, then it seems like a person is alive. So the soul hasn't left yet.

Goson:

- Well, you're an expert, you feel then.

Abudesh nodded. The face of the dark-skinned man frightened him. Fe'enti lay on the grass, eyes wide with horror. His mouth was also open. Such a face will terrify anyone who looks at it. But the warrior had to overcome his fears.

He gently took the mercenary's left hand and squeezed it. After a while, Abudesh got to his feet and looked at his comrades. At this, he shook his head. There were no signs of life. Fe'enti was dead. Absolutely and unconditionally.

Goson:

- I've never experienced anything like this before. Not a scratch on his body. But still, he's a creep. Moreover, specific.

Abudesh (thoughtfully):

- I'm not a doctor ... I just studied. But I will tell you that I do not understand why he lost his life. Possibly some kind of poison or something. But then there would be something on the body The eyes would be a different color. I don't know.... To be honest, I don't know what killed him.

Laertes:

- What if it's poison?

Abudesh (shakes his head):

- Don't think. If poison... Well, they don't die like that from poison. He saw something before he died. Something terrible. Look at his face. And look down... Under the groin.

Laertes carefully looks where his comrade-in-arms pointed. Under the inguinal region there is a small puddle of brown color. Apparently, this was the source of the nauseating smell.

Goson:

- That's what I'm talking about. He saw something... And then he screwed up.

Abudesh no longer pays attention to the fe'enti. His gaze is fixed on the valley that opened before him. Now he clearly understands how close they are to Abidu.

In the distance you can see the very city to which they followed. And it is he who will have to be freed from the soldiers of Sekherkar.

When Abudesh and Laertes took a closer look, they realized that there was nothing to free there. The city was abandoned. Not a single light. There is almost no light, except perhaps the moonlight. Usually at night they poured oil into the lanterns so that they would burn brightly and prevent travelers from getting lost. And there were plenty of guards with torches. There was usually enough noise even at night. But something else happened here. Something made the people of the city leave immediately.

There was not a soul on the pier either. All ships have left the city. With a keen eye, Laertes managed to examine the port area. Not a soul. Not a rook. No boat.

Abidi was located about 5 kilometers from the position of the soldiers. He stood right on the left bank of the Great River. Unlike other settlements, it was not surrounded by a fortress wall. The suburbs were located at a distance, and then the sandy area. The sands reached down to the ravine, over which the fighters stood.

Laertes (turning to his comrades-in-arms):

- Fled, cowardly offspring ...

Goson (shakes his head):

- No, you don't understand, bro... They didn't run. The straps are in place.

Abudesh (agreeing with a friend):

"When the Sekherkar flee, they take all the banners with them. And there, on the contrary ... see the front arch? Yes, next to that pyramid.... Scarlet banners everywhere!

Laertes looked into the distance and was convinced of the correctness of the words of his comrades-in-arms. The straps were in place. But there is no one around. Torches were usually lit next to the banners, but not this time. Someone took them and put them out.

Laertes (thinking):

- And if they are waiting for us there... away.

Goson:

- Ambush, you think?

Laertes:

- Well, they waited for us by the river.

Abudesh (inclining to be right comrade):

- Mmm.... Yes, it's possible. Such a theory should not be ruled out.

Goson:

- But why are there no ships? How will you respond to this?

Laertes:

- The merchants were sent south. Possibly with the residents. Well, the soldiers of the pharaoh could remain in the city. And if we go in there, they will definitely attack us. Apparently, they think that we can be scared by this.

Goson:

-What about the battle galleys?

Laertes:

-We could have gone further down the river. Or closer to us to ambush N'Tlenke troops.

Abudesh:

"Then the army of Sekherkar could have stayed in Abidu.

Goson:

"Perhaps Laertes is right. The enemies are still there.

Unexpectedly, an unprecedented horror appeared in Laertes' eyes. He pointed with his blade somewhere away from Abudesh.

The rest of the fighters turned back to the jungle. What they saw shocked them. They certainly didn't expect this.

The dead fe'enti was gone. His body evaporated. Where the dead mercenary lay, there was emptiness.

Laertes (looking at the place where the corpse used to lie):

- The black man disappeared

Goson (in wild bewilderment):

- What? But this.....

Abudesh (with the same emotion):

- And the truth is gone. But where?

Act 9. Misunderstanding.

Adam (loudly):

- Khabib!

The bearded hermit opens his eyes abruptly. A moment later, he is already sitting on the floor and looks at his friend with incomprehension.

Khabib (staring at Adam):

- What What? Where?

Adam (horrified):

- While you were snoring, a fly crawled into your ear!

Khabib freaked out. He does not understand the words of his friend. Obviously, a part of him is still in the realm of dreams. Until the end, he never wakes up.

Khabib (shaking his head)

- What? Yes to you What the hell are you carrying?

Adam doesn't budge. He looks at the auricle of a colleague, expecting to see an insect crawl out from there. But there is nothing. It looks like the fly has crawled too deep.

Khabib:

- What are you talking about, Adam?

Adam still holds the lantern in front of him. It shines directly on the hermit. But to the surprise of the fighter, he does not even react to the bright glow.

Adam:

- Listen, some rubbish shit crawled into your ear ... with purple wings. Hell knows what it is. But I don't like it!

Khabib winces. Then he blinks several times, trying to wake up completely.

Khabib:

- What rubbish shit? If so, I didn't feel anything.

Adam looks back at his colleague. And, very closely. He is trying to find some change in his behavior. But it looks like everything is in order. However, he decides to tell the truth.

Adam (still in shock from what he saw):

- While you were snoring, a fly crawled into your ear. With purple wings. Right into the ear hole. And you still continued to sleep. Didn't you smell anything?

Khabib (laughing)

- Ha! Did the fly crawl? Yes, are you chasing me?

Adam:

- Why should I lie? That's why I woke you up. Dumbass....

Khabib (with the same smile):

- Go to bed... Don't waste oil. And turn off that fucking lantern. If the Sekherkar people see us, we will definitely be fucked....

Adam (interrupts colleague):

- Understood bastard

In fact, he did not move away from what he saw. But if Khabib retains his sanity, then everything is in order. So the fears were unnecessary. And if something is wrong, then when they join the army of the general, there will certainly be good healers there.

Act 10.

Strange look.

Hefhemut wakes up. Something made her open her eyes. Something or someone.

Opening her beautiful eyes, she suddenly saw Lysander before her. Former mercenary from southern Caria, kindred of Hyperion. He stood right above her and looked at her. His smile was more than disgusting.

Hefhemut jumps to his feet in a rage and immediately takes out a crescent-shaped khopesh.

Hefhemut (angrily):

- What are you doing here, Lysander?

Lysander's smile disappears immediately. He shakes his head strangely and then starts looking around as if he doesn't know where he is.

Lysander (perplexed):

- I.... I....

