



# Meridian

Issue 1, VOLUME 6, JANUARY 28, 2026

JANUARY 2026

PRL Serials welcomes you to the exciting conclusion of the Fonlands Saga as the heroes of the PRL Serials battle a threat to the multiversal structure!

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In this issue:

**MASTER'S LOG 2120 - THE DIVINE ESSENCE - acε**

# PRL

s e r i a l s

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## from the editor

**H**ello and welcome back as we present the first ever January Issue of the PRL Serials!

The PRL Serials is a periodical. We believe in captivating stories told in the serial format, and we strive to tell stories in as many different art forms as are available to us.

Each year, we produce a [volume of our periodical that consists of twelve issues](#). Since 2014, the first issue has debuted on June 16, which we refer to as PRL Day, and new issues appear on a loose weekly basis, about three issues monthly for four months. Since Volume I, we have also released the PRL Halloween Special that consists of three issues in October; in recent history, the Halloween Special has been replaced with the Day of the Dead and the Fèt Gede Specials.

Each issue of the PRL Serials features at least six ongoing serial stories that may appear in each of a volume's issues. The run of a serial is dependent on the contributors and it is possible that a serial may not appear in each of a volume's issues.

The [Annual Issue](#) is a stand-alone issue of the PRL Serials that debuts halfway through a volume and contains eight annual issues of serials that have appeared in the periodical at some point in its history; new serials have debuted in previous annual issues but it is rare.

We started the [Interim Shorts](#) early in Volume II as a way for the PRL Serials to produce stories when publication of the issues stalled. Interim Shorts are serial stories, sometimes continuations of existing serials, that run between issues of the volume. They can be described as limited series, usually consisting of three to five issues to tell a contained adventure.

The title of the volume is chosen to highlight a serial that appears in all twelve issues of the volume; it can be the name of the serial itself or any title that captures the essence of a serial or more than one if plot lines overlap. Crossover events occur in each volume, meaning the plot of at least two serials overlap.

Starting in 2026, issues of the PRL Serials will be released on a monthly schedule. This change in our release schedule corresponds with the production of the official PRL Serials print issue. Previously, issues of the PRL Serials were announced via blog post and linked to a shared Google Document that contained the stories. Since 2024, [the PRL Serials website](#) has published every issue of every serial ever produced for the periodical and this will continue even with the print issue.

Readers should look forward to the Annual Issue on PRL Day, June 16.

Interim Shorts in more recent years have been published in the months leading up to PRL day, but readers should look forward to Interim Shorts between monthly issues in the future.

There will be a total of four Special Issues produced each year with less content than volume issues. The Halloween Special will return with a single issue on Halloween day, October 31, and the newly christened Fèt Deads Special will debut a single issue on November 2. There will be two additional Special single issues each year, the Solstice Issue in early December and the Equinox Issue in early March.

We like art here at the PRL Serials, and we strive to tell stories in as many different art forms as are available to us. We have more at our disposal now than at the start. Please enjoy our stories, dear readers, and if

it speaks to you, feel free to speak to us. Check us out on social media or [send messages through the PRL Serials website](#).

Volume 6 marks the end of another PRL epic as the heroes of [the Fonlands](#) and the multiversal structure battle the reality devouring threat known as Une. It's our second major culmination of everything that came before; I heartily recommend revisiting [Volume IV - Sixth Dimension](#), it wraps up the first six volumes nicely and shows just how powerful Alia, the Hyperion truly is.

The action will be epic and you can expect it all year long. Get ready for an all new era of the PRL Serials, dear readers, as we present Meridian. - Roy Cureton, 01/2026

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The story lines in this issue extend stories that appeared in previous volumes of the PRL Serials. Check out the Volume Archive at [prlserials.com/volume-archive](http://prlserials.com/volume-archive). The Fonlands first appeared in Volume 2 with [an excerpt from the Manual and References of the Fonlands](#), the guide to everything about the universe that rests on the back of a slumbering snake. [The Divine Essence](#) also debuted in Volume 2, detailing the impact of Pultine on the Earth of universe Prime 5. We also met the Vodun in their search for Lègba, and his countless iterations. The story continued in [Pultine's Greatest Hits](#) that detailed the history of the Fonlander across two universes. Volume 3 went to the [Arch of Hysteria](#) for an explosive melee and tournament to determine the role of Fonlanders in the future of Prime 5. Maxx the Superguardian of Bludon emerged as the victor and in [Àmuk](#) we saw life on Bludon. Soon after, the heroes of the PRL Serials discovered [the threat of Une](#) and now, they fight to save all of existence.

# VOLUME 6

## JANUARY 2026

# Meridian

## Issue 1

### **FEATURES**

#### **MASTER'S LOG 2120 - COLORS OF ARCANA 3-7**

The Master of Multiversal Arcana, Issac Washington, takes time to explore the details of arcana that he has learned since he arrived in the Fonlands. There are seven vodun, but eight colors of arcana that pervade the multiversal structure. Even if the terms associated with arcana in the Fonlands are different from what he is used to in his home universe, the concepts are familiar and support the theory that rules of arcana are constant across the multiverse.

\* \* \*

#### **ACE -13 - THE VODUN OF DEADS AND WRAITHS 17-23**

The Vodun travel to the newly made Disc of Deads and Wraiths on the underside of the Disc of Legba. They hope to find the being that dwells there who can be called the Vodun

\* \* \*

#### **THE DIVINE ESSENCE - WIELDERS OF THE GREEN - 35 - PULTINE IN PARADISE 26-30**

Pultine traveled to the Paradise Universe at the end of the last Volume, along with Alia, Maxx, the Halfyn Heir, and three of the Vodun. Their meeting with the being known as Ogi brought them face to face with their enemy for the first time. Be sure to check out the rerun of the Legend of Pultine from [The Divine Essence Issue 2 - A Daughter of Pultine](#), and of [Made in America \(Series 1\) - Issue 11 - The Alia](#), to learn more about Pultine and Alia.

\* \* \*

#### **SNAGARUDY - 1 - JOURNEY AND A TREE 32-33**

Journey arrives in the PRL Serials! By day, she is a sister, a daughter, a student, and she ain't afraid of nothing, even if that leads to a lot of bumps and bruises. By night, or before her bedtime, Journey is more than meets the eye.

### **SECTIONS**

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#### **THE VODUN**

#### **9 DISC OF SAKPATA** Excerpt from the Manual and Reference of the Fonlands.

#### **11-16 'YOUNG' VODUN CHRONICLES - SAKPATA'S FIRST STUDENT** Sakpata reminisces as the battle draws ever closer to the Fonlands.

#### **RE-RUNS**

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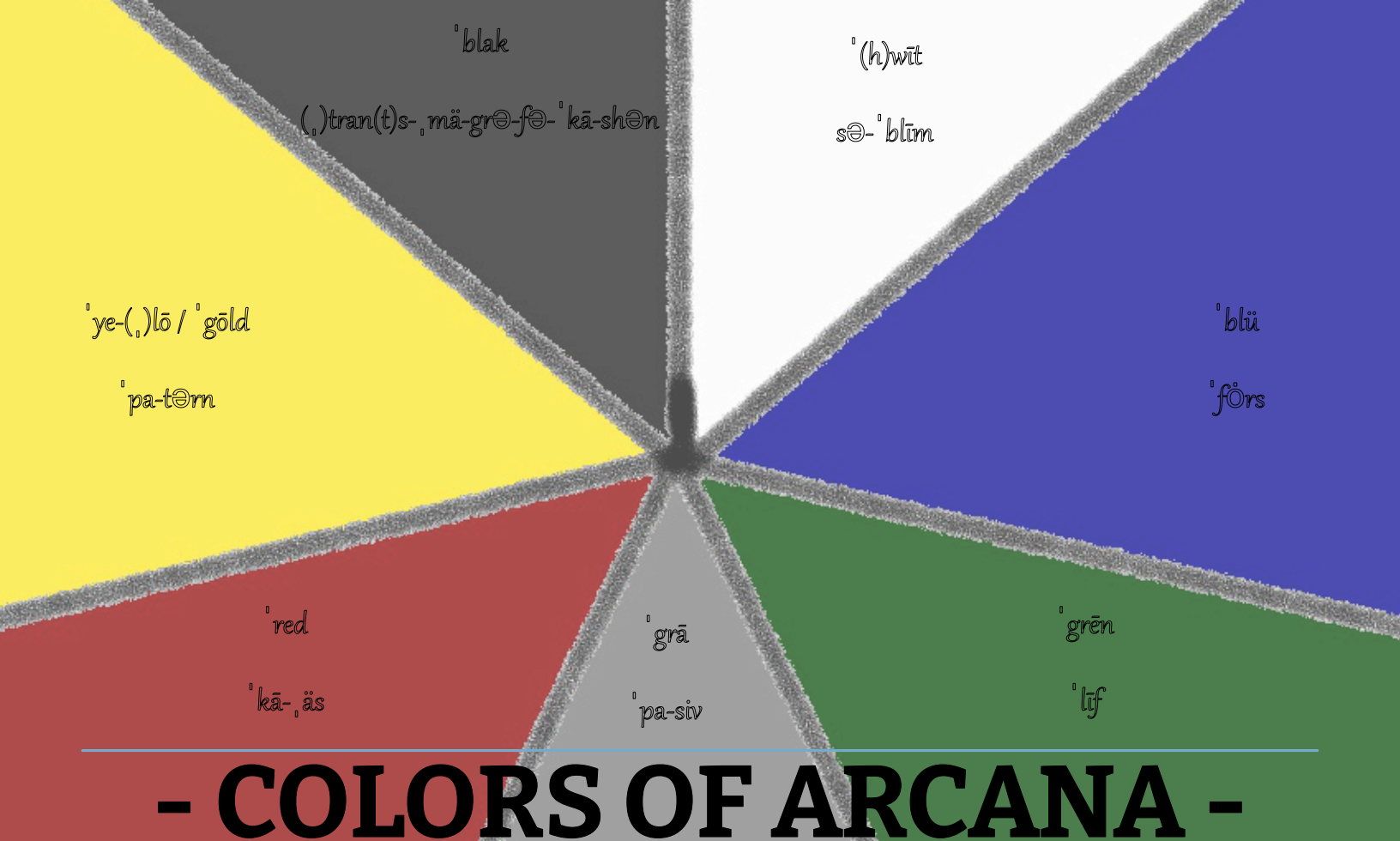
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# THE MASTER OF MULTIVERSAL ARCANANA

**MASTER'S  
LOG 2120!!!**





# - COLORS OF ARCANA -

BY WESLEY LIVINGSTON

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To understand arcana, it is helpful to understand the Earther conception of existence, which is sometimes known as science. Actually, many sentient civilizations of the multiverse have disciplines that are synonymous with science and understanding any of those as an explanation of the origins and workings of existence is helpful.

The reason and source of existence, including reality as you and I know it and manifestations of existence across the multiversal structure, are arcana despite the scientific models created by sentient civilizations of the structure that attempt to explain the origins of everything.

Arcana is everything that science cannot explain, things that defy scientific understanding. Wielders of arcana refer to the fundamental structure of existence as the Pattern and even the most learned and powerful wielders of Pattern Magic do not understand the breadth of its complexity.

A true survey of the multiversal structure is impossible to achieve, but the information gathered by the Smiting Chamber is expansive and confirms what has become apparent; the colors associated with the magic of the Vodun of the Fonlands are ubiquitous across the existences of the multiverse and they seem be foundational in allowing for an existence to thrive.

The colors are not strictly confined to specific arcane phenomena, you will see that there is a lot of overlap with Yellow/Gold Pattern Magic and Green Life Magic and White Sublime Magic and Gray Passive Magic. All magic is derived from interaction with the pattern that manifests as yellow or gold, and Green, White and Gray Magic exists as specialties within Pattern Magic. So a Yellow Wizard may wield power over the elements and be able to manipulate weather without consciously interacting with the pattern, and a Gray Mage could be extremely adept at manipulating the

pattern because of their monastic devotion and study that shifts the manifestation of that magic from Yellow to Gray. Similarly, a Green Witch could be very good at manipulating the pattern to make plants grow at a faster rate and that power would manifest green if the witch was creating this magic instinctively, without instruction from another Witch.

My use of terms like mage or witch is derived from usage in the Fonlands and informed by the classification system of the trading card game that is popular in the Fonlands known as Smiting. Certain terms have historically been used to describe users of certain types of magic and that is reflected here to help make distinctions, but it should be noted that there are users of magics of every color who refer to themselves as houngan or wizards, so know that those terms are flexible.

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**GREEN:** A witch describes a user or manipulator of arcana whose knowledge of arcana is gained through experience and intuition. Because witches' powers are innate and based on feeling, they tap an aspect of the pattern related to destiny, often obtaining the powers necessary in a given moment to preserve the stability of the pattern. Witches' powers involve commune with the pattern in an empathetic way and witches have been known to persuade and bend the pattern to their will by convincing the pattern that their understanding of a circumstance will be beneficial, though this influence on the pattern is limited to the manipulation of matter that the witch can physically touch or lay eyes on. This commune with the pattern allows witches, or wielders of Green Magic, to connect and control the sentience of other sentient things, in addition to the aforementioned ability to discern future events, and to manipulate matter in a limited way. The flowers and trees of the Disc of Agê are Green Magic users, the most adept among them being capable of subtly controlling the actions of other Fonlanders in their vicinity, and also to aid in the growth of other flora in their vicinity. It should be noted that Green and Purple Magic exist as opposing forces, but one cannot exist without the presence of the other. Green Magic is produced by the life force of beings and the naturally occurring cosmic structures of existence like trees, flowers, and stars. Mastery of sentience and of the life cycle is also known as Life Magic.

