



EQUINOX

2026 EQUINOX ISSUE, VOLUME 6, MARCH 20, 2026

10:46 AM EDT

Do you feel the change in the movement of the Earth as Sol shines down on the equator? The planet shifted to accomodate this, it has been steadily moving to this point since it last left it. The daylight and nighttime enjoy equal reign over the sky. The flora has returned and the flowers are blooming together. The spring is here. And we've got some poetry.

HIPOCRACIES - STONE HAND (RE-RUN) - SAKPATA'S SEVEN



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from the editor

We here at the PRL are happy to wish you, dear readers, a beautiful and transformational 2026 Equinox. I will admit that I hadn't thought about the equinox before we were discussing our publishing schedule for the year. We knew that we wanted to do an issue for each month, but we had to consider if the October-November specials would continue to be three stand-alone issues. Ultimately, we decided to keep roughly the same number of special issues for the year, but to do Halloween and Fêt Deads as single issue specials, in addition to the Annual Issue and the newly christened Equinox and Solstice issues. Deciding what exactly these new special issues would be is a whole other thing that has led to intense discussion in the PRL Offices.

Would they be holiday themed like Halloween and Fêt Deads? Or an opportunity to showcase characters from the current and past volumes, like the Annual Issue? One thing that was always clear, Equinox and Solstice would be the perfect vehicles for Interim Shorts that appear on the website between issues when our contributors find the time to post them. We've been light on the Interim Shorts in 2026, but hopefully that changes as the year continues and we settle more comfortably into our new publishing schedule.

So, what is the Equinox Issue? What did the contributors to the PRL Serials decide for the fate of this very special issue? Poetry, all poetry from tip to tail. That's right, the Equinox Issue is a celebration of poetry and features two new serial poems and reruns of some of our favorites from years past, including the Electricity Sonnets and Stone Hand (leaders and Leadership). Definitely be on the lookout for

future Equinox issues that will feature new and ongoing serial poems and re-runs of poetry from PRL past.

Check back in December for more information about the Solstice Issue.

The majority of the poetry featured in the PRL Serials is done by yours truly, and I am the only founding member who writes poetry, but if you want to be featured in future Equinox Issues, definitely contact us through the website (<https://prlserials.com/contact/>) and hopefully we can achieve the true spirit of celebrating poets and poetry in the future as we welcome the springtime. Until then, it's all bangers folks so strap in for the best serial poetry on the internet.

I love poetry and though I consider myself a fiction writer, I have written and studied poetry for just as long as I have fiction. Poetry is essential, and I understand if that sounds pretentious, because it is, but that doesn't make it any less true for me. Poetry has been the most effective tool I possess for expressing my emotions to others, and studying the way other masters of the English language manipulate words is one of my favorite pastimes; though, admittedly, I've spent a lot of my time with fiction in the past decade. I find poetic inspiration from many different sources. My favorite poet is probably Langston Hughes and he's inspired me to incorporate the music of my time into my work, which is how the poem Business Garbage Mixtape Vol 1 came into being. My favorite rapper is Ghostface Killah, his are the rhymes that sing the most to me away from the music and I love alluding to his words and his cadences. He exhibits a comfort with the expression of his thoughts to a beat, and I think the reason so many laud his storytelling is because he

interacts with the beat in such a knowing way that it's baffling he still has the wherewithal to actually communicate a clear idea or narrative. I also really like James Joyce, who is most associated with fiction, but he wrote poetry as well, and I love his attention to the sounds of words. He never overstays his welcome and it always made me go back to reread his poems over and over.

I would be remiss not to mention one of my greatest influences, the great Wystan Hugh Auden. I spent a lot of 2011-2014 listening to Auden (as well as Ted Hughes who I also like a lot) reading his poetry on my way to and from work. I love reciting his poetry, it gives me the same thrill I feel when I rap along to Jay-Z, or SZA, or Logic. The poem O Where Are You Going? by Auden is one of my favorites to recite. Read this outloud:

"O what was that bird," said horror to hearer,
 "Did you see that shape in the twisted trees?
 Behind you swiftly the figure comes softly,
 The spot on your skin is a shocking disease."

It doesn't have the expected ABAB rhyme scheme, but it's more satisfying because it goes beyond just the end-rhymes 'trees' and 'disease'. The third line, with its in-rhyme 'swiftly' and 'softly', gives you even more lyrical flair. The combination of 'horror to hearer' is interesting as well, the open sound with the closed, as well as the consonances that repeat with 'twisted trees', 'swiftly...softly', 'spot.. .skin...shocking disease.' It is a master class on musicality in poetry. Definitely check him out.

We hope you enjoy the inaugural Equinox issue. Be sure to come back soon for the March 2026 Issue!

- Roy Cureton

02/2026

* * *

VOLUME 6

EQUINOX 2026

Meridian

Special Issue 1

FEATURES

HIPOCRACIES - 1. THE ERASURE OF HISTORY 3-5

Chillleeee, people be lying to themselves and to others. It is interesting to consider the reason for this deception. This collection of poems explores the glaringly obvious hypocracies that people perpetrate today in our very polarized political climate.

BUSINESS GARBAGE - 1 - ITS HIGH INFLATION 6-9

It's a mixtape about money and shit. This serial poem is rated M for mature, and features strong language that may not be suitable for all audiences. Readers' discretion is advised.

STONE HAND (LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP) RE-RUN - 1. STONE HAND'S INCEPTION 13

Stone Hand is the future leader of America. Relive the rise of the man who will shape the future with his strong hand, it's our man, Stone Hand!

ELECTRICITY SONNETS RE-RUN - OHM'S FRIED CHICKEN 17

A few years ago, I took a class about electrical wiring, and very true to form, I spent a lot of class time writing sonnets. I was able to fix my light switch when it broke, so I got more than a few sonnets out of it.