Hefhemut (with the same emotion, puts the blade in front of him):

- You looked at me? Answer me! You were looking at me!

Loud voices wake up all the other soldiers, including Hyperion. Many, frightened of an ambush, draw swords and spears. The commander takes out his priceless hatchet, hoping to use it in action.

Hefhemut (sternly, towards Lysander):

- How dare you stare at me when I'm sleeping?

Hyperion already manages to run up to the girl.

Hyperion:

- What's happened?

Hefhemut immediately turns towards the Karyan. Her dark eyes are lit with rage. Lysander is still confused. He appears to be drunk or on drugs.

Hefhemut (to Hyperion):

- He stared at me when I was sleeping. I woke up, and he was standing and looking ...

Hyperion (smiling slightly):

- Yeah ... it's not according to the charter somehow.

Lysander (trying to justify himself):

- I don't.... I don't... It's not what the m'lady thought....

Awakened warriors still do not understand whether this is a dream or reality. Some in a hurry "turn on" the lights. As more light enters the room, they finally realize that there is no danger. The case affected only Hefhemut and one of the fighters.

Hyperion (Lysandre):

- Come on, let's talk... But not here.

Hefhemut:

- I do not know what happened. But he stood and looked at me....

Hyperion (to a girl):

- I'll deal.

Soon the mercenary takes Lysander out into the moonlight. He makes sure there is no one around. Without thinking twice, he grabs the Karyan by the throat and turns him around. He almost loses consciousness from Hyperion's firm grip.

Hyperion (Lysandre):

- What did you decide to masturbate in a quiet way, right? Confess, you dirty libertine.

Lysander (gasping):

- M'lady is. wrong....vlno.... got it.....khhhh....

Hyperion releases the Karyan and lets him clear his throat. When the fighter recovers his breath, the conversation continues.

Lysander (with fear, towards the mercenary):

- Master.... I'm really nothing.... Didn't.

Hyperion (terribly):

- Why did you stand and stare at her in the middle of the night? At her... sleeping. How do you understand this? We haven't had enough trouble here yet because of you.

Lysander:

"By all the Titans, I didn't do it."

Hyperion (with the same emotion):

- I don't know if you're lying or not. But remember, kid. She is not a port girl to be stared at. She is now your leader. And if once again I hear something from her about your strange views, I will speak in a different language. Do you understand me?

Lysander (nods):

- Yes, sir. But please, let me explain.

Hyperion is cooling down. Deep down, he understands that even if the soldier lied, in the current state of affairs he can hardly be punished. First you need to survive in this damned jungle, which probably hides something sinister in itself.

Hyperion (in a calmer voice):

- Speak.

Lysander (with horror in his eyes, looking at the mercenary):

- I didn't look at her... Something crawled up her back. Some rubbish. Fly or locust.

Hyperion (again allows himself to smile):

- It's okay to lie to you. Not a single rubbish can crawl there. We have potions that scare away any living creatures. Enough.... I would have told the truth... But if you like her, I'll upset you. She is not one of those who sleeps with just anyone. Hopefully we won't come back to this conversation again.

Lysander (not appeased):

- No, sir... you don't understand. There was something.

Hyperion:

- Something was ... in your eggs. I myself was like you in my youth. So let's finish. In a good way. Apologize to Mistress Hefhemut, swear that this will not happen, and go to bed. Or I'll send you on patrol with our guys.

Lysander:

- Okay, sir.... I just....

Hyperion (already in a harsher voice):

- All. We drove it. You understood me. Topic closed, soldier.

Act 11. In search of a fugitive.

Laertes, Abudesh and Goson, shining with "lanterns", run along the forest path leading to the river. They hope to find the fe'enti who mysteriously got up and fled... dead.

It was lucky that the jungle was explored by the locals. Otherwise, it would be easy to get lost here.

Warriors do not give up, but keep moving. But following the footprints in such darkness is unrealistic to navigate. The black man escaped, and this is an indisputable fact. Even though Sekherkar's warriors had probably left Abidu and the surrounding area, it was necessary to act with double caution. Nobody canceled the presence of enemy spies.

Goson (annoyed):

- Fuck the task ... Look for a dark-skinned man in the forest in the middle of the night. It's probably easier to find a needle in the Great River. Or in the Atlantean Sea.

Laertes:

However, we need to find him. Most likely, it was not such a dead Kushite after all.

Goson:

- Not so dead, yes. But he didn't have a heartbeat. Everyone knows this.

Abudesh (excitedly):

- Fe'enti eat people like pies. If he brings his own here It will be a complete ass. Who knows how many of these bastards are hiding in the jungle.

Goson:

- Quiet!

A strange-looking snake with purple spots appeared right in front of my eyes. She quickly crawled across the road and disappeared into the nearby bushes.

But this is not what attracted the attention of the warriors. Goson noticed that there was something lying in the middle of the path in the distance. From a distance it looked like a dead body.

With weapons at the ready, the fighters approached the place of discovery. All guesses turned out to be correct. They were corpses. Many lifeless bodies. There were no less than ten soldiers of Sekherkar scattered along the path. All dressed in armor and helmets. They even left their weapons with them.

There was no blood, just like with that Kushite. Not a single sign of damage. Even the facial expressions were the same. Wide eyes, open mouths. Who could have done this was not clear. But definitely not rebels.

Goson (feels goosebumps):

- Again the same picture ...

Abudesh (looks at the bodies):

- These are the warriors of the pharaoh. It's kind of strange... Who are them so.

Laertes:

- And not a single injury. They are dead.... But..... But they seem to be sleeping. I don't know how to explain it in human language.

Laertes is horrified to notice how a strange-looking fly with purple wings has crawled out of the mouth of one of the dead. In the blink of an eye, she flew into the air, and soon disappeared from sight. The insect seemed to suspect that it was being watched.

Goson (anxiously):

- I don't like this.

Laertes stares at the crossbow, lying not far from one of the dead. He already wants to take a weapon, but his comrades-in-arms stop him.

Goson:

- No need. You don't have to take anything from them... They They are cursed.

Abudesh (irritated):

- May be enough? Cursed... Yes, you are like a old woman from a Bedouin tribe. Wherever you spit, there are jinns and ghosts everywhere.

Goson (nervously):

- How do you explain it? These are not rebels, but the soldiers of Sekherkar!

Laertes (thoughtfully):

- And if ours are operating here? Our other allies? If they're the ones clearing the area here?

Goson:

- Yeah... How?! And who is so cool with us to wet enemies without a single damage? Or do you think it's one of our priests? Just took, conjured and finished them off? Don't talk nonsense... It's clearly someone else. But definitely not ours!

While the comrades-in-arms were arguing, a reliable plan matured in Abudesh's head. It was necessary to somehow convey all this to Hyperion and Hefhemut before it was too late. And one of the fighters had to do it, and immediately. Others were to continue surveying the territories. It was necessary to find out after all what is happening here, in the name of all the Gods.