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**RED:** A warlock describes a user or manipulator of arcana whose power results from chaotic disruption of pattern magic. Warlocks almost exclusively use Red Magic that is warped by its nature, and often manipulated by a malevolent source of the warlock's powers if they gained them in pact with a more

powerful Fonlander. The Hira of the Disc of Gu are examples of wielders of Red Magic who do not identify as warlocks or manipulators of arcana in a formal sense because their Red Magic is produced by their ecstatic gland. The Hira use chaotic red magic that is capable of disrupting the pattern by severing the strings of the pattern and causing incredible destruction in reality. The pattern is capable of healing itself of this disruption with time. Hira have toppled mountains with a single punch, or blighted forests by stomping the ground. Forests blighted by a violent Hira stomp eventually return once the pattern has healed itself in the physical location. It was previously believed that the Vodun Gu was almost driven mad by wielding the Blight Maker, which is a powerful source of Purple Magic, but it is most likely that wielding the Blight Maker caused a surge in Red Magic in the Vodun that destabilized reality around him and caused him to dissociate. Red Magic is also known as Chaos Magic.

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**YELLOW:** A wizard describes a user or manipulator of arcana who is identified by the pattern as able to wield immense power to preserve and maintain the pattern. Wizards can manifest Yellow Magic innately if gifted the ability by the pattern, but aspiring wizards often undergo rigorous study of arcana in order to demonstrate their ability to wield Yellow magic to preserve the pattern. The Executioners of the Disc of Xêvioso, particularly the Golden Executioners, wield Yellow magic that suffuses the Greatest Warrior statue located at the Golden Basilica of the High Court of Fierce Justice. The Golden Executioners are the pattern-chosen protectors of the Justices of the High Court who wield Yellow magic to dispense justice granted to them after demonstrating their worthiness in whatever esoteric manner that the pattern necessitates. The dwellers of the Disc of Xêvioso not chosen by the pattern, and the Fonlanders at large who do not use

magic that is associated with the color of the Disc of which they were born, use Essence blue magic. Ritualistic practice produces Yellow or Golden Pattern Magic if the practice pleases the pattern and the most disciplined and learned wizards are Patternists.

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**WHITE:** A magus/priest describes a user or manipulator of arcana whose exercise of particular aspects of arcana are so great they become embodiments. Light is the power source of the pattern and without it, the pattern and all arcana would cease to exist; it is likely that reality would collapse in on itself in the absence of the pattern. The Luminaries of the Disc of Jo are embodiments of light who manifest White Magic. Mages can manifest white magic by mastering to the point of embodiment an aspect of pattern magic, like the Luminaries or the String Dancers, the most potent and unpredictable seeds produced by the Cotton-Wood Tree that embody the delicacy and esoteric power of the strings of existence they are said to tread with their strange movements as they float the space of Jo's Disc. This embodiment is referred to as Sublime Magic.

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**LACK:** A houngan/shaman describes a user or manipulator of arcana who serves as an intermediary between more powerful arcane forces and others and who makes pacts with powerful beings of arcana. Black Magic users are often mistaken for wielders of Purple or Death Magic, but Black Magic doesn't involve the manipulation of the arcana associated with life and death. Black Magic facilitates change in the otherwise rigidly structured pattern and gives the pattern its elasticity. Without Black Magic, the pattern would be fixed, meaning the future would fix into its last formation

before the disappearance of Black Magic. Black Magic allows for the free will of sentient beings to shape their destinies and prevents one very powerful user or a powerful collective of users of arcana to seize control of the pattern that would be easier to dominate if it wasn't constantly being impacted by the destinies of sentient beings. Black Magic is generated in a perpetual cycle where the pattern itself leaks Black Magic that is the distillation of changeability and Black Magic users gather it and wield it to directly change the pattern in ways that produces more Black Magic. The Nightmares of Lêgba's Disc wield Black Magic produced by their ecstatic glands that allows many of them to become the source of another's worst fears. Black Magic is also known as Transmogrification Magic.

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**B**LUE: A sorcerer describes a user or manipulator of arcana whose ability with and knowledge of arcana is passed down through family lineage. Sorcerers, like Wizards, are chosen by the pattern to wield specific abilities, but these abilities are aligned with the natural forces produced by the pattern, like gravity and magnetism. This predilection for controlling the natural forces of the pattern are usually passed from parent to child unless an individual is chosen by the pattern to wield these powers. The Nommo of the Disc of Agbe are a kin of half fish, half humanoid beings and their population is large around the oceans of the Disc. Nearly every Nommo is a sorcerer with the ability to control water, some have the ability to generate electricity, to manipulate metal, or to increase or decrease their density at will. The family tree of the dwellers of Agbe's Disc overlaps considerably considering the nature of pregnancy and birth in the Fonlands, so it is true that there are many dwellers of Agbe's Disc who wield the Blue Magic of sorcerers. There are sorcerers on the Disc of Lêgba who exhibit mastery over

gravity and are able to become intangible, and their magic manifests as a Blue so dark that it approaches Black. Blue Magic users controlling naturally forces wield Force Magic.

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**G**RAY: A mage describes a user or manipulator of arcana who devotes their lives to the study of arcana and lead monastic lives. The Vodun Skapata is associated with the mountains and rock, solid things that are still until disturbed, and like a rock or stone, a mage is most often found in a state of stillness that allows them to use their astral form for rigorous practice and study of arcana and the pattern. A mage doesn't specialize and it is for this reason that they often withdraw from social life because of the considerable amount of arcane knowledge required to achieve the distinction. Mages are always underestimated because they do not generally make flashy displays of their power, and there are some Fonlanders who believe Gray mages to be the weakest users of arcana in the Fonlands, but Gray Magic can be wielded to produce massive amounts of concussive energy. Gray Magic is amassed in great quantities as mages study and practice and is only released as force in times of great duress. The Kammapa of the Disc of Sakpata are a curious case of Gray Magic users because they do not practice magic as a discipline, but they do mature as they consume other matter. The Kammapa absorb knowledge of the sentient things they consume and because they consume any and everything they can get into their mouths, they inevitably consume Fonlanders knowledgeable in arcana and the build up of this knowledge leads to a passive magery that pleases the Vodun Sakpata. The Gray Magic of the magus is known as Passive Magic.

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**P**URPLE: A necromancer is a manipulator of arcana who wields purple or Death magic.

Death Magic harnesses the arcane energy produced by the natural death and decay of organic things. Death Magic naturally occurs where life occurs, and Death Magic is dependent on the presence of Life Magic to exist. Death magic is not just the ability to end life, it is also the ability to manipulate the energies of spirits or souls that often result from the death of sentient beings. Death Magic has a connection to the pattern through its connection to Life Magic, but Death Magic is not generated directly by the pattern as other magics. The Death Witch Coven that originated on the Disc of Jo and was banished to Agê's Disc are masters of Death Magic who do not wield the magic that is produced by the Fonlands, known as Divine Essence. They only wield Death Magic. They call themselves Death Witches because they wield Death Magic as witches of Agê's Disc wield Green Magic, from a place of intuition and empathy with the magic. Death Magic manifests as Purple Magic.

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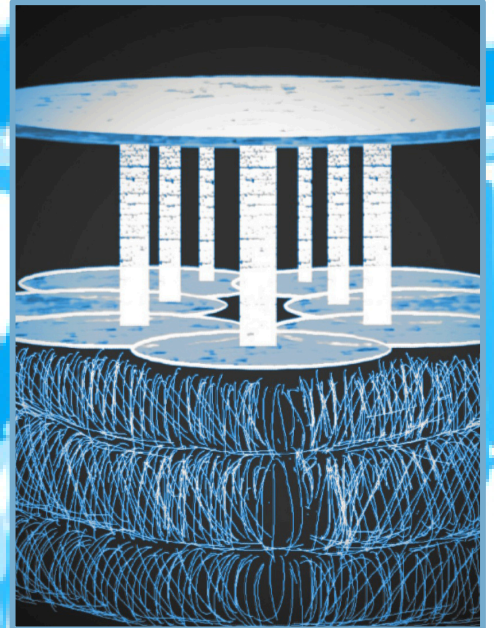
As the Master of the Arcana of my home universe, I wield White Magic because my powers are the embodiment of the arcana of my existence, but the aspect, or color of the visual component of my magic, has never been white, not even since I came to the Fonlands. My magic generally manifests as dark blue. My close friend Maria Moreno who is also from my home universe and has taken the moniker Wazad the Transverse, manifests Yellow/Gold magic because the powers of Wazad directly interact with the Pattern, though neither of us had heard it referred to as the Pattern before arriving in the Fonlands. It is by complete chance that Maria's magic has a Yellow/Gold aspect; not even the first Wazad the Wonderful of our universe had ever made mention of the pattern. My working theory is that wielders of arcana from my home existence can choose the color of their aspect, even if this choice isn't an explicit one, but for someone like Maria who uses spells written down by the First Wazad, the color of the aspect was chosen by the first wielder.

# The Fonlands / Prime 5

The entirety of the Fonlands is seven discs that overlap to form a circle with a large disc suspended above them on seven pillars that emerge from each disc, and it all rests atop the slumbering snake that hoists it up into the ether.

The strange nature of the Fonlands is attributed to its collision with a pillar of the superstructure of the multiverse and its subsequent settling into its current position where it has latched onto another universe in a strange way. The mingling of the Fonlands with this other universe that has qualities more akin to the Hyperion existence of its node, let's call it Universe Prime 5, resulted in the discs of the Fonlands encroaching in regular intervals into Prime 5, and it just so happens that the planet Earth exists at the center of the Fonlands Discs – even on its revolution of the sun because the discs of the Fonlands wobble as the slumbering snake breathes – just under the suspended middle disc. This is significant because the arcane energy generated by the Fonlands Discs are concentrated at the spot in the middle of their circle formation, and this is the cause of the regular appearance of the Fonlands on Earth.

It occurred for the first time, and continues to this day, in present day Congo. Beings of the Fonlands have immense knowledge and they can exist on Earth.



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The following serials take place in The Fonlands/Prime 5:

*The Divine  
Essence*

**COTTON-WOOD**

**Wazad of  
Outer-  
Spacetime**

**ÂMLUK**

**Smiting  
Champs**

**MASTER'S  
LOG**

**Deads'  
Town**

**MMOQTIA'S  
GREATEST  
HITS**

**THE DEFT HANDS  
OF ZACCHAEUS**

# THE RULERS OF THE FONLANDS

The Twin Children of the Creator and the Seat of the Lofted Disc:

Mawu: Female, the moon

Lisa: Male, the sun

The Children of Mawu-Lisa and Rulers of the Seven Discs:

Sakpata – Vodun of Minerals and Rocks

Xêvioso – Vodun of Weather and Justice

Agbe – Vodun of the Waters

Gû – Vodun of Iron and Fury

Agê – Vodun of Forests, Jungles and the Harvest

Jo – Vodun of Wind and Air

Lêgba – Vodun of Trickery and Unpredictability

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**More serials from the Fonlands /  
Prime 5**

**Death  
Magic**

**THE MASTER IN:  
OUTER SPACETIME**

**Death Witch  
Coven**

**The Old  
House**

Check out these major storylines that took place in the Fonlands

**AN EARTHER  
IN THE  
FONLANDS**

**ARCH OF  
HYSTERIA**

**Serials about  
the Vodun**

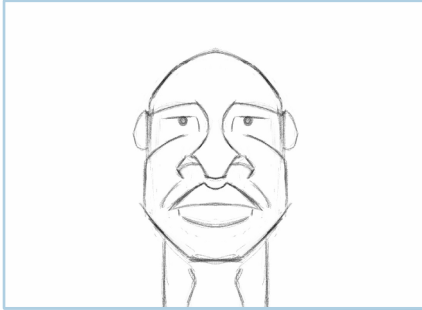
**FINDING  
LÊGBA  
(PRL  
TEAM-UP)**

**ACE**

**FINDING XÊVÍOSO  
(THE DEFT HANDS OF  
ZACCHAEUS LIMITED  
SERIES)**

**Young Vodun  
Chronicles**

**DEATH-  
GROWTH**



## SECTION 3 - 3

### THE DISC OF SAKPATA

#### PHYSICAL, NATURAL, AND SOCIAL PROPERTIES

# FROM THE MANUAL AND REFERENCE OF THE FONLANDS

The Manual and Reference of the Fonlands is the official guide of the Fonlands and the Prime 5 Universes, located on Node 5 of the Multiversal Structure. This month, we explore a few features on the Disc of Sakpata.

## DISC OF SAKPATA

BY WESLEY LIVINGSTON

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### Gold Apprentice Compound

The compound was formed on Sakpata's Disc in relatively recent history to foster a scholarly understanding of the powers of Fonlanders. The most serious students of Pattern Magic attend the School of Patternists that is located in the Nanto Highlands of the northern Disc that surrounds the pillar to the Lofted Disc. While the most powerful and flashy wizards of pattern magic usually attend the Golden School on the Disc of Xévioso, master Patternists have always congregated in the northern highlands of the Disc of Sakpata and they formed the School of Patternists that emphasized a deep study of the pattern and the magics derivative of it. The instructors, all high patternists, including the Justice Mage Obatala who splits his time between the School of Patternists

and the Golden School, manifest Gold/Yellow, White and Gray magic because of their extensive knowledge of arcana and specialization in specific aspects of the pattern. Sakpata also teaches at the school but he only provides instruction to a select group of students who manage to reach his summit, the location of which is high in the mountains and is not widely known.

### Ore Amulet

The Ore Amulet was removed from the pillar of the Disc of Sakpata by the Fonlander known as Boromo, a giant of the Highlands who led the battle against the Ninki Nanka who sought to turn mountains outside of the Disc's overlap with the Disc of Gu into volcanoes. Boromo possessed the Ore Amulet until they were collected by the legendary hero Idia.

### Rocky Forests

The overlap between the Discs of Sakpata and Agê is known as the Rocky Forests. The area is mostly

rocky with dense trees that grow up from the rock, but there are areas with dense soil on the side closer to Agê's Disc.

### Sakpata's Jewel

The Jewel of Sakpata, along with the other light sources of their respective Discs of the Fonlands, was produced by the Disc after the naming of the Vodun. It is a pristine chunk of deep red Rubellite Tourmaline that is luminous enough to provide daylight. It travels north-south, moving from one extreme to the other at regular intervals.

### Sakpata's Summit

Sakpata rests his physical body on the high peak of a mountain that is not the highest point on the Disc of Sakpata, and its location is not known to the majority of dwellers of the Disc. Reaching Sakpata's summit is the only way for a Fonlander to demonstrate their worthiness to be a student of Sakpata.