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Card Game of the Fonlands**

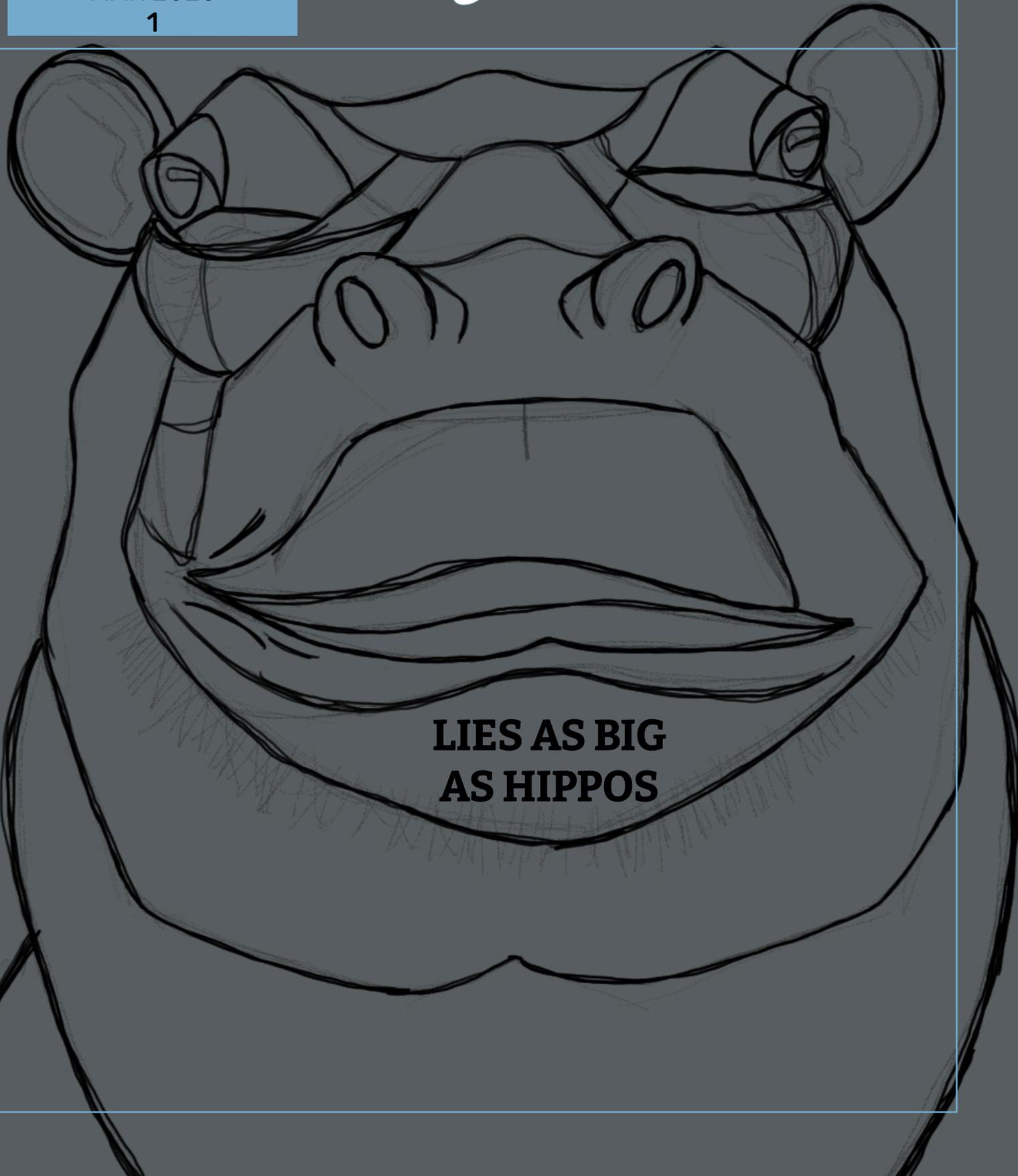
PRL

s e r i a l s

MAR 2026

1

Hipocracies



**LIES AS BIG
AS HIPPOS**

1. THE ERASURE OF HISTORY

They said, taking down statues
Was burying the past
That it wasn't about the baggage
It was about heritage
And they saluted a flag that relished
Chains and whips
Bitter bondage and
Money for an aristocracy
They claimed this flag was just about
Legacy, the hard fought history
Of their forebears

And newly empowered by a generation
That is low-key self centered and jaded
Hiding under a slim majority
That still believes in fairness
Millennials are largely full of shit
They don't know racism,
But they know a set of friends in the workplace
And a different set they get drunk with
And never the twain shall meet
It just reinforces that aristocratic thinking
That they are made for boardrooms
And the darkies are good with their hands
Its a deadly strain of racism
Cultivated in the neo-moderate 90s

When democrats called darkies super predators

Anyway,

Newly empowered, those same people

Who bemoaned removing symbols of

White Supremacy from the casual existence

Of the people in the south

Are now content with removing the history

Of everyone who isn't white

They say woke so much it means nothing

And then use that to justify

Erasing the complex journeys of natives

Immigrants and slaves from history

Because it makes America look bad, they say

But when we wanted to remove those

Symbols of hatred and aristocracy

Because America is a Democracy

Where citizen counts equally

You said that we should stop being so

Sensitive about the bad stuff

Get over it, it happened

Because we can't erase history

So why is history being erased?

PRL

s e r i a l s

MAR 2026

1

Business Garbage

M

for Mature

**MIXTAPE
VOL. 1**



1. It's high inflation / I don't show for nothing

I really ain't got time for this

You know what I'm saying?

I got things to do, places to do them.

And they still calling me,

Emails, text messages,

How these people get my phone number?

Fuck this, I need a break

It's high inflation

My margins is razor thin

I'm doing this shit extra hard

And the crowd is loving it,

Sixteen to twenty-five eating it up,

and I'm forty on this bitch

I consume jazz tunes under dope flows

The people like it dense,

Vocabulary intense,

Line up a word for every beat

And that def is intricate

They charge by the letter

You go beastly on, get that rhyme on

But struggle to keep the studio lights on

It's a metaphor for something

The big lesson while the beat thumping

Commentary on scrutiny

For sensitivity sake

Good thing I ain't eating on this shit

Everything's a business

You give out to gather

To sustain you gotta

Manage that, be big time

To get enough

Nah, man, nah

They on some spam shit

Steady hitting me up

I ain't selling for less than six figures

Niggas steady blowing me up

I don't care if the lights off

This my shit, I slaved for this shit

Shut this shit off and bring the beat back

I let go my performance on em

Tell stories on em, get lit

Pop a tale so tall, ya neck split

And my commission a hundred percent

Fifty K for a verse, a few puns here

A loud one there, shits bonkers

I'm all over it

I don't show for nothing, I'm a king
Big feet stomping, everywhere I go
Leave the club thumping, shit so magical
Steady money scheming, cash is my fucking thing
And I don't like yellow M&Ms
Take them shits out

Before I let go on this
We gotta talk figures,
That's Just whats up
Don't be looking at me
To unleash the beast for free
Thats for common niggas
I'm an extraordinary nigga
I'm big league, next level

PRL Poetry

We love a good serial, regardless of the genre. You know that the PRL Serials features fantasy and science fiction serials, but have you taken the time to enjoy the poetry? There is a lot of poetry to explore over at prlserials.com (<https://prlserials.com/tag/poetry/>), and some poems are featured in this very issue as re-runs. Be sure to check out these poems on the website:

STONE HAND

Life in
Marvelous Times

HALLOWEEN SPECIAL

VOL. 1 POEMS

Electricity
Sonnets

Hipocracies

SHIELD
WARS

Two poems about spring

In the Rain III (Spring)

Spring weeps and freezes
but the trees still bloom
White and purple, green
alongside my dreary
Afternoons are bright into
8pm dusks
The air is cleaned and
cleans alike
But, Spring weeps and freezes
soon the winds will pick up
Maybe April or May will lift his chin up
Maybe gloom will camp all the way into June
Maybe everyday hence will shine and bloom
but only after
Spring weeps and freezes to his content
As the sky vacillates shades of his temperament

Spring

Spring is alive again
A bird sat next to me at 11am
I smoked a cigar
As children played in the grass oasis.