Abudesh (to both associates):

- Guys, I've been thinking ... We must convey to the camp what is happening here. Hyperion and the others must know. Goson, you need to go and deliver everything to our people.

Goson (surprised):

- Why me?

Laertes (agrees with Abudesh):

- Agree. Goson, go. Tell them everything. And we survey everything to the River. If we see something, we will not engage in battle, immediately - back. But it's better if you tell them everything in advance. Warn Hyperion. Tell them there's an enemy here that even the Sekherkar can't deal with. And tell me about the revived corpse.

Goson realizes that he can't get off. He must complete his task.

Goson (sighs):

- OK. But you be careful here. And if something goes wrong, immediately to the camp. Don't be heroic.

Laertes (to a friend):

- Come on... go already!

Goson turns around and runs in the opposite direction along the path. He tries to do it as quietly as possible so as not to attract too much attention. After a few seconds, he disappears.

When Goson is out of sight, Laertes looks at Abudesh.

Abudesh (to a friend):

- Need to go. Let's go to the River, let's see what's there. And back.

Laertes (nods):

- Where to go. But I don't like it. Ahh..... fuck this crap.....

At the last word, he winces. Laertes again feels a sharp pain in his leg. This time she is stronger than before. It looks like another bite of an unknown insect.

The tingling goes all over the body and reaches the back. Laertes' face is contorted in pain.

Abudesh (looking anxiously at his comrade):

- What happened to you?

Laertes tries to move away from the pain. He shakes his head several times. Cramps in the leg pass as quickly as they appear. The warrior understands that there is nothing there. Otherwise, the bite would have been at least visible. But he had already looked at the ankle more than once. Everything was in order there.

It is foolish to think that there is something there. All this is only in the head ... Or so it just seems to him.

Laertes (moving away from the shock of pain):

- All is good.... Go ahead.

Act 12.

Hyperion and Hefhemut.

Hyperion can't sleep. Sleep, as if taken by hand. He slowly walks around the village until he decides to go a little further. The hatchet is still with him. This is for a surprise attack. But he knows that if anything, he will be warned. Even the day before, the mercenary sent three of his people - Abudesh, Goson and Laertes. If the enemy is indeed here, they will report it. And if they have already been killed, then in this case the commander has a weapon.

Hyperion comes behind the hut and heads towards the Great River. Her murmur can be heard even from here. Along the way, he comes across a couple of small stones, one of which he sits down.

The nights in these places are hot. And mosquitoes fly everywhere. If not for the special ointments, they would all have been eaten that same night. Fortunately, creams repel not only insects, but also any other living creatures, for example, the same snakes. It was lucky that the funds did not drown in the river. For this, thanks should be said to the ammonite Imran, who pulled out a whole and unharmed bale. Too bad there was no food there.

Sitting on a stone, Hyperion again plunges into memories. But not for long. He is distracted by outside noise.

He immediately jumps up, pulls out an ax from his bosom and prepares to cut off the head of anyone who comes close to him. However, this time there was no danger.

Hefhemut (approaching Hyperion):

- What are you doing here?

The mercenary lowers the ax and sits down on the stone again.

Hyperion (looking away):

- So simple. I wanted to sit.

Hefhemut carefully approaches the warrior and sits next to him, on another stone. In her hands is a bow and arrows. This is just in case too.

Suddenly the soldiers of Sekherkar will decide to visit here.

Hefhemut (looks at the warrior):

- Only now I begin to realize how many we lost on the river.

Hyperion:

- Yes.... We are like Sekherkar. Everything is going according to plan ... Just the opposite.

Hefhemut (chuckles):

"No... don't compare us to that monster. We are not like that. Although ... about plans, I agree.

Hyperion (allows himself to smile):

- And what.... True. All these Sekherkar commanders are only screaming that everything is going as it should, and how successfully the campaign against the enemies of the pharaoh is progressing. It's funny to listen ... They all win ... They only lose, at the same time, city after city.

Hefhemut:

- Very soon we will take Zarem. And let's free him.

Hyperion imagines how the valiant host of N'Tlenke enters a huge city stuffed with temples, pyramids and giant statues. How joyful residents meet their liberators. But this is not far off. Sekherkar has already lost enough territory. Very soon he will retreat to the metropolitan area.

Then he will have nowhere to retreat. Only if you go to the desert lands But even there, the local tribes, tired of despotism and bloodshed, can wait for the enemy.

Hyperion (looks at the girl):

"But you're not from the Sea People, are you?" Right?

Hefhemut:

- I'm local. The father is from Byblos, like Adam's. Mother is from Lower Keme. Nom Sais.

Hyperion (shudders):

- Sais... I seem to remember. We went to Sais once. Even when they were "sea peoples". There I entered the service of Sekherkar. I wanted to find gold and glory And in the end I realized that my task is not at all in this Everything that I lived before ceased to mean to me. Piracy.... Robbery.... Robbery.....

Hefhemut (with interest):

- Have you ever robbed small merchants? Ordinary people? Or just the rich?

Hyperion (honestly):

- Small merchants? One day. I remember..... We went to sea with my father. Somehow we came across a ship from Ilion. That's where they robbed him. I was only 16. But then rarely.... They attacked only the warriors of Sekherkar or the Nuragians. And then this creature decided to buy us and use us in wars.

Some of us pecked at Pharaoh's gold. Me too. But then he realized everything And decided to help the uprising Because there was no other way.

Hyperion again remembered that infernal massacre in the desert village. There were tears in his eyes. He realized that he no longer wanted to talk about his past.

Hefhemut sensed that she had hit the mercenary. And so she chose to remain silent. Deep inside, she knew exactly what story he could tell. Almost everyone who served Sekherkar had something similar to share. But the main thing is that the past is behind us.

Hyperion shook his head to keep from showing tears. He set out to change the subject.

Hyperion (toward Hefhemut):

- And you?

Hefhemut (thoughtfully):

- Sekherkar called everyone into his army, even women. He believed that all the inhabitants of Zarem should fight for him. From every nom, from every village. Sekherkar unleashed wars with all the neighbors, arranged such a massacre there, which no one had done before him. He ravaged the villages, destroyed the population. But not all Zaremians were like that. In vain, some thought that the blame for this massacre lies with all of us. No..... We didn't choose Sekherkar. He himself came to power because he decided so. Those who tried to resist him were poisoned or imprisoned, where they soon died. Sekherkar gave us no choice. When the father was killed by the Canaanites, the mother was beside herself with grief. She blamed the pharaoh for everything, all his power. And then the soldiers came and tried to take her into the army. They grabbed everyone in the city who came across their arm. I stood up for my mother. Attacked the guards. They beat me and wanted to abuse me. But the mother pulled out a knife and cut one of them. Those bastards hung it right in the square. And I ran away. My cousin saved me. He owned a shop not far from our house. But few people knew about the other side of his life. He led the underground. Trained me. Taught everything he knew.