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A stylized illustration of a man in a hoodie and a hand holding a bowl with two birds above it. The man is drawn with simple white lines on a black background. He is wearing a hoodie and looking forward. To his left, a hand holds a bowl. Above the bowl, two birds are shown in flight, their wings and bodies composed of overlapping red and blue lines, creating a sense of motion and magic.

Go back to where it all started.

Kevin is a man, and men go out on their own to chart a course for their destiny. Kevin isn't like other men, though. Kevin can make his imagination real.

# Amazing Elroy, the Magician

Check out all of the amazing adventures of the Magician on the PRL Serials website: [prlserials.com](http://prlserials.com).

[It Exists](#) - The man is on a trip across the country and gets so much more than he bargained for. Over the course of his journey, the mystery of his preternatural ability begins to unravel.

[The Magician](#) - After the world discovers the secret of his preternatural ability, Kevin Blackmon is coerced into becoming a secret agent of the US government. He tries to use his ability for good, but can he trust his government handlers?

[Amazing Elroy](#) - Kevin and Alia arrive in North Carolina after he frees her from government custody. Before they can find the peace Kevin is looking for, they'll have to battle zombies created by a secret organization.

# ‘Young’ Vodun Chronicles: Sakpata's First Student

BY MAXWELL ROBERSON

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“I came from very far,” the man of graphite said from a distance.

There was a strong wind all around him and snow drifted on the maddened currents creating a cascading wall. The man of graphite was not bothered by the temperature, but he wore blue cloth that wrapped his waist down to his knees that were buried in snow as the man of graphite knelt before the peak of the large mountain. The cloth that the man wore recorded his life, the many streaks of white marking important moments in his development.

“You should not have come,” the Vodun said from the peak. He was not yet the Vodun that he would become, but he was still very mighty, and the few Fonlanders who existed then, would bow to him instinctively when they met him. As he sat on the peak, he was just a dark figure behind the carpet of frantic snow and the whirling of the strong winds.

“But I am in need of your help. The situation is so grave that I braved this treacherous summit to find you. I am in need of your aid and the Ore Amulet...”

“Stop!” the Vodun said forcefully and then descended the peak to stand at a distance from the man of graphite. The Vodun waved a hand and the winds stopped still, the

snow that had been floating madly cleared the area in a wide circumference around the Vodun and the rocky mountain that had been buried under snow was exposed like a crater formed around the Vodun’s feet. He was tall and his body was hard with muscle that made it appear as though he was constructed of boulders under the form fitting tunic

and short pants that he wore. He had the appearance of a young man, younger than the man of graphite, but the Vodun was the elder of the Disc in its infancy.

The man of graphite was on the rocky mountain in the circumference cleared by the Vodun and he stood despite the urge to



Nova, graphite child of Molo mountain

prostrate, squaring his shoulders as the Vodun stood before him.

"They speak of the amulets even in the mountains that bore me, they are said to give regular Fonlanders like me the powers of the Vodun. I would not insult you by asking you, in all of your magnificence," the man of graphite surveyed the Vodun head to toe as he said this and he stumbled in his words for a moment as he considered the impressive form in front of him. "I would not ask you to assist me if it wasn't important. A new wolf kin known as lupaster has thrived in the rocky forests as of late, and some have become vicious creatures, calling themselves the Canis Pack. The homun have the blessings of Agê because they protect the forest in ways that larger Fonlanders cannot. The Canis threaten to decimate their population which will be disaster for the rocky forest. The homun commune with the trees and they help to satisfy desires the trees cannot fulfill in their sedentary state. I know that you care nothing for the trees, you are the Vodun of the rocks, but I fear real calamity if the homun are allowed to be hunted and chased into caves, the forest will not thrive as it has."

The Vodun, Sakpata listened despite his anger. The homun were among his favorite kin of all the Fonlands. The small-statured, humanoid homun were among the early dwellers of the Fonlands and Sakpata used to watch them from his high perch with his far reaching gaze as they scrounged around the new grass that was budding from the seeds that had been swept across the Discs from the Disc of Jo. The homun gathered seeds at the behest of Agê who was much more personable with others than Sakpata, and they planted the forests and the jungles around the sturdy plants that were already blooming up from the ground. The homun had been born in the overlap of Sakpata and Agê's Discs and they existed in substantial numbers in the mountains away from the rocky forest, but Sakpata had developed a particular affection for homun of the rocky forest because they happened to be in his

eyeline when he sat atop his perch on the high summit facing east. Sakpata only watched when he took breaks from his work, when he was surrounded in a blob of gray that was often chaotic at its edges in the winds that blew through the high summit though the magic was strong and coalesced around him like a moving blob of gray syrup. Sakpata spent more time than any of his siblings practicing his arcane right as the Vodun child of the Mother-Father. Sakpata was well versed in Xêvioso's pattern that seemed to wrap itself around the wizard and to flow through him as though Xêvioso was the pattern made Vodun. By the time in Sakpata's history that the man of graphite stumbled onto his high peak, it was clear that Sakpata's gift was the patience to learn and practice and he was almost as skilled as Xêvioso in manipulating the pattern. When he was on his high summit, he ejected his psyche from his body taking a spirit form that he used to practice identifying and tapping the pattern as well as arcane movements that were much more difficult to complete in the spirit form, his body solid in its place and near impossible to assail. It made him sad to hear that the homun were threatened, he'd been in his spirit form for long enough that their carefree existence had been threatened by these Canis lupasters.

"The amulets are a myth, graphite child of Molo mountain in the deep south." Sakpata took a step closer to the man and they stared at one another intensely. "They were dreamt up by star-eating witches far away and their lies have only spread. A child of Molo like you doesn't need anything but steadfast devotion to become as powerful as a Vodun, and I would welcome that. But there is no shortcut... tell me your name."

"Nova," he said and bowed his head slightly.

"Nova, I am fond of the homun, they are peaceable and as you said, they are beneficial to mine and my sister's Discs, but I don't believe that we Vodun should intervene in that way. You said it yourself, the Canis will decimate,

reduce by a tenth, not annihilate, and that reduction in their population will allow for something else to be birthed by the Fonlands to fill the void it leaves. The homun will persist, and who knows, maybe they are more resilient than you think. You can help them with your considerable powers. Do you know that you are gray nature, thoughtful and contemplative, made for the deep study that will produce unbridled power? If you start now, you will eventually be more than the Canis can handle even on your own."

"Give me the amulet and I will be your student for however long you will have me," Nova said it more forcefully than he meant to and despite the size difference between them, Sakpata was at least a foot taller in his current form, and when Nova realized that he was pressing the Vodun, he took a step back and bowed his chin to his chest. "Forgive me, Sakpata, but we are wasting time and each moment that passes, an innocent homun is slaughtered and both yours and the Disc of Agê become more violent. It does not have to be this way, the Fonlands can be a paradise, nothing has to die, we don't need to kill to survive. The Canis do for the thrill of it, the rush of consuming another's Essence and that should not be the way of the Fonlands."

"You mean to dictate what the Fonlands can produce as dwellers of the Disc?" Sakpata asked with feigned shock.

"No," Nova shook his head slowly, thoughtfully, "but we all share these Discs, and we can teach one another how to be."

Sakpata nodded thoughtfully.

"If the amulets are real," Sakpata said after a moment, holding the graphite man's strong and rigid body in his gaze, "and I don't believe that they are, but if they are real, then they are in the pillars that support the Lofted Disc. And if they are real, then they were created for a special purpose and cannot be easily attained. I would imagine that if your

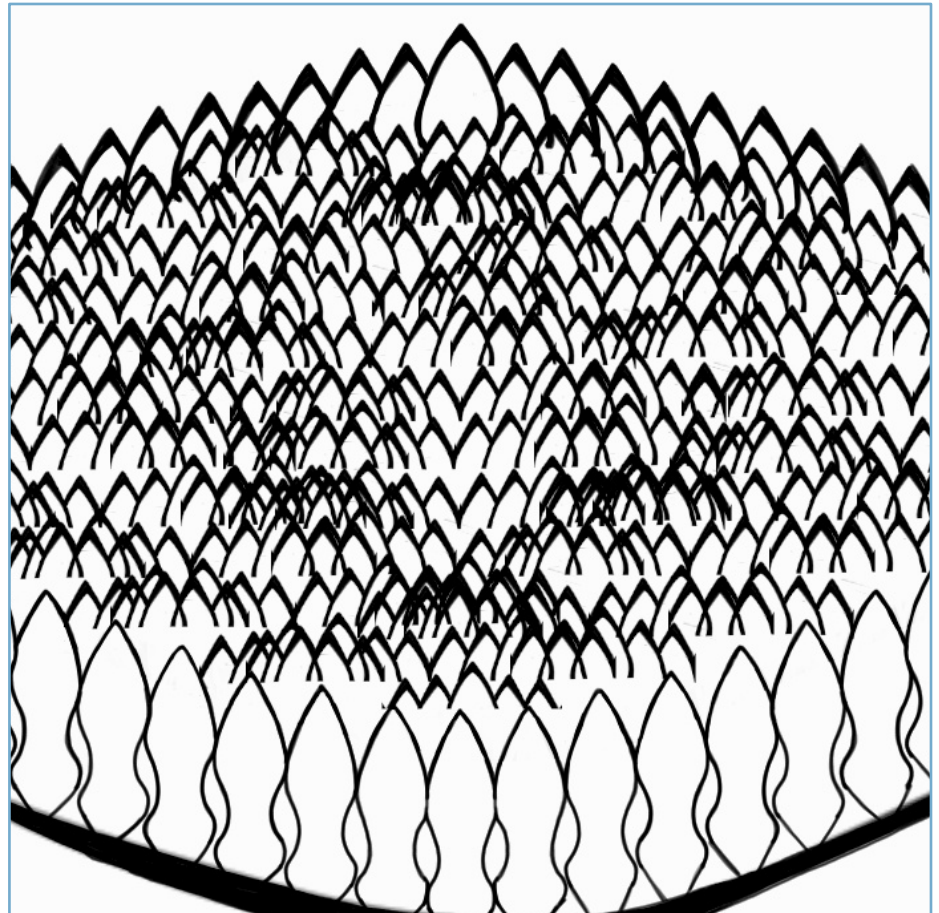
purpose aligns with the intentions of the amulet, you will be allowed to extract it from the pillar, but if your intentions do not align, I wonder if there is a punishment of some kind for being unworthy? And once the amulet is freed from the pillar, does it return to the pillar when you have completed your quest that it deems worthy, or are you charged with its safety until the end of your existence? These things are very mysterious, Nova, and again, I doubt that the Mother-Father would allow artifacts of such power to be loosed on their beloved Discs. If they did though, you should be assured that they are more than meets the eye and laying hands on them will not be easy. These amulets would be the distillation of the power of each of the Vodun, the array of seven magics in seven colors, and that would not be something easy to contain. Would you risk all of that to stop this violence that you and a band of others who are strong like you could easily put down? Your gift is your thoughtfulness, but do not allow yourself to be so narrow minded that you cannot think of things from different points of view. You have much to learn and I would teach you, Nova." Sakpata put a hand on Nova's shoulder. "We can teach one another, and you can be powerful enough to shape my Disc in ways that please me, and ultimately the Mother-Father. Go, fight for the Disc you envision, then return here so that we may begin."

Nova nodded dutifully and left.

\* \* \*

"This will not stand," Jengi said angrily before the gathered homun. He stood on a mossy rock that glowed Essence blue as Sakpata's Jewel set in the distance, and the other homun stood around him in a tight crowd of thirty. "We will kill one of them for every one of us that has fallen, and we will wear Canis hides as a trophy!" The group called words of agreement, some cheered loudly. "You are all here because you are the trusted leaders of the march of your homun bunches that roam these Discs, and I

Rocky Forests, artistic representation



can see in the light of the moss that you all agree with me. We have never begged for wars or physical confrontation, we are the planters of Agê who live in the good graces of Sakpata, ever loyal to the Mother-Father. We deserve our place and we must stand against the slaughter of our kind by those who view us as weak victims! We must gather the strongest..."

"You are so eager for battle, Jengi, you don't think about the increased numbers we will lose if we engage the Canis in war. Or maybe you do think of it, but it is of no concern to you." Beng was angry when she interjected and she stood among the crowd that was enthusiastic for Jengi but practical enough to listen to one as wise as Beng. She was the march leader for the largest bunch of homun in the Fonlands who foraged around the forests of Agê's Disc in regular nomadic patterns, planting seeds or harvesting the fruits of their labor from previous plantings during their nomadic pattern. The activity of the

homun is so significant that even if other Fonlanders of the forests have not laid eyes on the homun, they can discern their presence by the appearance or disappearance of foliage around the forests; the calendar of the Disc of Agê is based on the nomadic movements of this homun bunch that rejuvenates the forests in regular intervals. There is another substantial bunch of homun in the jungle side of Agê's Disc and Beng helped to forge their path in the jungles to provide a similar renewal that the forests receive.

"She is right," Yaka, another homun, said somberly, "we can send our young to fight and I know that we have the spirit to repay their cruelties to us in the Rocky Forests, but I am of the mind that the homun of this territory move elsewhere, it is what we homun do best. I would gladly welcome any from the forests to my bunch in the mountains. There is plenty of space as well to start a new bunch, and plenty of other bunches to join. We do not lose anything as a kin by abandoning the Rocky

Forests, and it is possible that the Canis will just move on and allow the homun to return to their preferred dwelling."

"So we are cowards," Jengi said, not to Yaka only, but to the crowd. Many were still stirred by his voice that was calming but also authoritative and reeked of competence. "Being a nomad is running from an enemy that hunts us for sport? Not for the homun, we wander to sew and the Fonlands reap daily. We are not run from the land, we leave it when our time has come to an end. And it is not our time to abandon the Rocky Forests."

As some cheered Jengi on, Beng shook her head. It was clear that factions were forming and she dreaded a future where only a few bunches of homun create an army to face the Canis and are slaughtered.

Beng moved through the crowd that had devolved into smaller groups of intense discussion. She moved to join Jengi on the mossy rock and Yaka was climbing the

opposite side of Jengi to stand next to him as she was. They spoke among themselves as the groups below had their discussions.