It is Spring time again
And tag is the only war that rages
Domestic. Lets not mention the one
Abroad. And be happy for the moment.

Despite our petty cruelties,
Our self-imposed sadness
Our destruction, our weaknesses,
Spring came. Lets dance like children.

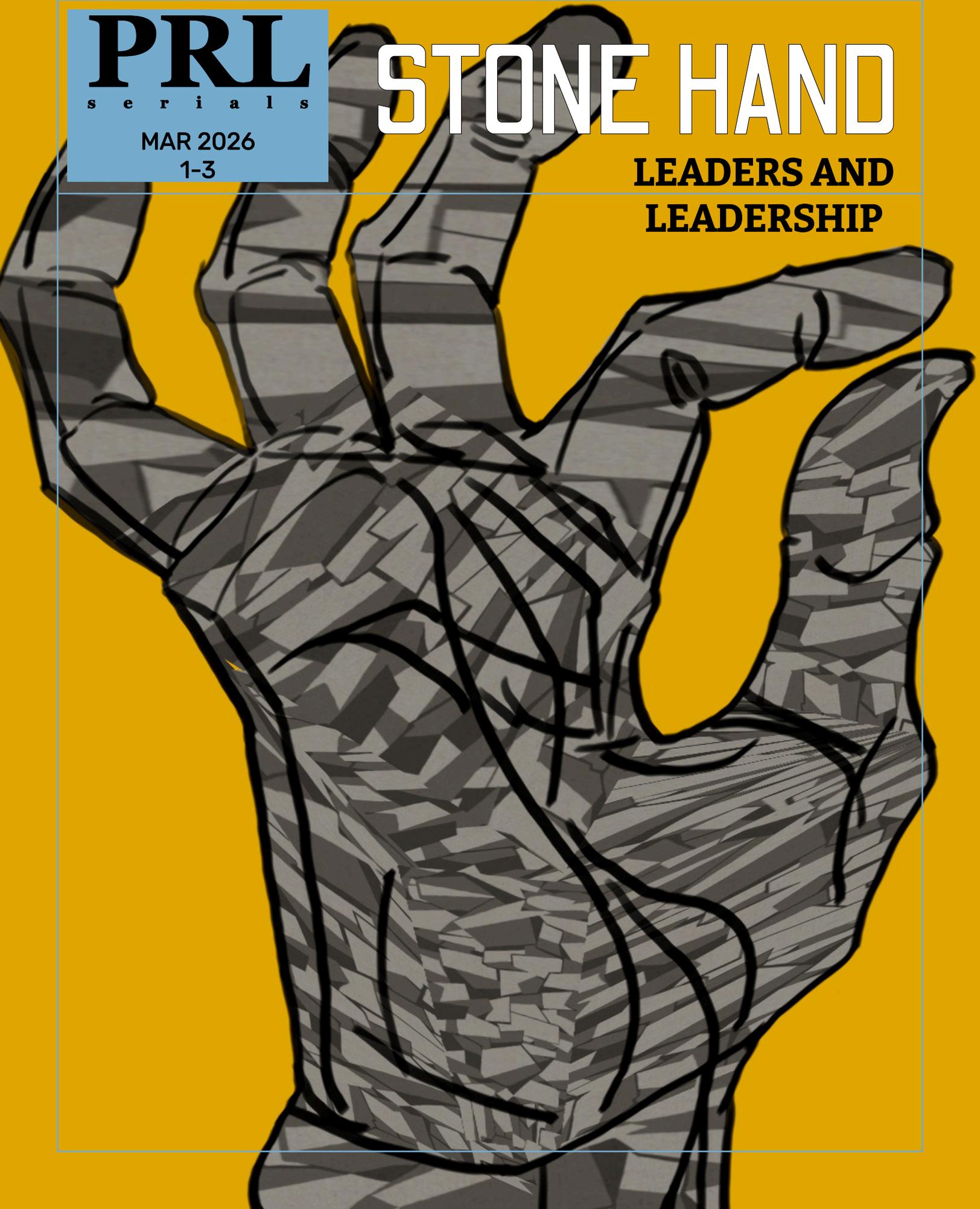
Lets slow dance to the music of traffic
On high roof tops and walk our
Dogs with invisible leashes. Lets
Bow to Spring and welcome it once more.

PRL
s e r i a l s

MAR 2026
1-3

STONE HAND

**LEADERS AND
LEADERSHIP**



1. Stone Hand's Inception

Men can spring to life
from stone, maybe they are awakened
from sleep as heavy as hard rock
and it happened once when Stone Hand
was born

it was the hand that touched him
that picked him up from his mundane position
among his lifeless brothers
waiting to be unlocked

the hand had clear intentions
to secure a future free of boundary
and what better way than to sire
the heir apparent in a land of
opportunity

Stone Hand need only
weasel into significance
with fun gestures and jokes
and make firm eyes
when a mood arises
to demonstrate a capacity
for the serious

three dips in water and the hand
bears Stone Hand to grow, to go forth
to conquer a world waiting to be led

2. Influence

He can make you see
that you are blind without him
you are nothing in his absence

you are quarterman and he is so many wholes
that he can substantiate you, and those you love

spread the word, he can do it

pretty soon, everyone is supplemented
by his wholes, waiting for him
on screens and in shades
to tell of a new upgrade in thought

even those sound enough
rip parts from themselves in hopes
that he can be near them

he is impressed

he let himself be

3. That Nigga is Gonna be President

That nigga is gonna be president

the Critic said, with a rolled cigarette
on his lips, bobbing to a music
unintelligible, unbearable to dogs.

Stone Hand wrestled with the sound
behind his forehead, shook it long
enough to fall victim to the Critic's stare

and Critic saw him, stumbling amongst
a blur of people distorting the view
of the library's face, enough to perturb the Critic

alone, but something about Stone Hand,
his peer, the man-boy's posture
mocking straight backs everywhere

Critic took a shine to hating him,
saw him for what he would be,
could become if he managed

to remember what brought him
to the library, or so his demeanor
suggested to the Critic, naturally

Stone Hand misses the joke,
misses the Critic completely, there are
quite enough about to easily miss yet another

PRL

s e r i a l s

MAR 2026

Electricity Sonnets

**SHOCKINGLY
IAMBIC!**

Ohm's Fried Chicken

The shock is bright enough to still
Grown men tremble at 16 volts: Let go!
Isn't possible, instead, body bright
To light crispy chicken tender on feet
Immobile, ready meal for the hungry
Ohm's Fried Chicken, open 7 days a
Week; volts begat weak amps begat current
The likes of which a large man is toast and
Entree. Come on down to Ohm's Fried Chicken
Open 24 hours straight, day or
Night – chicken at the ready, the currents
Don't sleep so how could we? Come one come all
Step right in, avoid the open current
Or shun that, be item number thirteen