Hyperion (after a half-minute pause):

- And you became a rebel?

Hefhemut (smiling sadly):

- Yes. When Sais rebelled, I led a resistance force and was the first to strike at the nomarch Teket. We executed him publicly. And so my story began..... A dark story.....

Hyperion:

- Where is your relative now?

Hefhemut (hides a smile):

- Killed in action commanding troops in western Libya. He was defeated at Temehi. Then reinforcements came and crushed the Sekherkar. But Khaba was never saved. He died a heroic death.

Hyperion:

- He was a worthy man. Worthy warrior. You don't have to grieve for him.

The characters are silent for a while. Hyperion clearly understands how similar they are. Both have lost someone they loved and appreciated. The mercenary also lost his father. But he found out about this only later, when he joined the uprising. As it turned out, the Sekherkarovites captured him, brought him to a coastal city and tore him apart with horses.

When Hyperion found out about this, he wept bitter tears for the first time. He had never cried before. His father taught him to restrain his emotions. After all, this is not to the face of a man and a warrior. But then... he disobeyed him for the first time.

Now there is only one thing left - retribution. There is no other way to solve this issue. Someone has to stop Sekherkar and all this madness. Maybe then, in this land, peace will finally come, long-awaited and calm.

Hyperion (looking again at Hefhemut):

What will you do when the war is over?

Hefhemut realizes that she cannot answer this question. She set the main goal in life. But then what..... So far she has not thought about it, and is unlikely to think about it in the near future.

Hefhemut:

- First you need to crush Zarem. Rid him of pharaoh's evil. And only then think about the future. I think it's right.

Hyperion (realizing that the interlocutor is right):

"I haven't thought about anything either. But you know...

At the last word, he smiles. And all over the face.

- You know, I will gladly drive the hatchet right into Sekherkar's throat Unless, of course, he lives to see us meet.

Hefhemut allows himself to smile again. The words of a colleague inspire her.

Hefhemut (with a mischievous gleam in his eyes):

- No.... To begin with, I will drive an arrow into him Well, then, I'll leave you for a snack.

Act 13. Uninvited guest.

Goson shines his "flashlight" in front of him, trying to remember how he got on the trail. He is not a tracker, but he remembers the way to the village. Although not as good as I would like.

At the same time, he understands how difficult it is to hold both a bow and a light device in his hands at the same time. At any moment, an enemy can jump out from behind the bushes. If this is a living enemy, a soldier of Sekherkar, then he is lucky.

And if not ... If someone else jumps out.

Goson nearly bumps into a snag sticking out of the ground. He is surprised to find that one of the local trees has been felled. And, it happened quite recently.

He tries to speed up and runs forward. The warrior understands that the sooner Hyperion gets the information, the better for everyone. At least the camp will have time to prepare for the possible appearance of the enemy.

But suddenly, something comes in his way. Human silhouette. Goson immediately stops and freezes. He tries to shine with a "lantern" in front, but at the same second the light disappears. The warrior finds himself in total darkness.

The silhouette is still standing in front of him. Looking closer, Goson sees that the stranger has turned his back on him. He stands with his back to the warrior without any movement.

Goson feels goosebumps running through his body. He's scared. He's incredibly scared. He would gladly take it and run away, but there is absolutely nowhere to run. The lamp no longer works, and the warrior has to throw it to the ground.

Goson knows that he can't delay. He slowly takes an arrow out of his quiver and puts it on the bowstring. His hands are trembling. He understands that this will ruin the shot. He may miss. But it's better to protect yourself somehow than to hide.

Inwardly, the warrior feels that the stranger sees him. He has his back turned to him, stands like a statue, but he sees and hears everything perfectly. He can see perfectly how Goson moves, how he puts an arrow on a bowstring, and how he aims a bow at him.

Goson (overcoming bouts of fear):

- No ... No place! Stay where you are!

The shadow doesn't move. The stranger continues to maintain the same position.

Goson (louder):

- I said stop... If you move, I'll pierce your head! My arrows are sharp!

Stranger (hoarsely):

- Do you really think that will stop them? They will not submit to you. They'll just take it and make you a part of it.

Goson turns pale. The goosebumps on the body are only getting bigger. And yet, he notices that he sees the enemy perfectly. His vision gradually adapts to the darkness.

The soldier sees who is in front of him. This is fe`enti. The same dark-skinned one who had recently been dead. Kushite stands with her back to him, completely naked.

Goson (still aiming at the enemy):

- Don `t move! I will shoot!

Stranger (same voice):

- It sees you... It is watching you now. Turn around.

There is a crash behind Goson. Goosebumps come with even greater force. Warrior is horrified. He doesn't know what to do. He realizes that something monstrous has penetrated right behind him.

It remains to turn back. Turn around and see the creature that stands behind him. But if he turns, nothing will stop the fe`enti from charging forward and stabbing his blade in his back. Goson feels doomed.

Stranger (whispers):

- Turn around.

Goson overcomes his fear with great difficulty and turns around. But he doesn't see anything.

Behind him is solid jungle. Hundreds of trees intertwined with each other. Multiple bushes. Stones peeking out from under the grass. Nothing special. Except for the pitch and frightening darkness.

Goson looks up. And again he sees only the jungle.

Then he turns back. But this time there is no fe`enti in front of him. The black man disappears. No one else has their back to him. Nobody here.

Goson (in disbelief):

- What the hell....

And here he hears the crash again. It looks like someone broke a tree. And this crackling again came from behind the back of the warrior.

Ghosung realizes that he will have to turn around again. And meet fate, whatever it may be. He encountered something inexplicable. He had never encountered anything like this in all 23 years of his life.

It remains only to shoot in time. Shoot to death.

Goson turns around. And freezes in horror. A fe'enti stretches out in front of him. But he doesn't look human at all.

The head is too long and elongated, the torso is all dotted with purple abscesses, on which The same insects are sitting, a strange-looking fly with bright purple wings. The arms are long and almost drop to the ground. Face.... It just doesn't exist. Instead, there is a huge hole from which hundreds of purple eyes look at him. Again the same flies. Same fucking flies.

Goson is at a loss for words. He can't say anything. Not a single word. Cannot speak, cannot think, hear, move.

The fe'enti, or what's left of him, hits the warrior on the head with all his might. The blow knocks the soldier back. In flight, he drops everything that was in his hands. He no longer has a bow and arrows. There is no weapon that can help him in battle.

The monster is lightning fast. Before Goson can fall, the creature pounces on him and unleashes huge fists on him. The warrior's face turns into a shapeless mess. There are splatters of blood and brain fluid everywhere.

Act 14. Creatures in the middle of the night

Imran wakes up. But not by choice. He is awakened by someone or something. He abruptly jumps up from the bunk he managed to find in this hut.