"Yaka is right," Beng said to Jenji. "You have no right to come here and to force expectations on these homun who are being killed. You have earned the respect that you enjoy, but this is not your place."

"You cannot field an army in the Rocky Forests," Yaka said. He was not threatening, but he was firm as he stared at Jenji. "I understand why you have come here, word of the slaughter has traveled far and we homun are so connected that it is a wound to the spirit to lose anyone of our kin, but the wounds we will sustain as a kin if we engage in wide-scale warfare could be far worse. There may be some among us who would welcome this fight, but you must gather them in the way of homun, wage warfare in the way of the homun to turn a small force into an invisible and omnipresent lethal force of the forests. Use your head Jenji. Send these leaders of the

march home, help the homun of the Rocky Forests find a way to safety, and plot revenge for the fallen later."

"Why don't you do it, Yaka?" Jenji asked. He was angry but he also seemed tired, resigned to the reason that the other leaders had pelted him with. "You are always sending others to do your bidding, but you are wise enough to take charge here and make this all moot. Why do you not act, Yaka?"

"This is not the volcanoes," Beng said. "You are too prone to violence, and jump to it as a quick fix for everything you encounter. That obviously works for you there, but you will only cause further strife here. I know you mean to help, that is evident to everyone, but you are acting to be demonstrative, Yaka acts when action is needed. He knows his place as the leader of the march in the mountains, helping to keep the homun there safe as the leaders of the march can do here. You should not have called us."

Jenji's anger was subsiding to shame as Nova appeared from the thicket of trees. He was very tall to the homun with the blue fabric streaked white hanging from his waist.

"You all are the march leaders of the homun?" he asked them as they all turned to him. "I heard that you were here discussing the issue of the Canis. I would help you all if I can. Please tell me how I can be of service." Nova knelt as he talked and Jenji, Beng and Yaka had made their way to stand in front of the large man of graphite.

"Who are you?" Beng asked angrily.

"This is a friend to the homun," Yaka said as he smiled up at the man. "It is good to behold you again, Nova."

"I thought I recognized you, march leader Yaka, but it is strange to see you so far east. Do you all lead the homun bunch in the Rocky Forest?" he asked, referring to the three homun before him who looked



Homun, small-statured dwellers of the Rocky Forests

like children compared to the size of Nova.

"We are all homun and gather to stop the senseless slaughter in the Rocky Forests," Jenji replied. "Have you come to fight with us against the cruelty of the Canis?"

"There will be no more loss of homun life," Yaka said firmly. "We will insist that the homun of the Rocky Forests march west with us."

"But the homun keep these forests," Nova said looking around himself with concern on his face that was like an emotive sculpture of graphite. "They water the flowing suckle that feed the aggressive beehives, keeping them docile enough to avoid conflict with the bongo kin that grazes the moss on trees and rocks. I've seen it before when the homun aren't marching through the Rocky Forests on their regular paths, it only leads to discord and I have found this place to be a true oasis in the hard mountains that bore me. The Canis cannot just take it away so flippantly. I understand if there are no warriors among you, but allow me the chance to communicate with the Canis that the homun are not for hunting before you lead them away from their home."

"Do you think that you can stop what is happening?" Beng asked. "The Canis are cruel and seem to revel in carnage, can they be swayed with reason?"

"They cannot," Yaka said. "You must be prepared to fight them or you are only wasting time."

\* \* \*

Sakpata chuckles at the news from Xêvioso, Agê and Lêgba, news that they deliver urgently to their siblings.

"This really doesn't seem like the appropriate time for laughter," Lêgba says. "If we can't reason with this thing, if Agê can't heal it, then we are in for a fight that will span the multiversal structure!"

"Calm down!" Xêvioso

Canis Pack, kin lupaster, menace of the Rocky Forests



about?"

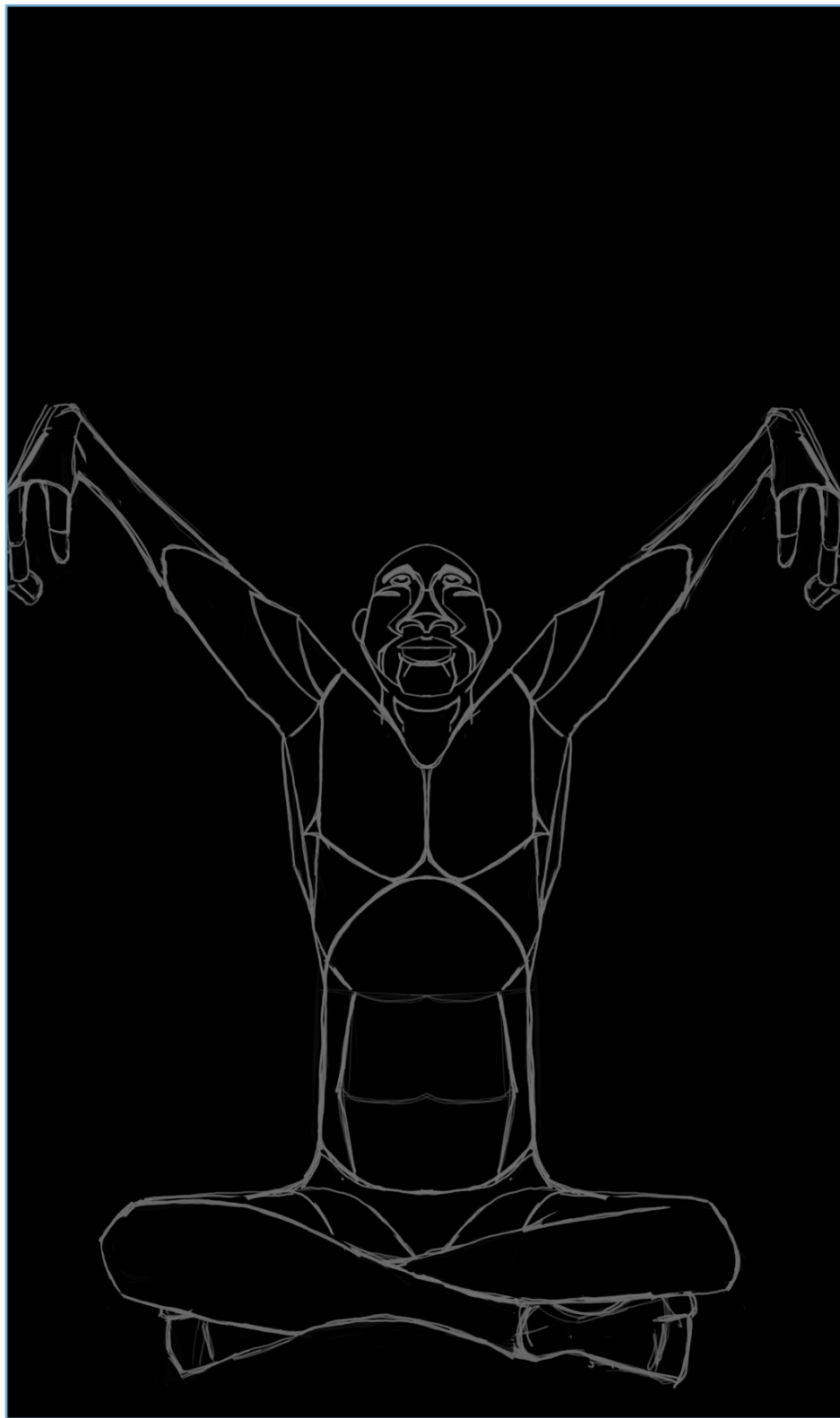
Sakpata laughs. "My point is that, he told me that the homun faced the same delima that we face now. Can we use reason with an enemy or is the only option to wipe them from existence. Nova tried reason, but the enemy, the Canis, were brazen liars. They made promises, reneged on those promises and slaughtered hundreds of homun. Nova mourned them as he raged on the Canis, driving them out of the Rocky Forests. He still mourns the homun to this day, and he regrets not doing what he should have. He should not have trusted an enemy that had shown him its nature. We should not either. Agê, convince her that we believe she can be cured, that we will do anything to avoid conflict, and meanwhile, use your powers to understand what she is, what animates her. And we will use that information to systematically wipe her from the realms of the structure."

The Vodun nod solemnly, Gu with a smile on his face.

"As soon as the list of Une-impacted realms is compiled, I will go with a team that I will choose, to assess the situation. Xêvioso, continue to coordinate the attack on Une. I am sure that if we are successful at the existence of her source, it will make everything else easier. We will do this. The pattern tells me that Une is clumsy, even if she is more knowledgeable than she was. We are the Vodun of the Fonlands, children of the Mother-Father, and nothing is more powerful than our combined efforts, even if we must split up to face an enemy on many fronts. The pattern favors us because we will maintain it, we will not disappoint."

Sakpata dismisses the meeting of the Vodun that Xêvioso had assembled and Sakpata goes to wait patiently in the Smiting Chamber for the list of realms he will soon visit, and to assemble his team to travel the multiverse.

\* \* \*



insisted and Lêgba crossed his arms petulantly, glaring at Sakpata. "Do you have something you would like to say, Sakpata?"

"I didn't mean to interrupt. I was listening and then I was reminded of something long ago

when we all were closer to the beginning of our existence. Before Nova became the first Gray Mage, he faced a considerable challenge in the Rocky Forests..."

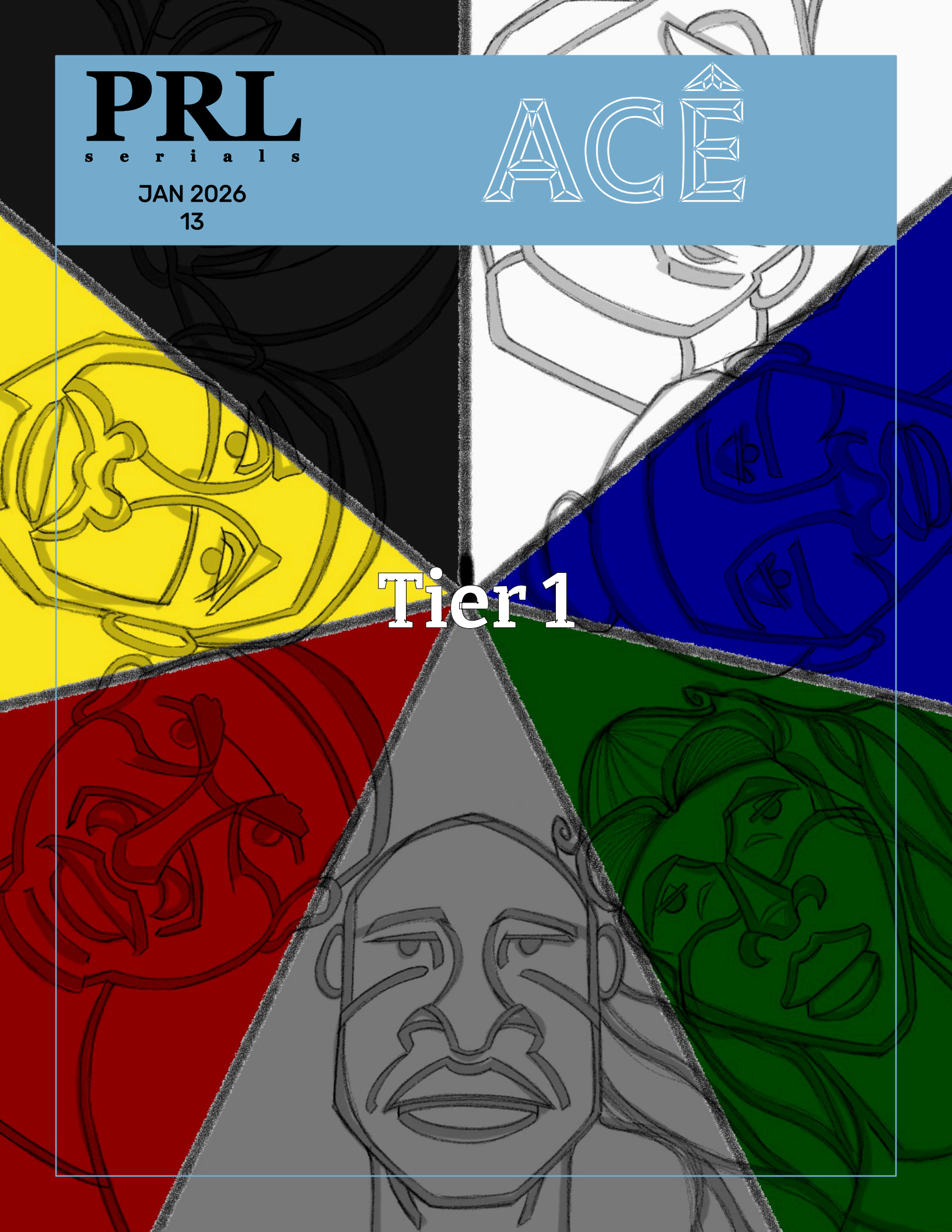
"Big brother," Jo interrupts, "with respect, what are you going on

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## — THE VODUN OF DEADS AND WRAITHS —

BY ROY CURETON

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The undersides of the Discs of the Fonlands rest on the back of the slumbering snake, but it is possible to dwell on the underside of the Fonlands Discs. The undersides, like the topsides, are marvels of arcana that defy expectation and this allowed for the creation of the newly christened Disc of Deads and Wraiths on the underside of the Disc of Lêgba. The underside of Lêgba's Disc had been empty, white nothing, but the Baron Samedi used the Death Magic of Deads' Town, that had been on the Disc of Lêgba, to seize the entire realm known as Outer Spacetime, or what had been the veil existence of esoteric magic that existed invisibly on top of universe Prime 5 where the Fonlands had encroached long ago, to form the new underside that was a Disc all its own.

"I smell green magic here," Agbe said as she descended the grassy hill along the dirt road that was carved into the grass. She walked with Gu and the lower the hill descended, the thicker the mist of Divine Essence that settled in the

lowland of the hilltops, and the less the grass was visible.

"You don't smell magic," Gu said, clutching his long spear with the razor sharp tip. It matched the metal chain mail vest and skirt he wore.