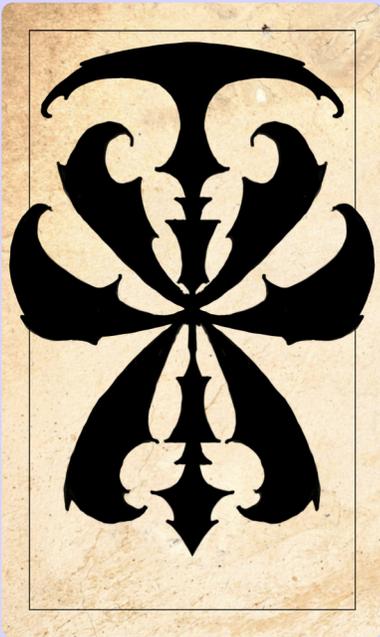
Colors

The world is a rainbow, as are circuits
Behind your walls that make the power veins
Bringing your home to electrical life
It takes all kinds to avoid a dark world
Red and black and yellow and white, orange
Maybe, there's too many to remember
It makes something bigger than the standard
Roy GB issue we might be used to
It takes Rainbow 27.0
To light the world that we are used to today
The world is a rainbow, with many shades
And it takes all kinds to avoid the dark
Of a long gone pre-industrial age
We do not look back to without regret

LOOK AT ALL THEM HIPPOS...

SMITTING

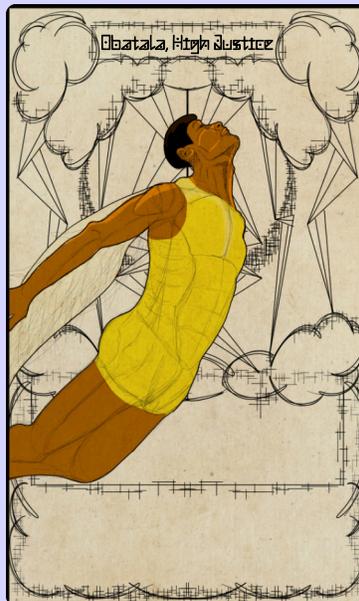
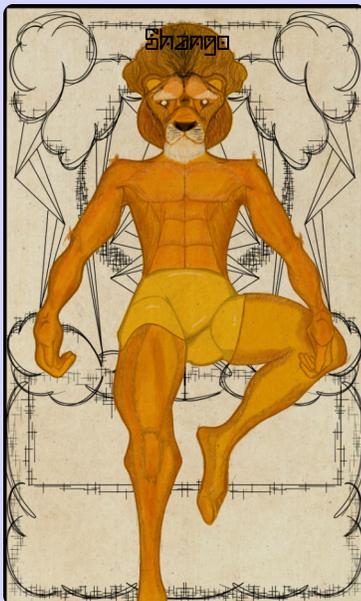
THE MOST POPULAR TRADING CARD GAME IN THE FONLANDS AND UNIVERSE PRIME 5!



The game of Smiting was invented by Xêvioso and Gû in their youth, when the discs of the Endlands were much less populated and there was little to do. Both Vodun can be short-tempered and after countless physical battles that disturbed the very structure of the Endlands, their mother-father insisted they find a nonviolent means to end their disagreements, and thus, Smiting was created.

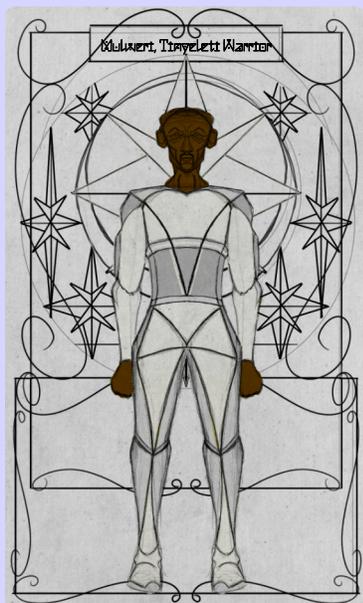
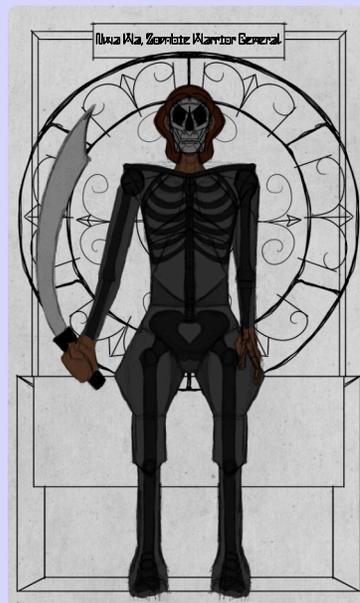
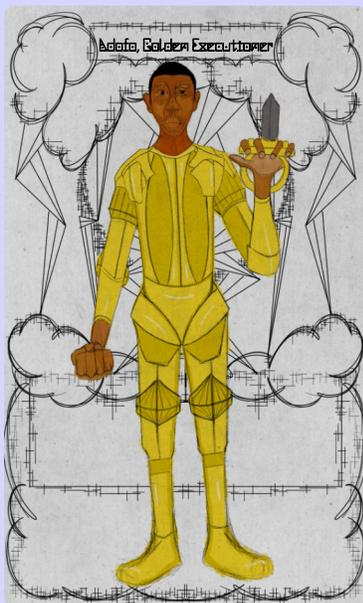
The game requires a Deck of Smiting that each Vodun perpetually builds to oppose one another. A card is created for the Deck by condensing the Vodun's memory of an encounter with any being into a rectangular shape that solidifies into a card with a picture of the being, a description of its origin, power level, stamina, health and any other pertinent information. Initially, the cards only included Endlanders, but both Xêvioso and Gû have done extensive exploration of the multiversal superstructure and have collected cards that defy the imagination of their opponents.

The back of Smiting Cards (pictured left) has been the same since the first decks of Smiting were created and is a Veve design created by Gu to represent the powers of the Vodun. Below, from right to left, are the art cards for Shango from Xevioso's first deck, Obatala in Yellow, and Ogun from Gu's first deck.



Smiting Champs

4Warriors



The PRL Serial with all the action involving the stars of SMITING.

It all started with **Smiting Exhibitions - The First Four Decks of Smiting** when the former Master, current Arcane Wizard, Issac Washington traveled to the Discs of Xevioso, Gu, Jo, and Legba to challenge the first four decks ever made to play the game to a match against enchanted decks generated from the multiversal structure by the Smiting Chamber. Then, we met the current lineup of the **4Warriors** (Adofo, Golden Executioner; Nwa Wa, Zombie Warrior General; Mulweri, Tinyeleti Warrior; Djallon, Ram Warrior). The 4Warriors joined the effort in

The Expedition to the Talj Junction - One-Shots that introduce the new recruits from the multiverse to battle the Pito in Talj.

The Expedition to the Talj Junction - Wielders of the Gold follows the heroic exploits of the users of Pattern Magic, including Xevioso, Alia, the Hyperion, and the Halfyn Heir. The Expedition to Talj ends in the tragedy of the Talj Rip, resulting in the end of the Talj Junction. Some beings of the existence known as Talj survive the destruction of their universe and the **Refugees of the Talj Rip** find a home in the Fonlands.