The warrior looks around. Abuid, his associate, is not visible. But he was lying on the floor against the wall, not far from a bag with some rubbish, which the owner of the house did not have time to throw away.

At the same moment, he feels something creeping up his chin. He slaps his face in horror and knocks this "something". He clearly sees that this is an insect, and rather big. Especially after it falls on the wooden floor. For some reason, the wings of the creature glow bright purple and literally illuminate the room.

Imran (still not departing from what he saw):

- Your well

But what is his amazement when he sees how the insect jumps up on its legs. But even a second ago, this beast was lying on his back.

Imran automatically lands in the direction of the creature and crushes it with both legs. The little monster turns into a shapeless blot. For some reason, the blood is also purple and glows.

Imran (sternly):

- Fucking jungle....

But then he recalls that they were all smeared with special means. These potions will scare away any living creatures, including large ones. The smell is felt even by forest hornets. But for some reason this creature turned out to be invulnerable.

Something makes Imran look back. When he turns around, fear fills his body. Animal fear. His chin begins to tremble nervously.

Right behind his bunk on the wall sits at least 10 such creatures, at least the size of a large grasshopper. The same bright purple wings, the same mysterious glow from them. Insects are too much like flies. But none of the detachment had ever seen such flies in their lives.

Imran (horrified):

- Save us, Anu

But the gods don't seem to hear him.

One of the fly-things twitches and leaps without hesitation. In less than a second, she is at the level of Imran's lips.

Imran does not expect such a reaction. From surprise and horror at the same time - his mouth is half open. And it plays with him the most cruel joke in his life.

The fly hurriedly penetrates the lips and in a moment is in the larynx. Imran tries to cough up this creature out of himself, but nothing helps. The hermit feels like he is suffocating. He can't breathe.

Following that creature, at least 5 more such flies jump on him.

Imran soon falls to the ground, hitting his head on the floor. He begins to beat in terrifying convulsions. His entire body is shaking as if it had been struck by lightning.

Act 15. Consequences of a bite.

Adam has a dream. Pretty weird.

He sees several huge insects in front of him. Only these are not ordinary living creatures. They are made of some kind of metal and glow from all sides. He can't figure out why.

Huge beetle-like creatures hover over something round. And only then Adam realizes that this is some kind of island ... or a large land. An island with several parts of land, washed by the ocean. But why it is round - the warrior cannot understand. There are no round lands. In any case, that is how the healers taught him.

There are more and more beetles above the ball. Their number is growing. More insectoid creatures arrive.

Adam notices that the mysterious ball is literally hanging in the air. And in the distance, luminous points are visible. Stars ... Yes, these are exactly the stars. But what is this reality?

Deep down, Adam knows that it has something to do with what's going on. He recalls that some scientists said that the whole world where people live could be round. Although the warrior was sure that this was not the case. If they all lived on the ball, then those who lived below would simply fall down.

Voice from afar (horrified):

- Adam... help.....

Adam finds himself hanging in the void. There is nothing around... Only these unbearable beetle-like and floating monsters, and in the distance a mysterious ball.

Voice (same)

- Adam... Help.... They want me to be with them.....

Adam (loud):

- Who is this? What's happening?

Voice:

- Adam... They absorb me.....

Adam (even louder):

- Who is this? What do you want?

And then he realizes that this voice he has known for a long time. It was Khabib.

Adam opens his eyes. He runs straight into the wall. Sleep still haunts him. On the one hand - he sees the wall of the hut, on the other - all the same giant beetles approaching the ball hanging in the air.

The warrior blinks several times. Judging by the half-light in the room, it was already beginning to get light outside the hut. But full dawn is still a long way off. The night was just beginning to fade.

After that, Adam rolls over to the other side. In a dream, he clearly understood that his colleague was calling him. Khabib... This stern-looking hermit. Harsh, but kind. A man who was ready to do anything for his comrades.

Turning to his brother in arms, Adam screams in surprise.

Khabib lies almost next to him. He looks straight into his eyes and... smiles strangely. His smile is almost all over his face. Only in the eyes for some reason there is no emotion. One void.

Adam hastily rises to his feet and automatically draws his blade. He always keeps a sword nearby, in case of a sudden appearance of the enemy.

Adam (toward Khabib):

- What the hell!

Khabib shudders and looks at his friend. His face comes to life again. The smile falls off the face.

Khabib (sleepy):

- Adam... what's so... abruptly.... I nearly died...

Adam (angrily):

- What are you doing?

Khabib again pretends that he does not understand his comrade-in-arms Or they really don't understand. He continues to look around and blink. It looks like he was sleeping recently. But Adam saw it all clearly.

Adam (points a blade at a friend):

- What are you doing? Answer!

Khabib also has to get up. He moves as if after a deep sleep. The blinking continues. When the hermit is on his feet, he staggers a little.

Khabib (in disbelief):

- Yeah .. you won't fall asleep with you What happened?

Adam (terribly):

- You looked at me and smiled as if you were planning something evil.

Khabib (with a smile):

- When I was planning evil Yes, you dreamed it all!

Adam lowers the blade. But at the same time, it squeezes his handle even tighter. Khabib, meanwhile, continues to recover.

Adam (in a calmer tone):

- Are you sure you dreamed?

Khabib (nods):

- What did you think? You tell me... When did I plan evil?

Adam realizes that consciousness has completely returned to the hermit. Or so, it just seems to him. But that creepy smiling face is still in front of my eyes.

Adam:

- I just woke up and... I saw you lying almost next to me and smiling ... I already thought that I reminded you of a camping girl.

Khabib (smiles again, but kindly):

- Ha-ha! No really.... I don't touch people like you. You're not my type.

At the last word, he laughed hoarsely.

Adam looked back at the doorway. It was already light outside the hut. And this means that soon Hyperion will raise everyone.

Either you have to go further, or build fortifications and turn this village into a small citadel.

Khabib (after the "laughter fit"):

- Well ... Maybe we'll go out, unwind? Anyway, the commander will soon raise us.

Adam (agrees):

"You won't fall asleep in this jungle at all, if it's bad.

Khabib:

- Still would.... It's good that we at least smeared ourselves with bugs.

Adam at this time had already left the hut for fresh air. He found himself on a path laid by the locals back when the village was living its own life.

But when he heard the hermit's last words, he shuddered as he had never shuddered before. Khabib talked about ointments from "bugs". However, that strange insect that crawled into his ear was not at all afraid of any drugs.

With horror, Adam realized that this beast could still be in Khabib's head. He was about to turn around to call his comrade to him. But he didn't have to try very hard.

Khabib was already there. Right next to him, very close.

Judging by his face, he had already come to his senses, feeling cheerful and fresh.

Adam (comrade):

- Listen, do you remember anything like that at night?

Khabib (confused)

- What exactly?