"But I can feel it. The Essence here is so thick," Agbe said, moving her hands through the mist that she could collect and shape. "It's made of blue and green magic, I'd assumed it was just Essence."

"It is Essence," Gu said.

"It's not exactly the Essence that we get topside from the Lofted Disc. It's like green magic settles here, maybe attracted to all of the death magic, and that green goes blue to make the Essence. This is fascinating."

"Is it?" Gu asked.

"You're just mad because you wanted a battle," Agbe chuckled.

"Sorry, Gu, the Deads and Wraiths are not interested in engaging in fights."

"You laugh all you want, but I am prepared to defend you from these rabid death magic users when they spring their traps." Gu was peering into the mist of Divine Essence and occasionally he waved his free hand in the air to clear it. Eventually they were walking up another hill and out of the mists. "We've been walking hills for quite some time and the horizon hasn't changed. They are planning an ambush."

Agbe smiled. The horizon was a deep purple sky that was almost completely black in some spots. The only light was the glow of the mists that was dotted with the tops of grassy hills. They descended into the mists again, but instead of emerging onto another hilltop in the seemingly infinite horizon, they saw a different view emerge as the mists dissipated. They were in a forest village where the mist was low on the ground and light enough that the dirt

road and the grassy lawns where wooden houses sat were apparent. The village was busy with deads and wraiths going about their business. The forms of the deads were shrouded in a haze of deep violet and they walked backwards. The forms of the wraiths had a yellow-white glow. Both wraiths and deads exist in as many shapes and sizes as exist in the Fonlands and universe Prime 5 and they were all on display for the Vodun.

"There's no fight here." Agbe said and pointed to the spear. "Holster that weapon. We are here to see the Disc that Death has wrought, not to destroy it. Besides, we don't want to scare off recruits for Fonlands defense. We must treat this as a diplomatic mission and I don't anticipate that being difficult given the hospitality." As she said this, the deads that they passed in their homes or manning their booths with various wares or corralling livestock stood along the side of the dirt road and bowed in awe and respect at the Vodun. Some of the wraiths seemed confused, so recently introduced to the culture of the Fonlands, but all went along with the deads.

"Alright," Gu growled and the weapon dematerialized in his hand.

As they walked, a figure with the yellow white glow of a wraith approached them.

"Welcome, Vodun of the topside," the man who was old but not ancient said as he bowed in the robes he wore. He had a full head of curly golden hair and his round face was a darker shade of gold or brown. "I was told to greet the two of you. I am the High Patternist of the Ayfyn Line that is accessible from this village through the mists."

"Who sent you?" Agbe asked as Gu stared at the wraith and exuded skepticism that did intimidate the wraith.

"The Grand Brigitte and the Barons," the High Patternist said. "They hold court on the rings in the mists many hills from here with the other Vodun who traveled with you. I have taken residence in Deads' Town, it is a pleasant place to exist among the Death Magic."

"It is not disruptive for a being like you?" Agbe asked curiously and knelt to get a closer look at the wraith. The glow around him was like the steam off a heat source in extreme cold and it dissipated about an inch off of him. "I sense the pattern in you, but Death Magic is an undoing of the very thing the pattern produces."

"The pattern produces everything in its way," the High Patternist explained. "Death magic is not the opposite of the pattern, death magic is an extension of

Transmogrification, but more finite in the change. The opposite of the pattern is chaos. The living can dwell in Deads' Town, though I have heard that in a previous iteration that was not the case. Us wraiths are cozy next to the deads, we are the same only made of different arcana apparently. I have witnessed wraiths embrace death, the Baron La Croix is a dead now and he is as I knew him, though admittedly my interactions with him have increased exponentially in this new paradigm in which we find ourselves, I had never met him before. But those who did say he is the same and now he has brothers who share a wife in the Grand Brigitte. But no, the Barons aren't brothers are they?"

"I hope not," Gu said with disgust. "Why would all three share the same companion?"

"They all love Brigitte. When you meet her, you will understand. She visited every location that was transported from Outer Spacetime to the mists between the hills and explained what the Barons had done and our lives went back to the way they were after a period of transition. The Barons seized Outer Spacetime with hostility, they gave me and my home planet a hunger for flesh infused with magic, but that was all reversed by the Grand Brigitte. The most difficult thing about all this is mapping this new place. It is difficult to navigate the mists, the locations



Deads and Wraiths, dwellers of the underside of the Disc of Lêgba



within seem to shift. It is said that the Vodun Legba has been charting the movements using his compass that has allowed him to create the most reliable map available, but he hasn't had enough time on the Disc to produce a comprehensive map."

"Things here are much more functional than some of us anticipated," Agbe said, shooting a look up at Gu. "It would seem that this Brigitte has risen to a place of leadership. Is that the general consensus?"

"I would say so," the High Patternist said. "But the powers of this new place are summoned regularly to the rings to ensure concord. All that said, there are powers in the mists that answer to nothing. I have stumbled upon horrors that have shocked my system, some of them from Outer Spacetime and I had never encountered them before. This place is truly a wonder."

Agbe stood and turned to Gu.

"So this Brigitte is their Vodun?" he asked.

"Does there have to be a Vodun?" Agbe asked. "There wasn't

one before."

"There wasn't a concentration of death magic before either," Gu said. "A Vodun of Death should face Une, we all know that. Agê and Xêvioso are formidable, and the tortoise with the Blight Maker is impressive, but the Fonlands allowed for this place just as we are on the cusp of real confrontation. The Disc is offering help by anointing another Vodun. We would be wise to identify them as soon as possible as we finalize our plans. Is there anything else that you know of that has the influence of Brigitte?" Gu asked the High Patternist. "Any one she answers to, like the Barons?"

"The Barons are in the mists. They aren't interested in presiding over anything. They are curious how all of this impacts the magic they wield. Brigitte doesn't rule every location like a monarch, but she has unified every location interested in community."

"Thank you for your time, High Patternist," Agbe said. "Can you take us to other locations in the mists of this area? If you have Lêgba's map I would like to see it."

The Patternist eagerly escorted the Vodun through Deads'

Town, showing them the routes through the dense forest that led to hills that crested the mists or to other locations in the mists.

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"You are the Vodun," Agê said to Brigitte.

The Rings of Arada were not exactly as they had been in Outer Spacetime. In the mists among the hills, the Rings were large stone platforms upon which structures were built, and the structures were inhabited by the Loa of Arada. It was like a large stone city in perpetual darkness under a deep violet sky that was obscured by thin clouds of Divine Essence. Agê and Xêvioso were on the center ring of Arada that has large circular walls and houses the Grand Brigitte. She spoke with the Vodun in a large hall of the center structure. She was dressed similarly to Agê, the dark skin of their slender limbs visible and they wore form fitting body suits on their torsos. Xêvioso was shirtless with a skirt and he wore a headdress with two sets of horns.

Brigitte smiled what seemed to be a strained smile.

"You sound like Lêgba," Brigitte said to Agê. "But Outer Spacetime was not home to Vodun. I am not a Vodun, and in all honesty, before all of this happened, I only wanted to intimidate the other powers of Outer Spacetime into admitting that the Loa of Arada were the greatest powers of our existence. Conflict wasn't real in Outer Spacetime, consequences weren't lasting or permanent. We were ensconced in fantasy, in the fantasy from lower spacetime and that which we made for ourselves. When the Baron Samedi reached into Outer Spacetime from Deads' Town, I was giddy, the possibilities seemed so great and the authority of the Aradnans would no longer be denied. But this place is not Outer Spacetime and I do not wish to fight anything for petty reasons anymore. I've done what I can to foster peace amongst the Wraiths and the Deads, and it has held. But the mists hold many

undiscovered secrets. If you are looking for a Vodun, maybe you will find it there. There is not one here on the rings of Arada."

"The Baron Samedi made this place," Xêvioso said and he waved a hand to disappear the headdress he'd worn to welcome Brigitte to the Vodun family, but it was clear that she would not be taking the title. "My understanding is, he did this for you to rule. We know that he is not interested, he is lost in the mists. This was all meant to be an extension of your Kingdom, but you refuse it?"

Brigitte shook her head. "It is not mine to refuse. I have traveled this Disc, given succor to every wraith and dead I have encountered, but I am not the ruler of this Disc. I will accept that I am the mother of civilized Deads and Wraiths, but that is not a Vodun is it?"

Agê and Xêvioso looked at one another and he shrugged, Agê shook her head at him with disappointment.

"We Vodun are the personification of our Discs," Agê explained to Brigitte. "After we earned our names, we grew as the Discs grew. Our connection to the Discs is as intimate as our connection to the bodies we wear. If you were the Vodun, it would be apparent to you and to everyone you encounter. I agree that you are not the Vodun, but that doesn't mean that you are not important to the function of this Disc, and maybe in some ways more important than everything else that dwells here. But none of that is important. We only seek the Vodun because some of us believe that the appearance of this place is the Disc offering assistance, the Vodun of Death who can join us in the fight that looms larger with each passing second. If there is a Vodun of Death, we hope to find them as soon as possible."

"Maybe Lêgba would know," Brigitte offered. She seemed relieved of a burden that she was capable of shouldering, but was content to continue the role she had fallen into

easing the wraiths into their new existence and introducing the deads to their new neighbors and explaining to all of them the way things operated in this new place. "I have traveled to many locations because of Lêgba's map. He might be in the mists now, unless you know he is occupied somewhere else. When he comes to the rings, I summon the leaders of the locations I have friendly rapport with and he tells us of the new places he has found."

"I'm glad to hear he's making himself useful," Xêvioso said. "This has his fingerprints all over it. The Barons are powerful, no doubt, but Lêgba was gone for so long, exploring the multiversal structure and I know he was itching to make something just like this. When is he due back here?"

"There's no cause to wait," Agê said and her eyes began to glow as she lifted a hand that was consumed in green magic. "He is in the mists, and he is on his way," she said as she powered down. "I have summoned the others as well. If Lêgba hasn't found the Vodun, we will combine our powers to try to find them as soon as possible."

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"What is that thing?" Jo asked. She and Sakpata had just descended a hill into the mists and as it was dissipating, a dark scene emerged. They were in what appeared to be a large field of thick grass under a sky of dark Essence clouds. In the distance, there was a large, pulsating orb of deep purple with veins of yellow-white snaking its surface that seemed to grow up from the dirt of the field. With each pulse, the orb grew larger and it was a disruption of the otherwise natural environment.

"It can't be," Sakpata said absently, almost dreamily, and he walked toward the orb, moving deliberately and never taking his eyes from the thing.

"What do you think it is?" Jo said, staring at him with annoyance and impatient curiosity

"Isn't it obvious, sister? We were born from the Lofted Disc, the Vodun who preside over the Discs of the Fonlands. The underside of Lêgba's Disc has been activated and seems to be giving birth to its Vodun. Reach out to it as you do when you desire to know where one of us is, you will feel the familiar arcana of the Vodun."

Jo stopped walking as Sakpata continued. She lifted both her hands and a gentle wind rose with them, rushing past her and moving her skirt of light fabric, then colliding into the orb in the distance. Jo felt what the winds felt and she guided them all around the orb, tried to probe it but it wasn't penetrable. When she stilled the winds and just listened, opened herself up to it as Sakpata said the Vodun could do to find one another, she felt something familiar. Not the large Third Heart nor the Ecstatic Gland, not the spark of their magic that made them masters of their colors...

"Wait!" Jo yelled. Her eyes had been closed and they shot open with surprise as she felt the spark of the magic that was pervasive in this place. She'd spent time with Owuo, she'd begged him to travel with the Vodun to the underside but he'd refused because of Gu's hostility, but she'd felt the death magic inside him and the spark inside the orb was familiar.

Jo ran to catch up to Sakpata.

"The Disc is giving birth to the Vodun?" Jo asked Sakpata when she was close to him. He was distracted and she followed his eyes to Lêgba who was walking around the orb. "When did you get here?"

Lêgba startled when he heard her and then smiled as he walked over to them.

"You all felt it too?" Lêgba asked with excitement. "I've been trying to find the source of this feeling that I couldn't describe since all of this happened. And recently, I guess it got big enough that I could follow it here. It is the Vodun of

Death, isn't it?"

Sakpata nodded, "It has to be."

"Agê just summoned me," Lêgba said. "I'll go get her and bring her here."

"Us too," Jo said. "Should we all go, or can they find us quicker if we summon them?"

"I'll go," Sakpata said, "I'm used to navigating terrain that is easy for others to get lost in. I'm sure Lêgba wants to continue to marvel. Jo, you can come or stay if you like."

Jo asked.

