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Meridian

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2026 Crossover Event
THE SECOND UNREST
act ii



APRIL 2026

The plot thickens as Unea and the Arcane Wizard face off in The Fonlands, Kevin faces Uneb in the Hyperion universe, and the forces of the Vodun try to regroup in the Une-Verse. The Second Unrest continues now!

* * *

In this issue:

THE MAGICIAN - THE DESCENDANT - MASTER'S LOG 2120

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ROY CURETON
EDITOR IN CHIEF
Layout Editor
PRL Heroes Editor

WES LIVINGSTON
Art Editor
PRL Cosmos Editor

MAX ROBERSON
Scroll Series Editor
PRL Mysteries Editor

VIV
Contributors

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from the editor

The summer is rapidly approaching and with it, the 2026 Annual Issue. Look out for that on PRL Day, June 16, 2026. It's so much closer than I realized and we are excited to show you what we've been working on. Of course you can check out previous Annual Issues for an idea of what to expect if you have no idea.

We are well into the 2026 Crossover Event, The Second Unrest, with this act ii and things are very interesting. It is a vast battle across many existences, but with three primary fronts:

1. The Fonlands where Jo, Gu, and Agbe organize to resist the half of Une known as Unea, and Sakpata and his team in the Smiting Chamber track Une across the multiversal structure;
2. the Hyperion universe where Kevin and the forces of that universe resist the half of Une known as Uneb;
3. and the Une-verse where Une resides and where the Vodun Agê, Fâ, and Xêvioso lead a force of beings from the multiverse to attack Une directly.

Issac Washington, the Master of Multiversal Arcana and the Arcane Wizard, is back this month as he continues to use his magic to prevent Une from landing on the Fonlands. He, like Kevin Blackmon in the Hyperion universe, greeted a half of Une as it arrived inside of his existence, and they have both surprised Une in their ability to resist her. Issac and Kevin are like two versions of the same thing, Issac the Wizard and Kevin the Magician, but while Isaac's skills as a wizard allow him to warp space and time sufficient to fool and trap Unea in a loop, Kevin's abilities are more tactile and

allow him to produce anything from his imagination to challenge Uneb. Kevin has undergone extensive training since we last saw him back in Volume VI that has greatly expanded his imagination over the years; early in his career as a hero with a preternatural ability he deployed armored suits with jet packs, and now he creates the legions of dummy soldiers and impossibly large constructs to face Uneb. Issac and Kevin are both magical, but the source of their magic is different. Kevin's ability comes from a device, the Dark Matter Manipulator, that was created on the distant planet Druont. Isaac's ability comes from extensive study of the wonders and mysteries of existence that set him on a path to becoming the embodiment of the magic of the universe, a title known as the Master of Universal Arcana.

The parallels between Kevin and Issac are interesting and I should note that Issac was inspired by a desire to have a Kevin-type character who wielded magic from arcane sources that mirror Dr. Strange of Marvel comics. I like magic and when I first conceived of Kevin as a character, I wanted him to be a magician with powers that had a complicated origin explained by science because I wanted to tell a science fiction story, and Issac was inspired by a desire to create a fantasy story inspired by myths and legends of the African continent.

Kevin debuted all the way back in [Volume I](#), in the very first issue of the PRL Serials and his story ran through Volume VI, though he was largely in the background of Volumes IV and V. Issac Washington debuted in [Volume VII](#) of the Halloween Special and his story continued in subsequent Halloween Specials until he traveled with Wazad the Wonderful to the Fonlands in the

Interim Short: The Deft Hands of Zacchaeus – 10 – Brad Jordan. Since then, Issac has teamed with the Vodun and the dwellers of the Fonlands to save existence from Une.

Now Issac and Kevin are the vanguard against the two halves of Une and their powers will be put to the ultimate test.

This issue features another re-run from [Âmuk](#), the serial starring Maxx the Superguardian. Definitely check out Maxx's journey if you're curious about the plot that led to this issue. Other things to check out if you want more of the backstory that led our characters to the present:

- [Multiversal Family Tree Anthology](#) - Features issues of many different PRL Serials and includes issues starring Owuo, the Abosom of Evil, the Mmoatia, the Witches of the Death Witch Coven, Alia, and so many more!
- [Death Witch Coven](#) - Find out how the fearsome wielders of Death Magic who were banished from the Disc of their birth became allies in the fight against Une.
- [Heated](#) - Owuo is pure evil, and for a long time many considered him to be the Vodun of Death, or that's how he saw it. This 2024 Crossover Event chronicles Owuo's existence from the start, to the present when Yana, the Queen of the Caves, discovered a threat to the multiversal structure through the Smiting Chamber.
- [Deathgrowth / Talj Rip](#) - The Vodun use the game of Smiting to save the Talj Universe from Une.

We hope that you enjoy the issue we will see you all again soon!

- Roy Cureton, 04/2026

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Meridian

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The Magician is back and still fighting the good fight against Uneb who showed up in the Hyperion universe to take her revenge on Alia. With Alia, and Ivan and Clay, existences away, Kevin leads the forces of the universe against the enemy that seems to have a never-ending store of energy.