Adam:

- A fly crawled into your ear last night. Don't you remember this?

Khabib (smiles again):

- No.... And what ... Even if it crawled, it didn't bother me in any way.

The hermit's smile grows even wider. This scares Adam a lot. There is clearly something wrong with the colleague. His behavior has changed ... But how exactly, he is still only trying to understand.

Adam didn't even notice that he still hadn't sheathed his blade. The sword is still with him. Perhaps this is not without reason at all?

Khabib (with the same emotion):

On the contrary, I feel great.

Adam (in disbelief):

- Are you sure?

Khabib smiles even wider. Almost the same as in the hut.

Khabib:

- Certainly. I have never felt so fresh....

Adam, horrified, steps back from his comrade. The blade is held in front of him. All his fears are beginning to be confirmed.

Adam (almost hysterical):

- You are sure? A fly has crawled into your head! Fucking fly!

Khabib (with a smile):

"And you think she did something to me?" I, like no one else, feel Unity.

Adam:

- Don't come!

Khabib continues to stand still. His facial expression is still weird. The smile extends almost to the ears. The hermit's eyes turn bright purple for a moment, and then return to their original appearance.

A small crack appears on the right cheek, from which a small bloody trickle flows.

Khabib (with the same emotion):

- You won't be hurt, Adam from Byblos.... How it didn't hurt others. It just seems scary at first. But then the fear disappears. You are aware of everything. Unity is everything, Adam... You just have to accept it.

Act 16. The River

Abudesh and Laertes managed to reach the Great River. They took up a position on a small hill, overgrown with trees and bushes. They hid so that no one could see them.

Both are armed with bows and arrows. Ready at any moment to hit the enemy.

Somewhere in the distance, the light was beginning to fade. But it was still far from full dawn. So the darkness was a salvation for the fighters.

Below, at the foot of the hill, there was a beach where the locals used to spend their time. But now it was literally filled with Sekherkar's soldiers.

There were at least 20 of them. Before Abudesh and Laertes found them, they heard screams in the local dialect. This is what got their attention.

The soldiers scurried in different directions, carrying out long canoes and lowering them aground. Judging by their faces, they were very scared. Abudesh and Laertes immediately realized that these warriors were preparing to flee, and the sooner the better.

Their attention focused on the commander of the enemy squad. It was a rather young officer, dressed in chain mail and an iron round helmet. He looks to be at least 25, maybe a little older.

Officer (in a commanding tone, in the direction of his comrades-in-arms):

- Move, ignorants! Move! Lower the boats!

Abudesh lay down on his stomach and carefully examined the commander's face. Fortunately, his eyesight was excellent.

Abudesh (quietly, towards Laertes):

- There are a lot of them. But they run away.

Laertes does not answer.

Abudesh is scared. His comrade was squatting next to him just a moment ago. But now he is gone, and he does not answer.

Something is clearly wrong with Laertes.

Abudesh, trying not to attract attention, carefully crawls out of the bushes. He sees Laertes writhing in terrible pain. He stands with his head to the palm tree. His hands are down.

It doesn't take a moment for him to vomit the contents of his stomach onto the ground. Luckily, he does it quietly. In any case, he tries.

Abudesh (Laertu):

- What happened to you?

Laertes turns sharply towards his comrade-in-arms. His face is contorted in pain. He seems to be incredibly sick.

Abudesh (with horror in his eyes):

- What the hell.... Haven't had enough of your stomach problems yet!

Laertes coughs quietly several times. Then he tries to catch his breath. When he succeeds, he looks at his comrade.

Abudesh:

- What's wrong with you?

Laertes (hoarsely):

- I don't know twists something. Apparently, the fruit was stale.

Abudesh (excitedly):

- Look, we still need to find out what's going on here.

Laertes coughs once more. Then he wipes his mouth and face with his right hand.

Laertes:

- Do not pay attention to me Please....

Abudesh:

- How not to turn..... You threw up so that....

At this point, he is speechless. The warrior looks at the place where Laertes vomited. It didn't look like simple bile. Something strange and slimy, and even luminous. Glowing bright purple...

Abudesh:

- We must go back You are clearly unwell.

Laertes (stops his comrade):

- No ... I say, do not pay attention to me. I'm all right!

Abudesh tries to forget what he saw. For a moment, he manages to make himself believe that nothing was there, or if it was, nothing significant. Just a fighter twisted his stomach. Who does not happen during such trips.

Abudesh:

- Okay, then let's look after them Further.

Laertes (nods):

- Everything is fine. Just ate something. It happens to everyone...

Abudesh is already rushing back to the bushes.

Act 17. Evil is already near.

Laertes and Abudesh are back in the bushes, watching the enemy fighters from the hill. By the time Laertes had vomited, the Sekherkar had already accelerated and almost all of them were boarding the boats. Some of the canoes have already left.

The young officer continued to command on the shore. Abudesh marveled at his courage. This was clearly no ordinary Sekherkar campaigner who didn't give a damn about his own. The commander remained on land along with three soldiers dressed in chain mail and armed with crossbows.

The officer himself had a khopesh naked. He stood on the shore and looked at the beach.

Officer (to his soldiers):

- All! We plunged. Now we'll go too.

One of the fighters, standing on the left:

- Sir, let me...

The officer knew at once that he was going to be asked a question. He obviously was not cruel to his subordinates, and preferred to be friends with them rather than play the boss.

Officer (to a fighter):

- What do you want to ask me?

Soldier:

Not everyone is gone yet... Commander Imhotep is still in the jungle. With him 40 spears and swords. These are our warriors. Let me ask....

Officer (interrupts soldier):

- Why didn't we come back for them?

The warrior nods.

Officer (continuing):

- They're already dead, Shimon! Dead! Have you seen what happens to people?

Soldier:

- I saw..... Yes, but Imhotep..... Mohshesh, my neighbor, serves with him. We have been friends since childhood.

The officer nodded again. Abudesh clearly noted that there has long been mutual understanding between the warrior and his commander. This means that there are fraternal relations among the Sekherkars too.

An officer:

- I know. But we cannot save them. Did you see what's happening? My cousin died this morning! He tried to attack me!

At the last word, the commander raised his voice.

Officer (continues):

"My own kinsman tried to kill me because of those damned flies!"

Soldier (violently):

"Damn this Sekherkar....

The officer looked menacingly at the warrior. His face turned purple. But then rage gave way to understanding.

Officer (comrade-in-arms):

- Carefully, for such words - the death penalty. However, I share your views. Pharaoh really doesn't care about people. In part, I even understand the rebels ... But I ask that this all remain between us.

The remaining two soldiers expressed clear support for their colleague.

One of the two fighters (toward the commander):

- But Shimon is right. For the pharaoh, we are meat for catapults, and nothing more.

An officer:

- So... Both of you, shut up! Everyone and everything is clear. If our lives were valuable to them, they would not have made excavations right in the city and would not have released these creatures.