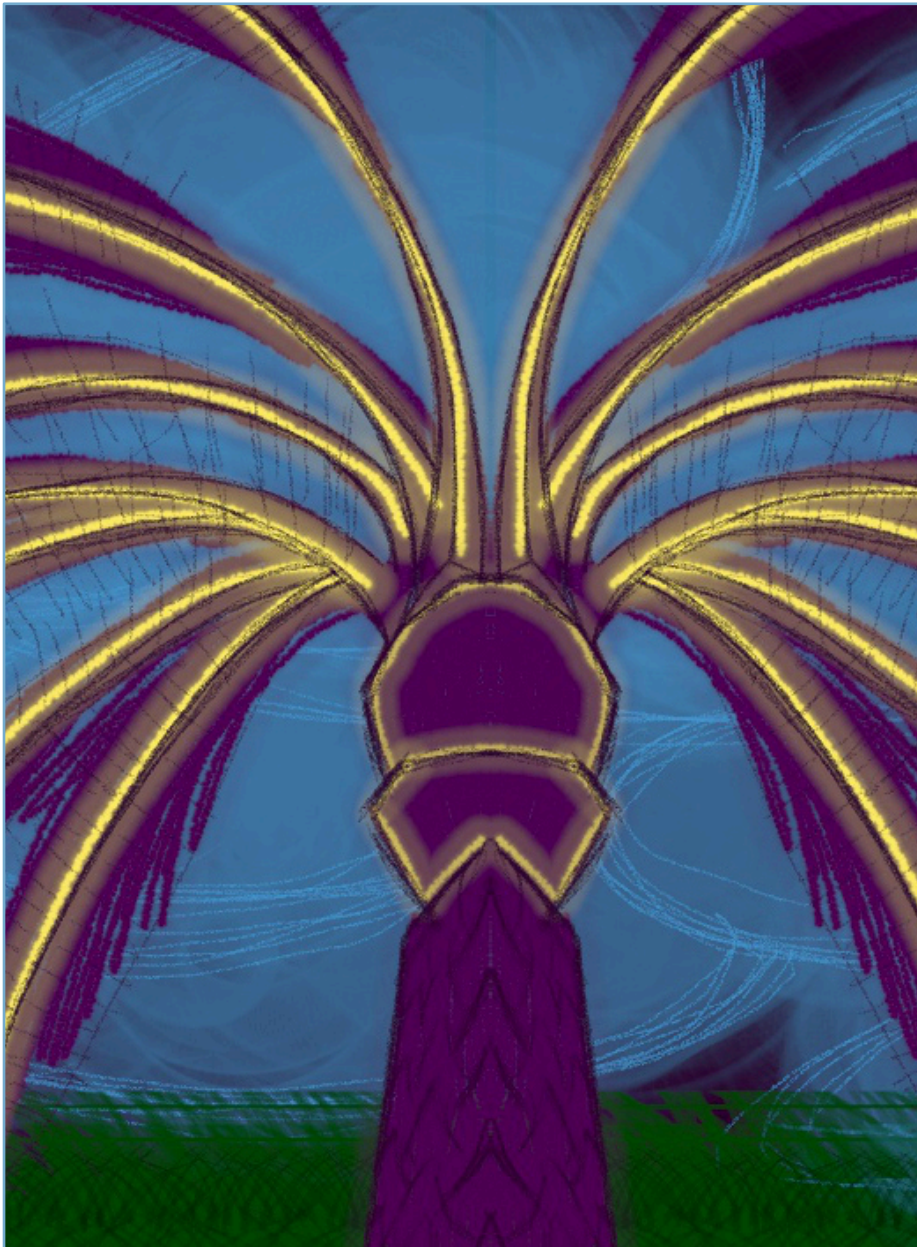
"I've spent the most time here and I don't feel confident that I could pull it off. Maybe Brigitte could if she knows portals, but I think the possibility of making a mistake with portals will only prolong their arrival here."

Sakpata had already disappeared into the mists he'd emerged from with Jo by the time Lêgba finished talking.

\* \* \*

When the Vodun had assembled at the location of the mysterious orb, Jo

Fâ's Palm Nut Tree, birth of the Vodun of Deads and Wraiths



and Lêgba stood before a large palm nut tree that had taken the place of the violet orb with yellow-white veins. The tree was deep violet with glowing leaves that sprouted from the top into pointed tips. A single palm nut hung down from the bunch of leaves at the top and it pulsed like the orb had, getting bigger with each pulse that reduced the size of the tree.

"I know her," Lêgba said to his siblings. "She has been there all along, I just assumed it was the Disc. But since the Baron did what he did..."

"What you and he did together," Xêvioso said. "You made all of this happen, didn't you? This isn't a gift from the Fonlands in our time of need, this is classic Lêgba playing at the powers of the Mother-Father."

"Of course this is a gift from the Fonlands, brother," Lêgba said sincerely to Xêvioso and to all of his siblings who looked at him skeptically, except for Jo who had been with Lêgba waiting for the others to arrive. "I will admit that I spent time with the Baron and mentioned the anomaly known as Outer Spacetime, and maybe I lent him some power to seize it after I planted some dreams in that space's Baron La Croix, but the idea to do that was planted by the Disc, by our sister, Fâ, the Vodun of Death who heard our worries and our fears and is here to stand with us against the threat that approaches. I have made myself useful brother, I have done my part. I am happy to introduce you all to our sister."

The palm nut was large by that point and resting on the ground, and the palm tree was so small that it was just a twig at the top of the nut. Then the nut stood on two feet to look upon the Vodun. It was a woman, a lithe body like a skeleton that was suddenly cloaked in a purple robe. Her face was bony, but handsome and she smiled with eyes that seemed hollow.

"It is nice to finally put faces to all of the voices," she said. "I am

## The Vodun of Deads and Wraiths

Fâ, Death Vodun who prefers to exist undisturbed. But I have been wrenched from my comfort to finally be what I would rather not be, one of you. No offense.”

“Offense!” Agê yelled. “You have been here the whole time, not bothering to serve the Mother-Father as we have been tasked! You are not one of us, you couldn’t be on your best day.”

“Things happen as they must,” Sakpata said.

“Is this real?” Gu asked skeptically. “How do we know she’s always been here?”

“I know she’s always been here,” Lêgba said. “My Disc can attest to it.”

“I am here now because the Mother-Father wants me to be here,” Fâ said. “I guess I can’t go back, either, because of the whole palm tree show. But the Mother-Father was happy with my decision to stay in the Disc, otherwise it wouldn’t have been allowed to happen, but now, the Mother-Father is scared of something and I am meant to help. So fill me in quickly and direct me toward something to unleash all of my frustrations before I take them out on all of you.”

“I’m inclined to take this all at face value,” Xêvioso said and he approached Fâ with Sakpata close behind to get her up to speed.

“This is all very strange,” Agbe said to her sisters, “but this feels real. I know that is our sister and that she is this Disc, even if she doesn’t seem to want it.”

“She is disrespectful,” Agê said, glaring at Fâ in the distance. “All that we’ve been through and she was supposed to be cultivating the Death Magic of the Fonlands, but what was she doing while the Death Witches were bouncing from Disc to Disc and sewing discord, and the Blight Maker was causing trouble? If she had been here, we wouldn’t have been scrambling in response to Une.”



Wraiths, dwellers of the Disc of Deads and Wraiths

“So you agree that she is the Vodun of Death?” Agbe asked.

“It feels right,” Agê admitted.

“Jo? What about you?” Agbe asked.

Jo shook her head slowly.

“It’s hard to deny it. She is our sister. But Owuo, don’t you feel the similarity?”

“I’ve felt the same thing with Gu and Ogun,” Agbe said. “The Vodun aren’t the most powerful, we are the Disc. The respect we receive as Vodun is the respect Fonlanders have for the land. She is the Disc, even if there are others more powerful. I doubt that she could kill us like Owuo can, but Owuo didn’t emerge when the Disc was inundated with Death Magic.”

“I know. I just, I’ve spent a lot of time with Owuo,” Jo said reluctantly. She wanted to accept what was happening but it hadn’t

been what she expected from this trip to the new Disc of Deads and Wraiths. She was sure that the trip would make it apparent to them all that Owuo, who had grown up with them since they received their names, was one of them. “Owuo always wanted what we had. We were siblings and we excluded him.”

“He’s a strange one,” Agê said. “If he wanted friends or siblings, he had to know that he was unpleasant to be around. Besides, this isn’t about feelings. If it was, then Fâ would not be Vodun either.”

“This all feels right to me,” Agbe admitted. “For the first time since you told us about all this, Jo, I feel like we have an upper hand. Une thinks she knows us, right? She took a Fonlands in the multiversal structure. I wonder if their Fâ had emerged.”

Both Jo and Agê nodded at the realization.

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Before she was the Hyperion, Alia Zephyr was a patient. She could do things that were hard to explain and she would have many adventures before she realized that she was...



# Amazing Alia, the Alia

Alia was first mentioned in *Made in America* (Series 1) – [Issue 10 – The Inner Aliarum](#). She was a patient at Morris Village in Columbia, SC where Dr. Thomas Eakran was a part-time consultant. Dr. Eakran takes Alia to the Institute for Brain Function (IBF), where she becomes a super secret government asset (detailed in [The Magician 12. Busting Out](#)). Throughout the first series of *Made in America*, we learn that Alia can see the future when she looks into the sun.

Alia appears as a main character in [Amazing Elroy](#), and following the exciting conclusion of Kevin Blackmon's story, Alia becomes the main character of the PRL Epic.

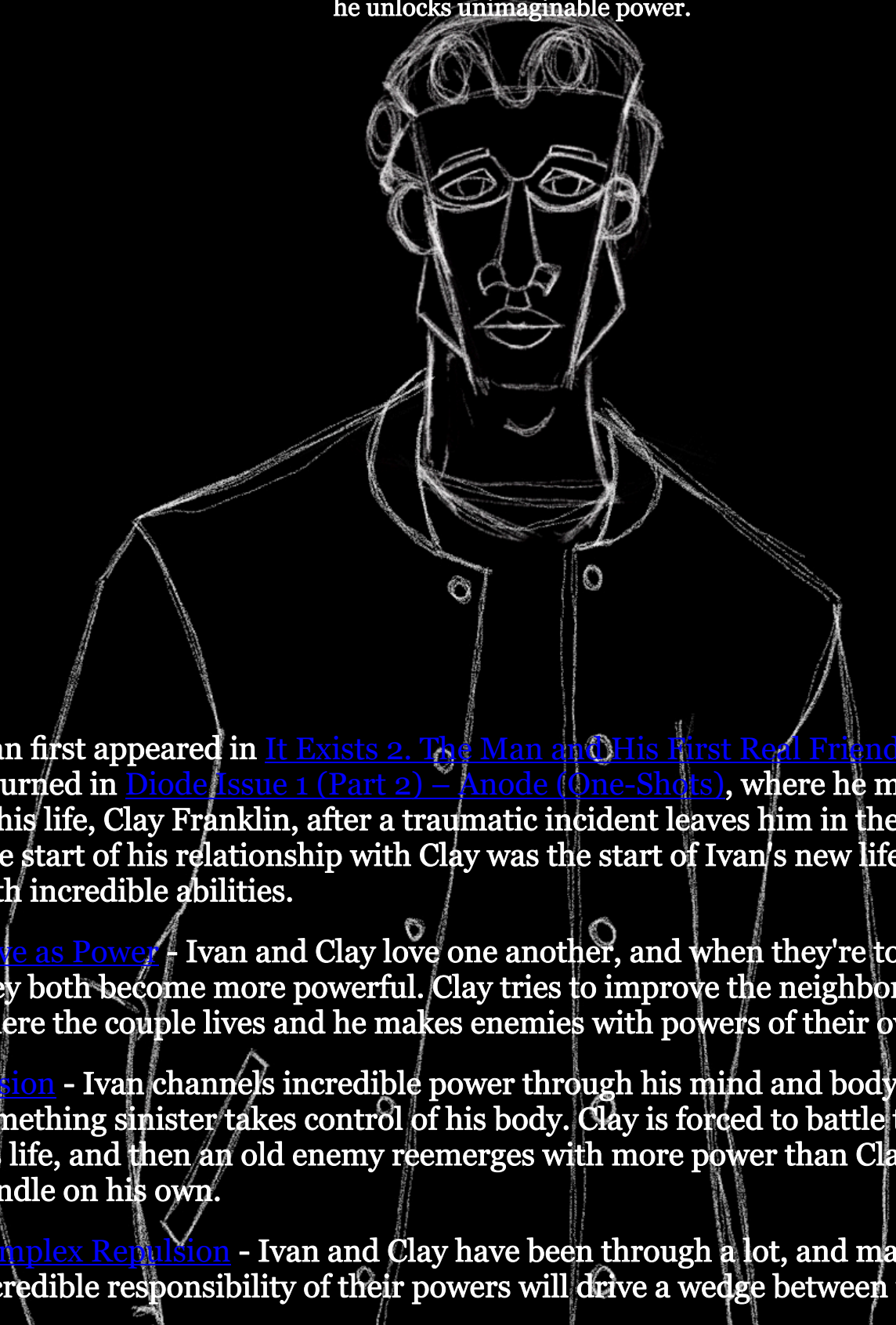
[Least Possible Future](#) - Alia strikes out on her own and it isn't long before the awesome history of her name catches up to her. She reconnects with Ivan and Clay and makes a home just in time to deal with the worst of it.

[Alia](#) - There have been many Alias, but only one like Alia Zephyr. After Alia loses her ability to see the future, she also loses her eyesight. And Dr. Thomas Eakran wants his most interesting patient back.

[The Hyperion](#) - In the aftermath of [Lost in Space](#), the Alia is in space and she is on a mission to reset the universe before it descends into darkness. There's never been a hero like the Alia, no one can do the things she does.

# Diode

Ivan Santana is the grandson of a shaman, and when he learns to accept himself for who he truly is, he unlocks unimaginable power.



Ivan first appeared in [It Exists 2. The Man and His First Real Friend](#). He returned in [Diode Issue 1 \(Part 2\) – Anode \(One-Shots\)](#), where he met the love of his life, Clay Franklin, after a traumatic incident leaves him in the hospital. The start of his relationship with Clay was the start of Ivan's new life as a man with incredible abilities.

[Love as Power](#) - Ivan and Clay love one another, and when they're together, they both become more powerful. Clay tries to improve the neighborhood where the couple lives and he makes enemies with powers of their own.

[Fusion](#) - Ivan channels incredible power through his mind and body, and then something sinister takes control of his body. Clay is forced to battle the love of his life, and then an old enemy reemerges with more power than Clay can handle on his own.

[Complex Repulsion](#) - Ivan and Clay have been through a lot, and maybe the incredible responsibility of their powers will drive a wedge between them.