SAKPATA'S SEVEN 1-3

with bonus material from ACE - Tier 1 - 14 - The Vodun Doing Work

by Maxwell Roberson

1. Ivan and Azalaan

"I don't think there is more you can learn from me," Owuo says with a rare smile that looks genuine. His eyes are alive in a new way and he looks at Ivan with a sense of accomplishment.

They are in the Shifting Planes of the Disc of Lègba, in a secluded spot where Owuo had transformed a platform into a temporary home and training facility. It has the appearance of an Earther boxing gym, but instead of a roped, square ring, there is a raised heptagon that mirrors the heptagon of the Smiting Chamber. There is a low light in the space and the heptagon is spotlight.

"Now you must go to the enemy as a necromancer and wreak havoc," Owuo continued, the delight for evil deeds creeping into his voice as he spoke.

"You really think I'm ready?" Ivan asks. They sit in the middle of the heptagon, both in black shorts and sleeveless shirts. "I definitely know more than I did, and I can see ghosts now, I can't wait to tell Wendy about that. But I'm ready to go with the others?"

"You have learned with the Abosom of Evil, a lesser student wouldn't have survived bathing in my magic."

"The aduro is strong," Ivan admits with a laugh, "but I've been through enough that I knew I could take it. It was almost like being possessed by the Red Father. He was all destruction and he would have torn me to shreds, my body

and my mind, but I managed."

"You've mentioned this Red Father before," Owuo says curiously. "Did your father become consumed by chaos and attack you? Oh I miss striking bargains with red magic users, they are so careless and desperate enough to give away anything in exchange for more power. Once, I sealed a pact with an onini python with the promise that she would terrorize a family of lepuraj on the Disc of Agè who annoyed me when I was passing through the Disc long ago. She is still stalking the first born of the Zomo Monarchy, and all she got in return was a negligible power boost that allowed her to kill her jilted lover." Owuo laughs uproariously. "Truly dumb, and the Zomo now give me offerings at the start of every homun nomad cycle in the jungles to try and spare their first born. I take the offerings of course, and delight in the continued slaughter of their children."

Ivan winces as Owuo laughs. The dark face of the Abosom is handsome in his levity, his skin is a very dark shade of violet but seems to glow in the places where the light from above falls down on him and it gives his skin the appearance of polished stone.

"You would have liked the Red Father," Ivan says. "His rage had destroyed an entire universe, I'm sure you find that funny."

Owuo chuckles and his face is distant, as though he is imagining such an existence reduced to nothing by unchecked rage. "Yes," he says with a sigh. "I do, but only because it is not my

problem."

"So you wouldn't care if my home universe was destroyed?" Ivan asks with an air of hope in his voice, hope that this being he'd spent so much time with in the two decades he has been in the Fonlands isn't as completely evil as he presents. Ivan hopes that the Abosom of Evil at least cares for him as a friend, then maybe he could help to curb some of the more cruel things that Owuo delights in.

But Ivan is naive and dangerously close to becoming a victim of that evil himself.

Owuo eyes Ivan and smirks. "You are a flirt, I see why your husband is so jealous about you."

"It's not flirting," Ivan says dismissively, Owuo loves to poke at his relationship with Clay, it is the extent of the abosom's evil that he has experienced in their time together. "I want to know if you care for me as a friend, as a student. Or is this only situational? You're only nice because you understand the threat of Une and truly believe that I can be helpful?"

"Sorry Ivan," Owuo says mockingly, "I know that my godly stature is alluring for an Earther, but I will not be blessing you with a sexual encounter, not even as reward for surviving my training."

"Would you care if my home world fell victim to Une?" Ivan asks again, ignoring Owuo's attempt to deflect. "I think that you would. Look how you've



helped the refugees of the Talj Rip here in the Shifting Planes, you oversaw their transition, and that had nothing to do with fighting the enemy.”

Owuo drops his facade of delight and speaks seriously. “Last lesson, Earther. You wield the incredible power of my aduro now, you can summon it to suffuse your power and wield it as you see fit, but know that each time you use it, I am sinking myself deeper and deeper into your very being and when I get the proper hold, I will turn you inside and out at my pleasure, and no prior experiences will save you from that. Everything that I do, I do for no less than eight boons to me. I have not shown you all of me, you do not know Owuo Odomankama, and pray that you are already in Deads’ Town when you do because I only show friendship to deads. I saw real power in you, Ivan Santana of Hyperion, wielder of the smokeless fire that could burn a mind inside out at your will, and if you live long enough, one day I will have you. Then and only then will I satisfy your sexual cravings for me that you so thinly veil with questions about my concern for you and your home universe. You can drop your artifice and give yourself over to me now, I will let you suck my toes for as long as it pleases you, little Earther. But only because you will make such a nice pet, not because I care for you. I cannot care for anything the way that you Earthers do, I am not susceptible to self-deception. So there, I proved myself wrong, I had one more thing to teach you, though honestly, I had meant for it to be a secret in the hopes that you would overuse the aduro and corrupt yourself beyond repair more quickly. And before you say it, I didn’t tell you because I care about you, your feelings, your life outside of the Fonlands, I told you because I would rather you had more time to become disenchanting with existence before you give yourself to me. When your relationship with Clay has dissolved because you realize that Earther love is suffocating...”

The explosion of neon violet and green energy off of Ivan is so powerful and sudden, that it catches Owuo off-guard and he is hurled back against a stone wall of the training facility. The heptagon is destroyed and Ivan hovers over the crater, a mad ball of flames surrounding him. Owuo laughs as he peels himself off the wall and floats to hover in front of the ball of flames.

“That hurt,” Owuo says proudly. Ivan glares at him with anger, but Owuo looks down to the destroyed floor of the training facility. “He’s all set, Sakpata.”

Ivan is confused for a moment and when Owuo descends to the floor of the training facility, he follows him, and is surprised at the presence of the Vodun Sakpata.

“Hello, Ivan,” Sakpata says as his physical form decreases to be the same height as the Earther. “I would like for you to join me. I have a very important

mission to ensure that Une is wiped clean from the multiversal structure. Owuo tells me you have become quite adept at Death Magic.”

Ivan half bows. “Of course. However I can help, I’m happy to.” Then he glares at Owuo. “I don’t believe that you don’t care at all, you try too hard to push others away. I think you feel guilty for indulging in your evil and you don’t feel worthy of friends.”

“Or family,” Sakpata adds and Owuo glares at him with anger. Sakpata laughs and shrugs. “The Earther is right. You became a creep because you felt excluded from the family of my siblings and I and wanted everyone to think that you were an outsider by choice. But Ivan and I know better.”

“Alright,” Owuo says, “Don’t you have some universes to travel to and clean up? Get out of here, both of you.”

“I will see you soon,” Sakpata says, “and thank you for your cooperation. You are an asset to the Fonlands.”

“Oh yeah? Do you realize Ivan has my aduro? He can kill a Vodun if he wants. It would probably kill him to concentrate enough to pull it off, but he could do it.”