Shimon:

- I wish I knew where they came from. These creepy creatures...

An officer:

- All because of these excavations, to them. All because of this shit... OK. We're leaving.

After these words, the commander went along with the fighters to the nearest canoe. Along the way, they were talking about something else, but their speech was already unintelligible.

Abudesh clearly understood that the matter here is still in Sekherkar. Something or someone came out of the dungeons. But he did not understand the officer's phrase at all. "My own kinsman tried to kill me because of the damned flies."

These words haunted Abudesh. And then there are those mysterious corpses in the forest, including a dead fe'enti mercenary who came to life.

Abudesh (toward Laertes):

-What the hell are they talking about. What other flies? What other creatures?

But Laertes again did not answer.

Abudesh looked to his left. Nobody. Not a single soul. His comrade was gone.

Abudesh (louder):

- Laertes!

And again silence. His colleague and friend disappeared as if he never existed.

Act 18. Invasion

Khabib's face is changing rapidly. The eyes turn bright purple again. A sinister smile stretches across his face. Lips cracked in several places.

The view of the hermit is truly awesome.

Khabib (toward Adam):

- You won't get hurt. Well, if only at the beginning.

Adam stands with a blade in his hands. The blade of his sword almost touches Khabib's stomach. And yet Adam fears his comrade... or who he has become now. Fear flickers in the warrior's eyes. Goosebumps run down your back. Legs begin to tremble.

Adam (overcoming horror):

- Don't come!

Khabib (with the same emotion):

- I'm not going to.

Adam does not notice how another enemy appears behind him. This is Abuid... But he's already infected. His eyes glow with bright purple lights.

Without thinking twice, the monster pounces on Adam from behind. He tries to make a choke hold and knock the warrior to the ground. But he manages to get out from under the grip of the enemy.

Adam turns to Abuid and stabs him in the chest. The blade passes through the body and exits the back. But there is no blood. Instead, some strange purple liquid, clearly unlike human.

Abuid (with a creepy smile):

- Unity is everything. Give in to him.... Give in.

Adam immediately draws the blade from the former comrade's chest, and then strikes with a slash. The enemy's head is thrown to the side. The headless body staggers and falls to the grass. A bright purple liquid continues to ooze from the horrifying wound on his neck.

Adam (toward the dead man):

- What's the matter with you!

At that very moment, something heavy knocks him off his feet. The warrior flies up, and then with all his strength falls to the ground. His back hits the ground and he feels a sharp pain. But fortunately, all the bones remain intact.

The maximum that Adam received from this flight was multiple bruises.

When he comes to, he sees Khabib ahead. His colleague has changed even more. The face no longer resembles a human.

Adam tries to get up, and he succeeds, although not without difficulty. He had already lost his blade as he flew through the air.

However, he always carried a short dagger with him in case he lost his sword. The warrior immediately snatched it from its scabbard and held the blade in front of him.

Adam (toward Khabib):

- Don't come!

Khabib keeps moving towards him. His face is no longer the same. The eye holes widened to the limit, the smile stretched so much that it even touched the cheeks. What's more, a strange hole appeared in his forehead from which purple blood oozed profusely.

Khabib (in a raspy voice):

- Resistance is futile. And you understand it. You don't have to resist it. It's waiting for you all.

Adam (still holding the blade in front of him):

- Don't come! What happened to you? What about my friend?

Khabib (smiles even wider, and from this the stripes on his face only get bigger):

- He can't hear you. You're trying hard. Khabib is dead... And you will be next.

Adam understands what needs to be done. If you delay even a little, then the enemy will overcome him.

A sudden blow from the back almost took the warrior's life. Such an oversight should not be allowed.

Adam might not be so lucky next time.

The warrior rushes at Khabib at breakneck speed. A few moments, and the dagger blade is already in the head of the enemy.

Khabib stumbles back. Adam does not have time to pull the blade and jumps to the side. His former comrade remains with a knife in his head.

But he doesn't die. He continues to look at Adam with a creepy smile.

Khabib (with a screech):

- Poor man... You can't do anything. Unity is everything. You can't stop this. The process is irreversible... And you....

Adam (at the top of his lungs):

- What did you do with Khabib?

Khabib:

- The same thing I'll do with you.

Now it's Khabib's turn to fight. He leaps forward and tries to knock the warrior down. Adam has to act again. He jumps back again.

The warrior notices that a dropped blade lies not far from him. If only you could get to it. After all, he managed to kill Abuid. When he cut off his head, his body stopped moving. The enemy was defeated. Perhaps the same option will work with Khabib.

Adam rushes to the blade with all speed, in the blink of an eye he raises it and turns to the enemy.

Khabib moves at him with furious force, again trying to knock him down. Adam dodges a powerful carcass rushing at him. He lets the hermit forward, and then with all his strength drives the sword into the back of his head.

The blade comes out of Khabib's forehead along with a splash of purple blood. Adam understands that this will not stop the enemy. He draws his blade in a hurry and strikes again.... Already on the neck.

The slashing blow blows off the hermit's head. She flies off to the side. A powerful body without any signs of life falls to the ground.

Adam sighs in relief. He still managed to outwit the enemy. The enemy is no longer a threat to him. However, later, the warrior clearly realizes that nothing is over yet. Khabib and Abuid were infested with those fucking flies. It was undeniable. And what is in them - it was only necessary to find out.

The most important question is where did these insects come from, and what caused their reproduction?

Adam examines the bodies of his dead comrades. Even yesterday he laughed and joked with them. Together they made plans for the future, laughed, drank wine, imagined how they would soon take Zarem by storm and personally hang Sekherkar.

Now all those plans have been dashed. And it's all thanks to these flies.

Adam (towards the killed Khabib):

- I'm sorry..... Sorry brother. I'm sorry.

He himself does not notice how tears flowed from his eyes.

Adam can hardly restrain himself from sobbing at the top of his voice. He understands that he must hold on. After all, this was just the beginning.

Act 19. Monster

Abudesh tries to find Laertes but can't. He is nowhere. Bushes and trees are everywhere. This is all reminiscent of that fe'enti mercenary.

It's useless to scream. According to that officer, there are at least 40 more Sekherkar fighters within the jungle. Who knows what the soldiers of this Imhotep are capable of. And how many are left. Abudesh certainly can't handle them all.

Abudesh (mournfully):

- Yes, to you

We had to quickly decide what to do. Or go to the camp and report everything to Hyperion. Or try to find Laertes, see it through to the end. Both were very risky moves.

Enemies, apparently, have not yet left Abidi. But deep inside, Abudesh suspected that the main evil did not come from the pharaoh's fighters at all. There was something else in this jungle.

The officer mentioned some flies. And here it is? What are these flies that inhabit people? Abudesh had a hundred questions in his head.