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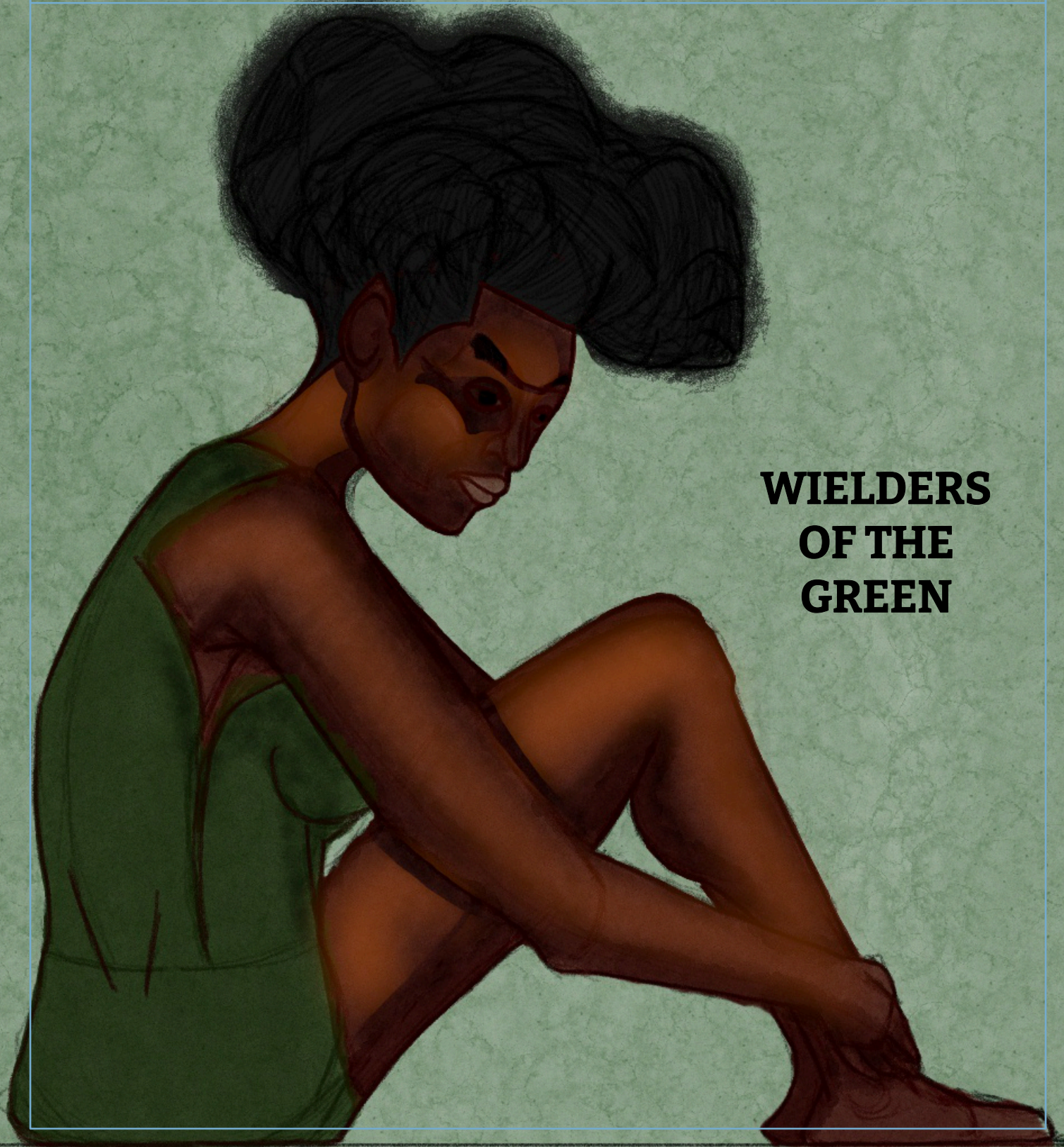
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# The Divine Essence

**WIELDERS  
OF THE  
GREEN**





## - PULTINE IN PARADISE -

BY VIV

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Pultine was impressed by Paradise Earth. She saw most it from afar as she traveled with her party from the Fonlands to the Paradise universe, but it was a sight to see even from a distance. It was like Earth as conceived by the Fonlands, specifically the Disc of Agê, and she marveled at the massive trees that grew up as high as the clouds. There were trees everywhere, over land and water, and when the party finally landed at the Antarctica that appeared uninhibited, she got the opportunity to really inspect the trees and other foliage. The home of the Ascendant, known as Top, at the Antarctica of Paradise Earth, was camouflaged from the outside and it wasn't until the party passed it borders did Pultine see the wonder of the city Top.

"How they hide all this?" Alia asked with wonder.

"This is more impressive than the Clandestine City of the Star Eombre," the Halfyn Heir said.

"There are cities on stars where you are from?" Maxx asked.

"No, it is called the Star Eombre. It is a city of bright lights and I like to take my Prince there to celebrate our anniversary. We found it by complete chance, I was in a battle and he was racing to find me because he was afraid that I was underestimating my enemy and just when he arrived, a bomb detonated, someone had orchestrated my conflict and they were trying to eliminate me and my enemy. The explosion took us all by surprise and we were presumed dead until we finally returned from the new place where we had been stranded as a result of the force of the explosion. Apparently, we were floating unconscious in unexplored space when we were saved by the secretive inhabitants of the Star Eombre who I only mention now because I am worlds away from my home and I know that you all will maintain my secret."

"They are so secretive that you worry about keeping their secret

even here?" Pultine asked. She was intrigued by stories of the Halfyn Heir's world, it seemed so different than anything she had encountered or heard about before. There were similarities that made it easy to imagine the places that he talked about, but the customs of the people were unlike anything she had ever experienced.

"It is the greatest privilege of mine and my Prince's lives that we are welcomed on the Star Eombre. Its exclusivity protects one of the greatest secrets of our universe and I am honored to be trusted with that secret. My Prince has sacrificed his life for it many times since we found it." The Heir got choked up as they moved through the streets of the city that was extremely technologically advanced, the spiritual opposite of the Disc of Age that Pultine called home in the Fonlands. After a moment, he continued. "I think I will miss this anniversary, but I know that he understands."

"I have not seen my

## PULTINE OF THE LARGE FLOWER



from [The Divine Essence Issue 2 -  
A Daughter of Pultine](#)

### The Legend of Pultine

Pultine was born in the lush forest of the disc of Agê. It is said that the great tree Iuma, that dwarfs the trees of the Eastern Forest and is one of the first sprouts to peek up from the rich soul of the Agê disc, grew a large knot at its center and after almost a decade Earther time, gave birth to Pultine, who nestled on a large flower that sprang forth from the knot, relieving the large bump at Iuma's center.

The birth of Pultine was a joyous occasion on the disc of Agê, and even Agê herself visited Pultine as she slept and ate on her flower, nursing on the nectars that Iuma fed from petals that seemed to sweat and then trickle nourishment to the babe.

Pultine was a black Mmoatia. The details of her parentage are not clear, though obviously Iuma was the mother who gave birth to Pultine. Whether her sole parent is Iuma, or if Iuma was impregnated by one or more Fonlanders is a secret that Iuma shared with no one, including Pultine.

Pultine's physical appearance was similar to that of a black mmoatia and it is for this reason, that everyone assumed Iuma was not her only parent. Her body was much larger than the typical mmoatia. She had long limbs and jet black skin, and her wings were feathered, while most mmoatia have chitin wings that are large compared to the size of their bodies and opaque like stained glass. Pultine's feathered wings had the appearance of the typical chitin wings of the mmoatia. Her eyes were bright against her dark skin, like glowing marbles of gray. She had black hair that grew as an unmoving afro on her head that came to jagged peaks and valleys, and she was known to wear shawls and drapes of silk that accentuated the ease with which she moved over land and through the air.

When the Discs of the Fonlands began to appear in Universe Prime 5, Pultine was the first Endlander to wander through the rifts that opened all around the Discs that all led to the same point on Earth. She liked the smell of the primitive Earth. She made three trips over the span of millennia and she interacted with early humans on Earth. It is said that Pultine is the mother of Endlander/Earther hybrids, though the details of her exploits on Earth are not well documented.

companion much since I emerged from cocoon," Pultine said. The streets of Top were full of the Ascendant beings that were humanoid deer-like creatures with elaborate horns and wings and they bowed to Xevioso, Legba and Age, the Vodun who led the party to the largest building in Top that was home to the Idol of Ogi.

"You cocoon?" Maxx asked with wonder. "I've known you a long time, and I've never seen this. Do all the mmoatia cocoon?"

Pultine nodded. "It isn't a metamorphosis like some things experience, it is, there are slight changes in our appearance when we emerge, but it is mostly a spiritual transformation that renews us in our long lifespans. I feel that I am someone new after emerging from cocoon, but I am new based on all of the old things that I experienced. I had been with Rusa for quite a long time before I went to cocoon and when I emerged, he said I looked younger than him. It was good to be reunited, but our time apart is necessary for the current endeavor, and maybe also for the longevity of our union. Time apart is hard, but it only makes love more fulfilling if you are lucky enough to return to it. I pray to Age," Pultine indicated with her chin to the Vodun as she said it, "and the Mother-Father that I am able to return to Rusa and make up for all of the time apart."

The Heir nodded thoughtfully.

They arrived at the largest building in Top and ascended the floors to the top in an elevator that moved very quickly.

"I have never been in an elevator that fast," Alia said angrily as they emerged from the sliding door onto the room that occupied all of the floor space. "That was like a spaceship inside of a building."

"It's a long way up," Legba said to Alia as they were greeted by Ascendant guards in impressive uniforms that were militaristic enough with their lapels and neatly

pleated jackets and pants to suggest that they were guards or security. Chief among them was Neu-Brosme 77 and she ushered them through the space that was a large, open space with windows for walls that looked out over the impressive city. The Ogi's lair is a place of mediation and the party passed many Ascendant who were kneeling in the direction of the Ogi Idol that stood large at the one wall of the room that wasn't mirrors. There was an altar all along the wall and Ogi's Idol sat in the middle. It was seemingly carved of stone into the shape of a large mushroom. There were no features on the Idol, but as Pultine approached it, she could sense the powers that were infused inside and the golden green and purple energy formed what appeared to be a living being around the Idol who smiled at Pultine.

"It is good to see you again," Ogi said to the Vodun and all the beings of the party could understand it. "The Smiting Chamber and Yana have been very helpful in the search for the enemy and even without the considerable powers we have brought to bear, we can only narrow down the location to Node 3 of the multiversal structure."

"These two have talked with the enemy," Agê said and stepped aside to allow Pultine and Alia to step forward.

"I know you," the Idol said and smiled down at Pultine in its way. Then it spoke the language of the trees that only the Vodun knew, not even Neu-Brosme and the Ascendant knew the language of the trees. The Idol addressed both Agê and Pultine and both were awe stricken at the use of the language. Lêgba put a hand on Xêvioso's shoulder and the two exchanged confused looks. The language of the trees of the language of the Mother-Father, and they had believed it to be unique to the multiverse, even if that notion is shortsighted considering the enormity and complexity of the multiverse.

The three of them conversed in the language of the trees and

eventually Maxx asked Lêgba and Xêvioso to tell them what was happening.

"They are all plants," Lêgba said with a shrug. "They are speaking in their way, marveling at the realization that the language of the Mother-Father exists in another existence."

"I have found her," Ogi said in a language that they could all understand. "It is an honor to speak in my native tongue, to be understood in the way that I understand things, I have never been able to speak it with anyone else before. This is such a privilege, I meant no disrespect to the Hyperion

Alia, the Hyperion

or to the other Vodun and your party. Hyperion, you spoke with Une, our enemy whose name has lost its power considering she has located the Fonlands and Paradise. It was your link to her that allowed me to connect and both Yana and I were able to instantly find it with the Smiting Chamber. Do you think that Une has reason? Can we end this all with a conversation, or with some healing applied to her manic psyche? She is afraid, she justifies the horrible atrocities she commits with the deep seeded belief that something is trying to end her existence and she will end theirs first. In this instance, it is true, but in another aeon, we could have been kindred, family like Agê and Pultine. But if she is bent on our

destruction, of course we have no choice but to end her. What was your impression?"

Alia looked worried for a moment and she seemed to rack her memory.

"Can you remember what she said to us?" she asked Pultine.

"I have given everything under my influence an immortal life," Pultine said with a surety that told Alia that Une had indeed uttered those words, and Alia nodded, then looked back to the Idol.

"She was afraid to die above all else. She doesn't want to starve, to ever know hunger, and she doesn't want other existences to stop her in her pursuit of the things that fuel her.

"She is ravenous in her hunger," Pultine said. "I don't think that there is a cogent enough being in there to reason with."

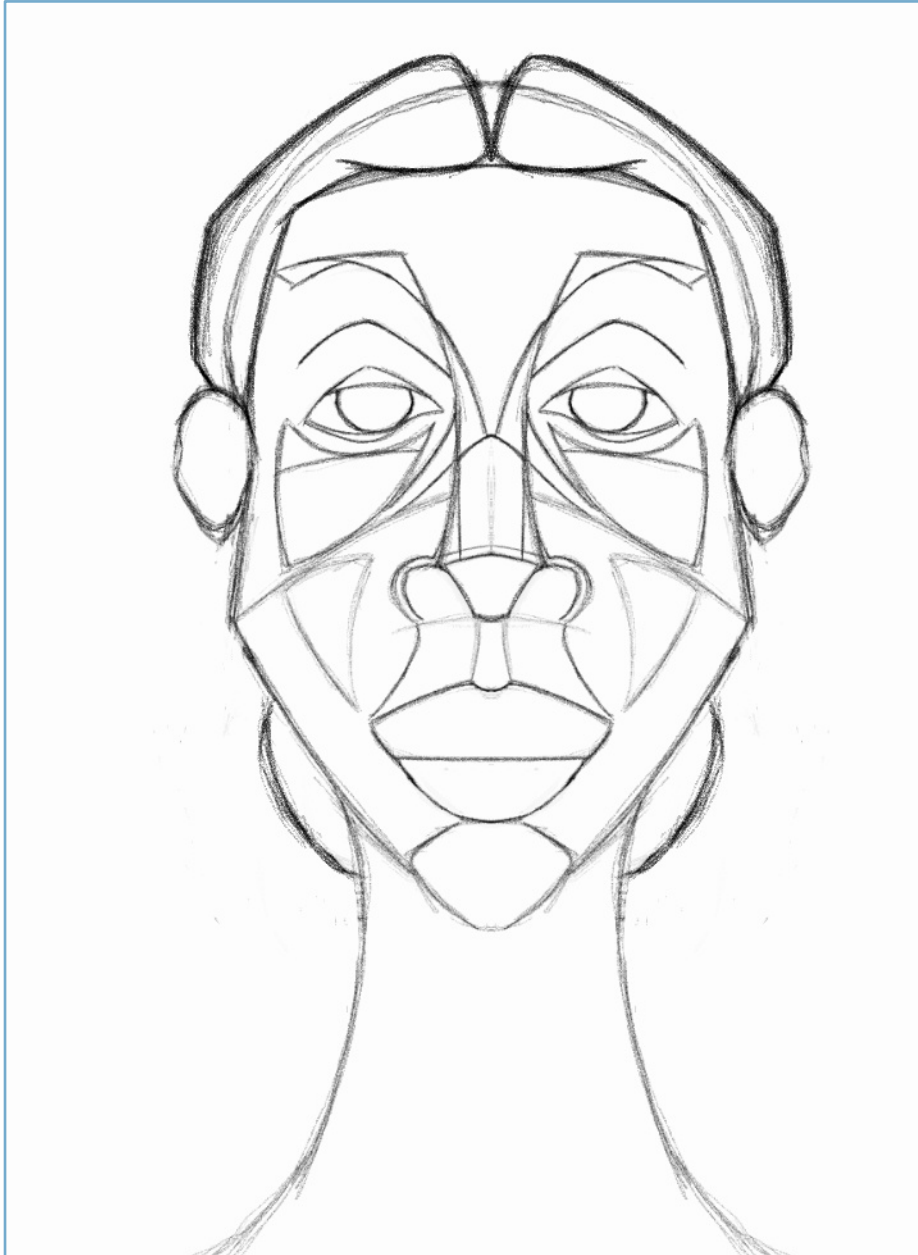
"I think you and Zacchaeus said the same thing would happen to me if I laid hands on this weapon," Maxx said and everyone turned to look at him. "I have no problem killing Une and anything else that threatens our existences, but we have to admit that we don't know how this thing would react to reason or to healing that might settle its mind."