“One such as Ivan deserves such a power, he would only use it to the benefit of the entire multiversal structure,” Sakpata counters and then portals himself and Ivan to the Smiting Chamber.

“Welcome back,” Azalaan, God of Dreams, from Universe 1121, says as the two emerge next to the heptagon that has a moving cloud of mist swirling on it. Azalaan greets Ivan then turns his attention to Sakpata. “His husband is going to Une’s home, he’s not available for our team.”

“That is unfortunate, I’d heard you two are stronger together,” Sakpata says.

“We are, but I have Death Magic now and I’d like to expel as much of it as possible before Clay and I join our power together again,” Ivan explains. “In light of what Owuo admitted to me, I’d rather not curse my husband if possible.”

“Owuo’s mark is insidious,” Sakpata admits, “but it is not as difficult to resist as he would like you to believe. You have a strong will. I would have advised against you learning his aduro spells if I had known, but you are far from doomed as a result. Azalaan will fill you in our mission while I go out and collect as many others as I can.”

“There will be seven,” Azalaan says, “I saw us all in a dream. The Smiting Chamber says that Ali is on the Disc of Xêvioso with the Golden Executioner,

Adofo. He will volunteer to come, but he and the Golden Executioners are pivotal to Xêvioso’s war plans so don’t bring him.”

“Shouldn’t we accept any who are willing?” Sakpata asks. “Is seven enough to do what we are called to do?”

“You are enough to do what we are called to do,” Azalaan says, “we are just protection and the circuit to boost your power. And yes, the seven that you will bring here, five now that Ivan and I are here, will be sufficient. Anymore and you are negating the dream of our success. I don’t want to have another dream about this multiversal mission, it may be full of bad portents. You brought me here for a reason, Vodun.”

Sakpata acquiesces and leaves Ivan with Azalaan to travel to the Disc of Xêvioso.

* * *

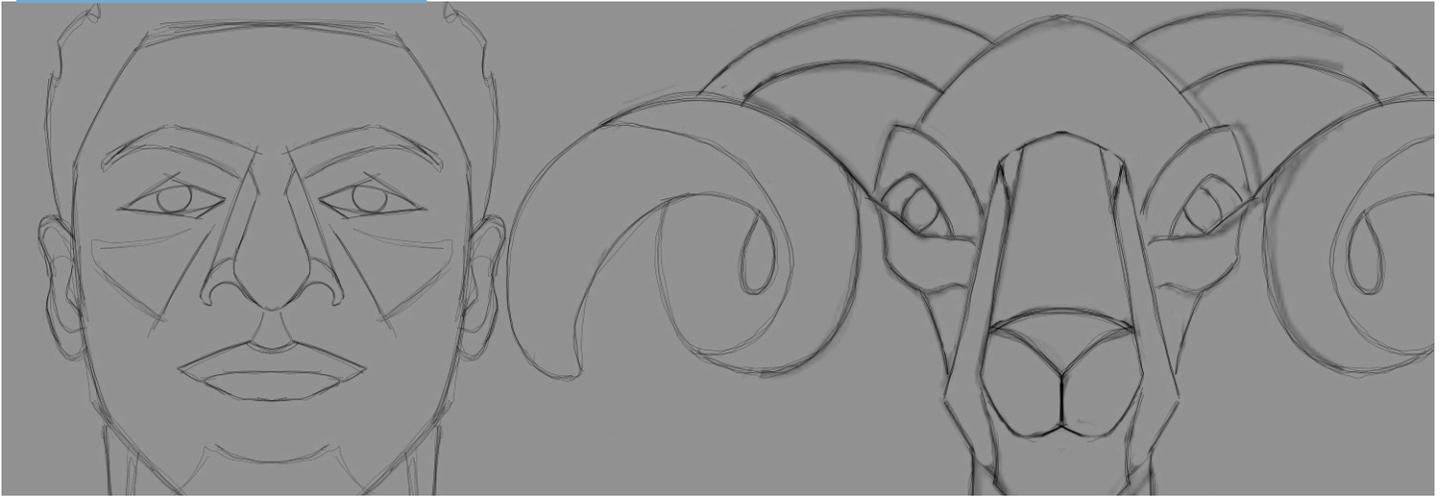
2. Ali and Djallon

“I just saw you move,” Adofo says. “Earthers, I swear, no concept of still.”

“Sorry I wasn’t born from a statue,” Ali says with frustration. He is wearing the traditional armor of the Golden Executioner and it is extremely heavy, but Ali has had to complete long trials like these before. When he trained with the Kazi on Eel, he balanced boulders that weighed tons in each hand in the Red Mountains for twenty-eight days straight, no breaks for food or sleep, and on the twenty-eighth day, he had to hike the mountains over twenty miles back to the Kazi Dojo before he ate and slept. He was demonstrating his proficiency with the invulnerability and strength masteries of the Kazi and utilizing those masteries for so long was so taxing that he slept for almost a week after his successful demonstration.

Standing in the armor crafted of solid gold isn’t the problem, he is so proficient in enacting the masteries of the legendary Kazi that he does it without real thought, but standing as still and empty-minded as Adofo is trying to teach him is the real problem. These days, even a couple decades removed, anytime he tries to clear his mind and relax, he struggles to stop the voices in his mind that replay with no prompting, the voices of his family, of his friends, his mentors and teachers, his allies and his enemies even, the voices he will never hear again since the universe that he called home ripped into oblivion. After settling in the Fonlands, he seemed to find peace, but as the battle nears, it seems his old survivor’s guilt has been rekindled. He confided this to Adofo who is trying to help him find peace in calm so that he can heed the call of the Pattern and possess its full power.

“Fine job you are doing teaching him calm,” Djallon, a Ram Warrior of the



Disc of Gu and member of the 4Warriors of the Fonlands along with Adofo, says as she braids the thick, wooly hair that grows between her ears and around her head in a large puff. She tames it into thick braids as she sits on a large stone in a field of grass near the Golden Basilica.

"I am upset because it doesn't seem like he is even trying," Adofo barks, speaking to Djallon but glaring at Ali.

"I told you I was struggling!" Ali barks back and they both look ready to convert their frustration to physical violence.

"Struggling means you are putting forth effort to take some action, you are just ruminating in there! Golden Executioners do not ruminate! We stand guard, empty of the personal and alert to the possible threat. Anything less compromises the lives of the Justices of the High Court. Maybe that is the urgency you need to clear your mind."

"I'm not an Executioner! This is called training, you fucking psycho!" Ali is very angry now and his hair that is also an afro (not as big as Djallon's, but impressive nonetheless) begins to spark with bolts of silver lightning.

"If you wear the armor, you guard the Justices," Adofo growls and as he lifts both his hands, a sepow knife appears in each of them connected by a golden rope. "Now, calm your mind, or I will calm it for you."

Djallon appears between them, not through magical means, but the two are distracted until she forces herself between them. She only wears the bottom of her armor and a red tank top, her hair half braided.