Laertes just disappeared. Abudesh has been wandering around the jungle in search of him for 15 minutes. But to no avail.

Well, at least the darkness is starting to subside. At the very least, this will give at least some head start for the upcoming search for the missing warrior. Unless, of course, Hyperion agrees to look for him.

Abudesh (quietly):

"Why did we even go after that bastard fe`enti.... For what.....

He scolded himself and his comrades for a stupid idea. Rushing in search of this dark-skinned man was unwise. But what's done is done. Nothing can be changed.

Voice (from a distance):

- Abudesh!

Abudesh winces. The voice was familiar to him. He immediately recognized him as Goson.

At first, the warrior rejoices, but then he realizes his mistake. They sent Goson to the camp. He should have reported everything to Hyperion long ago.

Abudesh (loudly):

- Goson?

Voice (same)

- Abudesh!

Abudesh tries to find the source of the noise, but can't. It seems to him that the voice comes from almost everywhere.

Voice:

- Abudesh! Help me.

This time it came from somewhere to the left. Abudesh quickly rushed to the source of the noise. The noise was coming from a thick palm tree surrounded by bushes.

Abudesh, just in case, put the arrow on the string. He knew it might be a trap. Ghoson could be grabbed by Sekherkar's soldiers and forced to scream, hoping that his comrade-in-arms would bite. Anything could happen.

The warrior came close to the bushes. The voice definitely came from there. The darkness had not yet fully subsided, and Abudesh could hardly see anything. Only solid bushes and tree trunks. Getting the "lantern" was dangerous. Yes, and this can lead to fatal consequences. While he will light the device, the enemy will already be behind him.

Abudesh (loudly):

- Goson! It's you?

This time the voice comes from the right. Right above the warrior's ear.

Voice (sounds like a rattle):

- I'm here.

Abudesh turns quickly to the right. A monster appears right in front of him.

It's Goson, but he doesn't look like a human at all. Almost nothing remains of the former warrior. Abudesh sees the face of the monster before him. There are more limbs. Many of them have not yet

formed and are continuous processes. The head suddenly lengthened and turned into something terrible. The eyes, mouth, and nose are reversed. The mouth appeared on the forehead, the nostrils on the cheeks, and the eyes at the very chin.

A blinding bright purple glow escapes from the eyes.

Goson's lips (with the same grit):

- Help me.....

Abudesh does not have time to shoot an arrow at him. He can't even scream. The monster hits him in the chest with all his might.

This blow crushes the entire chest, including the skeletal system. Abudesh flies back and hits a tree painfully. His skull is fractured. Darkness before the eyes.

The last thing he sees in front of him is Goson's horribly wrong face, which is rapidly approaching him.

Voice (from somewhere far away):

- Unity is everything..... Soon.... Soon you will know him.

Act 20. Strangeness continues.

Hyperion and Hefhemut continue to sit on the rocks. Not far from them flows the Great River. They don't sleep at all. There is simply no sleep.

But there is more. Hefhemut is troubled by a strange sense of unease. She remembered Lysander's face for a moment. When she woke up, she saw his creepy and vile smile. But it wasn't lust. It was malice. Lysander seemed to rejoice at something bad.

The girl could not forget that terrible face. Even after Hyperion had a tough conversation with the former mercenary.

Hefhemut (to Hyperion):

-Thanks for talking to Lysander.

Hyperion sits in the same position. He does not look at the girl. Although he is surprised to find that he has sympathy for her, especially lately. Perhaps it is because of this that he tries to avoid direct gaze.

Hyperion (thoughtfully):

- Come on.... It's OK. He won't come to you again.

Hefhemut:

I found his face strange.

Hyperion allows himself a glimpse of Hefhemut, but only briefly. At the same time, he tries not to show that he feels sympathy. In his opinion, now it is unreasonable.

Hyperion (with interest):

-What was wrong with his face?

Hefhemut had to remember this moment. She saw his creepy smile again.

Hefhemut (anxiously):

- There was something wrong with him. I can't really explain.

Hyperion (shrugs):

- C'mon. It's just that the boy hasn't seen women in a long time.

Hefhemut (continues to stand his ground):

- No.... There was something wrong with him. His face.....

Hyperion:

- The usual face of a young libertine.

He allows himself to laugh, hoping the girl will appreciate it. But Hefhemut looks scared. Obviously, this act is too much remembered.

She really thought that something had happened to Lysander. But what exactly - could not understand. Hyperion catches himself thinking that this fighter has never shown strange behavior. He has always been a rather humble warrior.

Staring at the commander in the middle of the night was not his style. Usually this is characteristic of those who have long been without a woman. But Hyperion remembered that Lysander had a lover. Not so long ago, they liberated another village from the army of Sekherkar. Lysander saved the daughter of a local fisherman. The mercenary was ready to swear that he saw them kissing.

Hefhemut (looks Hyperion straight in the eyes):

- And if....

Hyperion (perplexed):

Well, what could have happened to him?

Hefhemut (shakes his head):

- I don't know. But his smile... was creepy.

Hyperion:

- But he has a girl.

Hefhemut realizes that fear takes possession of her even more.

Hefhemut (nervously):

-"Then why was he looking at me?"

Hyperion:

- Don't know.... I just now remembered. He's never been anything like it.

Hefhemut:

- Then what is it? Did he even say anything to you?

Hyperion:

- He said that he saw some kind of fly on your body Violet. I saw her too, but not on you, but on the wall of the hut. Bullshit. These are just the locals.

Hefhemut (starts):

"But we have potions on us. We smeared them. This should scare away these beasts.

Hyperion (nods):

- Right. But apparently, these flies do not peck at it.

Hefhemut:

What color do you say they have wings?

Hyperion (thoughtfully):

- Bright purple... And what.... Is there something wrong?

The mercenary suddenly notices that the girl is looking somewhere away from him. Her pupils dilate in horror. Lips twitch nervously.

Hyperion (toward Hefhemut):

- What's happened?

He himself turns back and looks in the same direction as the commander.

Hyperion quickly jumps up from his seat and puts his ax in front of him. Lysander stands literally ten paces away from him. The same warrior with whom the mercenary recently had a preventive conversation.

Hyperion (Hefhemut):

- Stay close.

Lysander looks directly at Hyperion and smiles. But his face no longer resembles a human. Bright purple lights burst from the eyes, which shine brighter than the stars.

The cheeks are full of bloody cracks, from which a purple liquid oozes. The smile is so wide that it stretches to the very ears.

Lysander (towards Hyperion and Hefhemut):

- The time has come.

His smirk widens even further. Cheeks continue to crack.

One of the eyeballs bursts open and a small fly-like creature crawls out. The insect quickly travels down Lysander's cheek and then disappears into his mouth.

Hyperion (holds ax at the ready):

- Lysander!

Lysander (with a screech):

- Lysander is dead. But you You will be the next dish on our holiday!

To be continued.