"She was not open to reason," Pultine said to Alia. "She wants to remake everything in her image, and you either serve Une or you are her food. Can she be healed of some malady to prevent her from continuing her rampage?" Pultine asked Agê.

"I can only know that if I am near to her to sense her better. Can you take me to her the way you and Pultine saw her?" the Vodun asked Alia.

"I'm sure that I could," Alia said with a nod.

"Can we see it?" Maxx asked. "Is there a way for us to link minds so that we can see what Alia sees when she does this for Agê? I would like to



see the enemy.”

“I could facilitate that,” Ogi said, “but you will be linked to the mind of Une and susceptible to its influence. It will be a smaller risk than it will be for Alia and Agê, but it is a risk and you should know that before you join the mind-link.”

“I will take that risk,” Maxx said.

Lêgba and Xêvioso agreed to take the risk as well.

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There is a spark, a crackle of bright golden and green and purple light around them, and then Alia and Agê, and everyone spectating with the aid of Ogi, are no longer in Ogi’s Lair. When the light subsides around them, they are no longer inside of the tallest building in the city of the Asecendant on Paradise Earth. They are standing on the surface of a world familiar to Alia and Pultine, where the ground at Alia and Agê’s feet looks like the surface of a planet-sized ball of yarn, and there are fields of the hairy ropes that stretch far into the green and purple and yellow glow of the distant horizon.

“You again,” Alia and Agê hear before the tree of that bears Une grows up from the hairy fibers. She is as striking as Alia remembers with her mushroom head and the long tendrils that frame her face like braids. The folds of her body resemble clothing around a human form that walks confidently to stand in front of the visitors. “I am glad that you returned. I will be at your Fonlands soon enough, you still have a chance to join me. The conquest should be epic and send chills across the multiversal structure that you have altered to my existence. You will be the last challenge to my plans, I will so utterly destroy the Fonlands that the structure itself will tremble before the might of Une.”

Agê took a step toward Une with one hand on her chest and the other she offered to Une. “If you

stopped consuming realms right now,” Agê said, “You will be sated for the remainder of existence, and there is something that even immortal beings cannot escape, and that is the death of the existence that they inhabit. If you stop now and we vow that will leave you in peace with the realms you have conquered, you will know the peace that seems elusive to you. I can feel the enormous void at the center of you, it is created by your anxiety, your fear of death, and you have tried to fill it with so much, but nothing can fill that void. Nothing you have tried, anyway. I offer you the chance to feel whole, Une. Take my hand, let me show you another way.”

Une looked at Agê’s hand and then began to laugh. “You are so small you cannot even conceive of my plans. Let me educate you, Vodun. I will outlive this existence that is my home, that is why I have spread the multiversal structure. It is a self-sustaining organism, it is in a constant state of death and rebirth, but never all at once, the constituent realities never blink out all at once. And I have claimed enough realities that I am as perpetual as the structure. I know you all plan to launch an assault here with your great powers, I have learned a lot about my enemy since we last spoke. But know this, small, tiny, insignificant pests, even if you manage to wipe this existence clean of me, you are not done with me until every existence I have taken is wiped clean of me. I have taken a Fonlands before, I know you Vodun, and though you all proved too head strong to lead my Pito, you make for excellent nourishment, my knowledge of magic has never been stronger. I persist, I defy the will of everything that wants me dead.” She grabbed Agê’s hand aggressively. “Now, get out of my consciousness, or let me consume your essence,” she hissed at the Vodun.

Une’s grip on Agê was firm, but she soon let go when her hand began to sizzle and bubble, and then slowly dissolve.

“You have sealed your fate, evil one,” Agê said. “We have no

choice but to snuff you out. And personally, I will enjoy every moment of burning you out of existence.”

Une was wounded and though she tried to maintain her show of confidence, it was clear that Agê had surprised her with her ability to injure Une’s mental form.

“Me too,” Alia said and then she ended the mental connection to Une.

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“That is disheartening information to learn,” Xêvioso said when they were all standing in Ogi’s lair. “It makes sense, but I didn’t think about the fact that she has spread and we will have to rid many existences of her.”

“Can we ever truly be free of Une?” Lêgba asked.

“I am happy to battle across the multiversal structure to try,” Agê said fiercely. Her face was balled in anger and she looked ready to work her frustrations out with physical force.

“I was talking big, but this seems impossible now,” Alia admitted. “There no guarantee that we can even beat Une on that planet, and if we manage to somehow pull that off, we have to do it how many more times before its over? How many universes has she taken over?”

“I will consult with the Smiting Chamber to determine every location touched by Une and the current status of those locations,” the Ogi Idol said. “Maybe there were other existences like Talj that no longer exist and we don’t need to worry about her in those places.”

“Get that list as soon as possible,” Xêvioso says to Ogi. “We have to start strategizing based on this new information. We need to link everyone in charge of some aspect of this mission immediately.”

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from

# Made in America

(Series 1) – Issue 11 – The Alia

by Wesley Livingston

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The Aliarum protocols are simple enough. They had a different name when Moss first devised them to prove that her patient Mary had been misdiagnosed, but Eakran would eventually appropriate them after Moss and Cousins came to work for him. Moss had read previous studies involving telepathy and extrasensory perception and she did her best to eliminate the possibility that Mary was using a parlor trick to read minds. She used other doctors to help her, though they had no idea of their participation. She introduced a visual stimulation exercise for the optimism study and while a doctor showed and had patients identify positive images for 15 minutes at the start and end of their one on one sessions, Moss sat with Mary in a different room and asked her to tell her the positive images that were being viewed in the other room. The images were changed daily, Moss would print different images for each doctor to show their patients and she would have the doctor number each image as they were displayed. Mary accurately predicted the content and order of the images over the course of a week and Moss was confident that she had discovered a legitimate case of telepathy because there was no way for Mary to cheat. She had no way of seeing the patient whose mind she was reading or the doctor who showed the images, and she was unaware what images Moss had produced. In order to eliminate the possibility of suggestion, she had Cousins, who had not seen the images that would be shown to patients beforehand, record Mary's results over the course of a week, and she was still 100 percent accurate. Moss was confident that her results were fool proof and she wrote a paper that she submitted to medical journals without vetting it through superiors who she knew would dismiss it out of hand. She wanted people to read her results and decide for themselves. Moss received a lot of criticism and people dismissed her as a fraud. She was embarrassed that she had even tried, until she received a call from Eakran.

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The last woman in the Aliarum file is Alia Zephyr, a native of Zephyr, NC before she was orphaned and grew up in many different houses and institutions in NC. She would eventually settle in Columbia, SC and she chose her last name to always remember her home. Her hometown was the only thing on her birth certificate that she recognized; she never

met either of her parents. Many who knew her thought she was doomed from the start, despite the quiet grace of her slender neck, her angled chin and nose, and big doe eyes all colored richly mocha in a light. She was beautiful, but she was tough to understand and many of the adults tasked with her care gave up trying just as Alia was acclimating to new environments and was warming up to the new people. Alia was tall in her youth and her face gave the impression of very close scrutiny that made others nervous. And everyone thought her very strange; it didn't help that her favorite pastime was staring into the sun. She had many different diagnoses over the years. In adolescence she was medicated for attention deficit, and in her teens she was thought to be bipolar, before it was ultimately decided that she was schizophrenic. She had tried to explain to a doctor why she stared at the sun despite the damage to her eyes and soon she was prescribed medication to stop the voices in her head. She'd told him that from a young age she could see possible futures when she looked into the sun and even though it did not allow her to accurately predict the future, it showed her new people she would meet and the places she would go. Alia knew that what she said sounded crazy to others and there was a part of her that genuinely hoped that the doctors were right, that medication would free her from the mounting responsibilities she felt because of the knowledge she gained when she looked into the sun. But even when heavily medicated, her visions persisted and by the time she was in long term care in Columbia, SC she realized that she could hear other people's thoughts. She was actually able to control the actions of one other patients who was usually in a stupor from the drugs they took.

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When Alia met Eakran for the first time, he approached her just as she was leaving the cafeteria after dinner, and his presence hit her like a brick. She was hysterical and she looked at him like he was a monster. The women that were with her, Elia and Aile, both tried to calm her because they knew Eakran to be a nice man, but Alia would not calm down and she had to be sedated. When she came to, Eakran was smiling at her from the doorway and she cowered against a wall.

"You're not human. Don't come near me."

Eakran was astonished. "How do you know that?" He asked calmly.

"I saw you, I saw your spaceship. I saw you take that little girl, but didn't know what it was back then, but I remember."

"What little girl?" Eakran was genuinely puzzled.

"Maria. You brought her back. She must be something special."

"You're not making sense right now, Alia. But I know you're just like your friends. I can feel you in my head right now. What am I thinking?"

Alia hid her face. "Just leave. Nobody believes us."

"I believe you. But I'm not the man you saw take Maria. I don't know what you're talking about and I'm not going to hurt you."

Alia refused to speak and eventually Eakran left. He insisted on sessions with Alia after that incident and though they mostly sat quietly, Alia never making eye contact, Eakran initiated the necessary paperwork to have Alia, Elia, and Aile transferred to the institute for a top secret study.

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In the basement of the Institute for Brain Function, Giovanni finds Dr. Cousins at the door of the room where a patient named Nebuchad is screaming hysterically.

"She's in Dr. Eakran's office. What's wrong with him?" Giovanni asks.

Cousins is shaking his head. "I don't know but I think we found the Maria he's screaming about. It's funny, everything you found on Ms. Moreno, all that information you gave me, none of it indicates a connection between the two of them. There's no way they could have ever met each other. I'm going to talk to her. Get Moss down here quick to sedate Nebuchad."

Cousins leaves the hallway where the patients' rooms are located and he doesn't notice Alia who is looking at him through the window of her door. He can't know that she is smiling from ear to ear.

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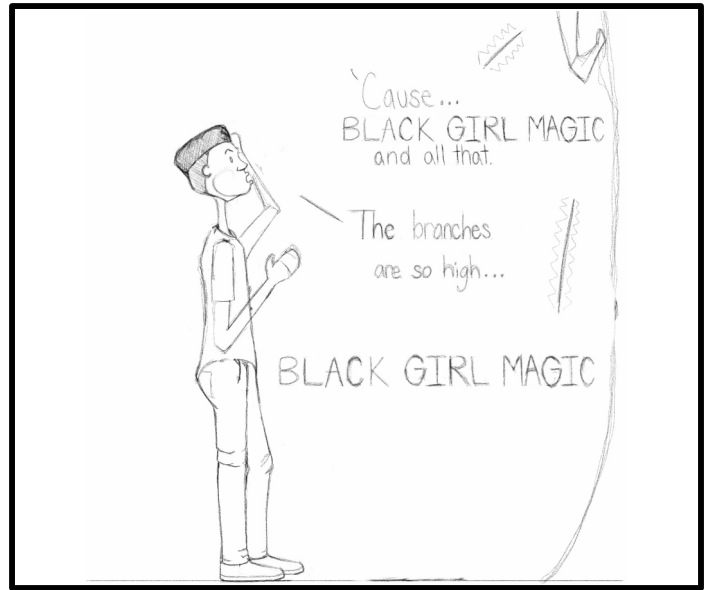
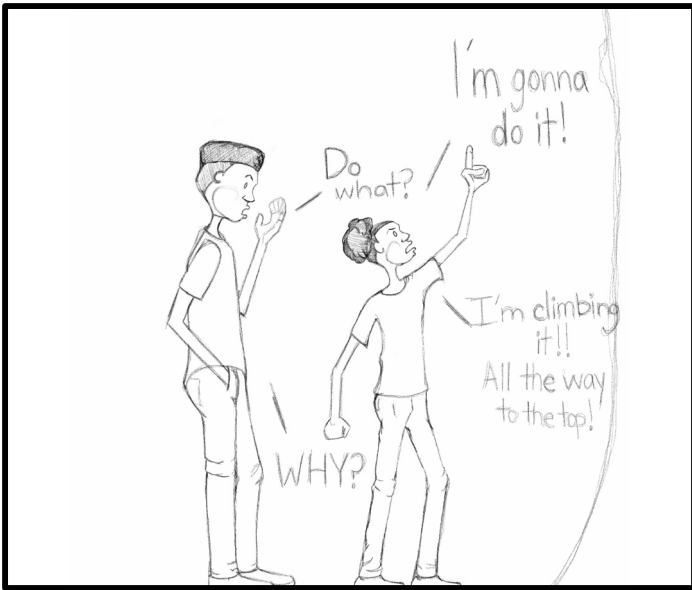
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