"This was a dumb idea," she says looking between both of them. "Adofo, you are no teacher. And Ali, what you suffered, what happened to your home, was unprecedented. No one knows how to cope with such a loss, least of all this guy. You have to chart your own way forward, but you won't do it alone, you have friends who care for you and the Fonlands is your

home if you will choose it."

"I would still like to lasso you with my sepow, but Djallon does speak for me," Adofo adds. "You do not deserve to be haunted by the past, and maybe my way is not a lasting solution for you, but it can be a way to cope when it becomes overwhelming. When your internal voices are loud, focus on the subtle sounds around you for distraction. Focus on the sounds of footfalls on golden pathways, the breeze against the fabric of a High Justice's robe, the things you don't normally associate with sound."

"Spoken like a true patternist," they hear and turn to see the Vodun Sakpata approaching them. "Very nice to see you all again, and hard at work, as we all are these days."

Ali, Adofo, and Djallon all bow to the Vodun.

"Your words are the highest compliment, Vodun," Adofo says.

"Knowing that your kin will be guarding my siblings against Une gives me great comfort, Executioner."

"As it should," Adofo says and he looks flustered, overwhelmed by the complimentary Vodun. "I am devoted to the success of the Fonlands in the coming battle."

"I know that you are of the Disc of Gu, warrior, but please educate me on your specifics," Sakpata says to Djallon.

"I am of kin djallonke, rams of the southeastern Fouta mountain plains, noted for valor in the Arena. I proudly take my name from that of my kin."

"You were born close to the overlap, where the volcanoes taper off," Sakpata says with a nod, "You are a rare breed, the warlock of great discipline, I can see it in the red and grey of your armor. I heard tale that you were imbued with the green magic of Pultine during the mission to Talj. If that is true, then you are a being of extraordinary arcana and I

would like you to join Ali and the others I am assembling to scout the full extent of our enemy's corruption of the multiverse. I intend to verify the existences where her taint persists and to obliterate her when I am able, which should be easier because we should not encounter the bulk of her. You faced the threat beside Ali before, I am asking you to do it again with me."

"Excuse me, Vodun, sir," Ali says clumsily, afraid to interrupt the Vodun. "But, you say I'm coming with you? You think that's the best idea? I mean, I came here hoping Adofo could help me settle myself. What happened to Talj, to my home, messed me up."

"I know why you are here, Ali, and I believe that this mission will give you the focus that you desire. If you will trust me, I believe that this could be cathartic for you. You lost your home, and so have countless others, and together, we will cut Une's tendrils that latch her to the multiverse to ensure that she will never do the same again. You will come with me, and so will Djallon, pride of her name and kin, and we will prepare the structure for its deliverance from its greatest enemy."

They both agree to accompany Sakpata and they wave goodbye to Adofo who waits on the Disc of Xévioso for his orders.

"Tracia is with something called a Death Witch," Azalaan says to Sakpata when he returns to the Smiting Chamber. "They are in a swamp on the Disc of Agê. You should consider the Decay Witch, she is violet and green."

"I think you have the wrong aboatia," Sakpata says to Azalaan. "The Decay Witch is a good recruit, but it is Ahdís that I will invite, and she will bring Shini to make seven."

"Are you questioning my dreams, Vodun?" Azalaan asks with mock offense.

"I am questioning your perception of your dream. Did you really see Tracia? Because I am sure that she will be next to Pultine and Agê when they face

Une. Ahdís will agree because she knows that her sisters will be enough. And if it is Tracia and Decay, then who is the seventh?"

"The Dark Witch Sorcerer, who will insist on coming when you invite Decay."

Sakpata is contemplative for a moment as he considers the options before him.

3. Tracia, Decay, and the Dark Witch Sorcerer, or Ahdís, Shini, and Decay

The Mire of Teal is not overrun with Death Witches as it had been. It has largely returned to its quaint tranquility and the Decay Witch couldn't be happier. She even smiles at Tracia and Ahdís as they sit and talk with the few remaining Death Witches of the Mire who have taken up residence in Decay's wooden cabin that has been enlarged with new additions for the permanent guests. Currently, eight Death Witches including Decay reside in the cabin.

The mmoatia have been frequent visitors to the Mire over the years, since the liberation of the Death Witch Coven from Kútmóme, and they get along like the Coven or the hive of mmoatia that inhabit the Aziza mound in the jungle, which is to say that they mostly have a good time together, though frictions of personalities are inevitable. They play a lot of Smiting, the epic games between Tracia and Detritus are an exciting spectacle for many in the bog. Decay has mended her relationship with her neighbors in the Mire of Teal, the hippos and the roaming mokele dinosaurs frequently pass by the cabin and no longer display apprehension toward the Death Witches.

"You've gotten much better," Detritus says to Tracia who strokes the neck of a hippo that sleeps soundly next to the bench where she sits across from Detritus.

"I think I've always been pretty good," Tracia says. "I was just intimidated by the audience before. You Death Witches don't quite put me on edge as you did before."

"You'll be one of us yet," the Ruin Witch says and Tracia flashes a look of concern at Ahdís who sits with Decay on the porch, as both mmoatia wonder if Ruin is only joking about having caught some vision. "Don't worry, Supreme, I am not speaking prophecy," she says, having observed the exchange.

"You witches aren't so bad when you're not terrorizing others," Ahdís says and Detritus laughs. "But we do enough of the same things that I don't envy your powerset."

"Because you are already witches," Decay says. "We perform magic the same, you all just use Divine Essence and the Pattern, we use Death Magic, though I have learned something of using Divine Essence since I've been here in the Mire."

"Less a Death Witch every day," Detritus says snidely, eyeing the cards in her hand that float before her just as Tracia's does. There are cards on the grid that perform the passive actions of the cards and figures made of magic rise up from the activated cards.

"But always reluctantly so," Decay quips, "does that ease the wound? Oh, however will the Death Witch Coven continue without Decay? They will never be as fearsome without her. The scrolls will never tell the tales of their wondrous deeds for what are they without the great and dear Decay."

Ahdís doubles over with laughter and Tracia tries to hide her laughter behind her cards, but Detritus is instantly angry and sits up on the edge of the bench, staring at Decay.

"You mock, but it is true, Decay, you are our sister!" Detritus says with force that borders on arcane distortion.

"Calm," Ruin says and puts a hand on Detritus's shoulder. "We have been enjoying such a peaceful period of training in preparation for the big conflict to come, there is no need to shatter that now. We agreed, only one fight is permitted until we have survived it, then you are free to direct your anger any way you wish."

"I don't mean to start conflict," Detritus says, relaxing back into her seat. She flicks a finger to play a card from her hand and it floats to land in the grid where it is infused with purple magic. "I am just saying, to hear one of our sisters is happy to be free of our family is difficult to hear and it is even harder to understand why she doesn't understand it as the tragedy it is. You mock, but I do think we are weakened at the thought of your absence. We wield Death Magic, yes, we can tap it wherever we find it, but a Death Witch gives their life to the Coven and our new selves are bound together, all forged of the same Death Magic spark that reanimated me and the others at the base of Moon Daisy. Death Witch Magic makes you a Death Witch and when you decide to extinguish the spark within yourself, you will extinguish part of the Death Witch Magic forever. We will survive, yes, but there will be less of us and that is something to mourn."

There is a tense silence between them. Then Tracia leans over the Smiting grid as she takes one of the cards from her floating hand and places it on the table top. There is a flash of green energy and vines of the green magic shoot out to every one of Detritus's gridded cards and they go inert, winning the game for Tracia.

"I wasn't sure how long to wait before I took my turn," Tracia says with a sheepish grin. Detritus, and then Decay, and then Ahdís, and then Ruin begin to laugh.

They are bantering normally when Sakpata arrives and he bows to them as they bow to him.

"Lovely to make the acquaintance of such a powerful assembly of witches," Sakpata says.

"To what do we owe this pleasure, Vodun?" Detritus asks.

"I have a most dangerous mandate," Sakpata says and sits cross-legged in the clearing before Decay's cabin in his large Vodun form, though he can look at them all at eye level while he sits. "The Vodun Agé discovered that Une is still present in the realms that she has devoured and even if we destroy her at the root, she will still persist on the structure. I need three of you to join me with four others on my quest to burn Une out of the multiversal structure. I anticipate that she will be weaker than she is at her source, though we will be facing a threat the size of an entire realm. I am confident in my ability to face and defeat this weakened Une with the help of the team I am assembling, but the numbers are few to avoid the loss of too many in the event of failure. If we fail, they can still succeed at her source and then go after what is left, but we hope to be done with this when Une is done. And that is all we really have, the hope that I am not deluded in my assessment of my own power."

Sakpata is genuine and it is touching to the audience of witches.

"I would go," Tracia responds first, "but I will be by Pultine's side when we go to Une. And I think that Detritus and Ruin are also set on being there."

"Then what about Ahdís, Decay, and one of your companions?" Sakpata asks the two on the porch of the cabin. "The Dark Witch Sorcerer or Shini would be welcomed additions."

Decay and Ahdís look to one another.

"I am happy to help however I can," Decay says to Ahdís, "but I don't think I can convince Mangwale to join us. He is still rejecting his name. He is more Death Witch than I am these days, and not happy to hear that we are collaborating with Fonlanders we called our inferiors before you imprisoned him."

"I am sure that Shini would come," Ahdís nods and she looks to Sakpata. "He is naturally a wielder of Death Magic, but he is an eager student of the Green, I think you will find him most helpful." Ahdís summons Shini and he arrives quickly because he is not far away. Then the two, along with Decay, travel



with Sakpata to the Smiting Chamber.

“Was this the dream?” Sakpata asks Azalaan after they emerge through his portal.

Azalaan scrunches his nose and glares at Decay, Ahdis and Shini as they stand looking around themselves at the Chamber.

“Fine, I was wrong, somehow you can interpret my dreams better than I can, are you happy?” Azalaan is angry and not hiding it well.

“I know nothing of your dreams, little god,” Sakpata pats Azalaan on the head with his large hand and Azalaan just stewes in his annoyance. “But I am thankful to have them and you to make me feel better about what I am asking them all to do.” Sakpata looks at all of them, everyone he has assembled and he moves his left hand that is inundated with gray magic that forms a list of about thirty names in the space before them all.

“This is our itinerary, composed by the Smiting Chamber,” Sakpata explains. “We will utilize the mists of the heptagon for training for seven risings of my jewel, and we will familiarize ourselves with each of these realms. Then we will travel to them, me and three others who I will choose based on your abilities and the realm. The rest will be on standby if assistance is required. I am grateful to all of you for joining me and I am confident that we will know victory.”

from Tier 1 – 14 – The Vodun Doing Work

Xêvio is already in the Smiting Chamber observing Sakpata's first mission to the tendrils of Une that snaked across the multiversal structure where she had taken existences. He can link his mind to Sakpata's even when the Vodun and two members of his team disappear from

inside the mists of the heptagon, and he sees them in an existence called Red of Node 1. There is so little left there, just lifeless gray shapes that had once been the stuff of existence. There are large gray spheres that had once been stars blazing hot enough to melt gasses, now inert and drifting in the lack of gravity; everything lacks mass so nothing pulls anything toward anything, and when things drift into one another, they bounce in the opposite direction. There is no light in this place called Red, so there is no color. Nothing is dark and that is curious.

“How would you explain that?” Xêvio asks Sakpata through their mental connection as he spectates Sakpata's view.

“It is the most curious thing about this very curious realm,” Sakpata replies. “Azalaan, do you sense Une here?”

“I feel something in very deep slumber,” Azalaan says. He wears a gray suit that Sakpata had constructed with his hand spells for the team to protect them against extreme levels of force and to allow the Vodun to always be in contact with them in the realities they explored. The suit is simple, like a jumpsuit with a helmet and it is adorned with Sakpata's Veve, the Ore Amulet. “Its dreams are curious. There are so many, from times long ago, from disparate realities. There are too many dreams for one thing. But I only sense a singular thing resting.”

“It is Une, this, everything we see is Une resting,” Sakpata reasons. “I imagine that if we kill her in her home realm, this realm is one that she is likely to wake up inside of.”

“That is truly frightening,” Shini, the muthi Sorcerer, says wearily. “That means she could wake up here at any second.”

“Azalaan, keep monitoring for anything that might be helpful for us to know, Shini and I will see if we can cleanse an entire universe. Shini, I need you to

create a magnet for all of the latent death magic around us. I'm going to build a self-perpetuating construction that we can leave here that will be made entirely of Death Magic and will smother out any living and dreaming thing. Une is made of Death Magic, but Une is not here, only the glow of her slumbering subconsciousness that gives this place its eerie grayness, but the Death Magic construction should render these structures unsuitable for Une's consciousness, permanently severing her link to this realm.”

Xêvio is impressed watching Sakpata work so well with his team to do what seemed like an insurmountable task; even the Vodun is small compared to the size of the scope of the Une-infected realm and it is hard to believe that any of their efforts would be effective for ridding the entire realm of their enemy. But Sakpata makes complex arcane constructions while he sleeps, when he is awake and working intently as he does in the Une-infected realm, and supplied by one as skilled at Death Magic as Shini, he manages to make an extremely large construction that gets bigger as he continues his work repurposing the latent Death Magic that Shini attracts, and as the seemingly inert objects connect to it in their random floating trajectories around the realm. The gray matter of the objects that dissipate into nothing against Sakpata's construct, is instantly killed and converted to purple energy and whatever was inside dissipates.

Sakpata and Shini work for a long time before Sakpata is satisfied that their efforts will eventually clean the realm completely and they retreat back to the Smiting Chamber.

“That went well,” Xêvio congratulates Sakpata.

“Azalaan helped me select the right beings to aid in these efforts. He will continue to monitor progress there while I jump into another existence with other members of the team.”

**See you
again
soon!!!**