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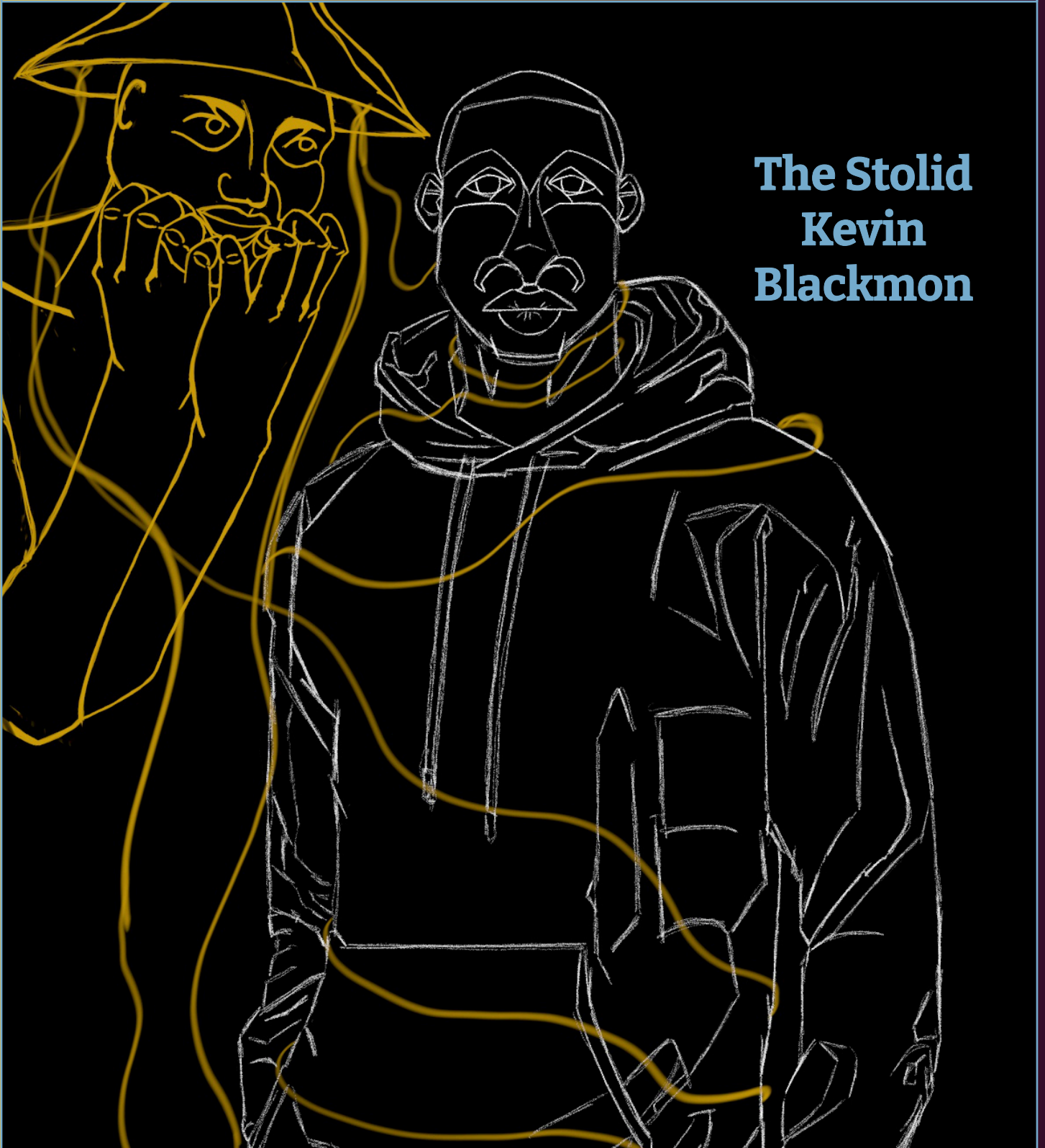
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37

The Magician

**The Stolid
Kevin
Blackmon**



- THE MAN FIGHTS TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE -

BY ROY CURETON

Kevin was content to die. He'd been knocked down hard and he thought that he had nothing left, and rather than drag himself up again, as he's done so many times in the past when he brought his preternatural ability to bear against the dangers of the universe as a corpsman of the Interstellar Panel, Kevin was done.

"Get up!" Alia screamed and her voice raged into the open air. "Get up now or I will kill you myself!"

"You don't need me," Kevin

moaned. Blood bubbled out of his mouth as he spoke and when he was done talking, he coughed up more blood. He groaned as pain shot through his body. He was sure that he had broken bones and maybe his organs had ruptured because the blood kept coming when he coughed.

"Why haven't you healed yourself?" Alia asked with disgust. She blasted yellow-white light from her hand at the large herd of bison stampeding in their direction. The eyes of the bison blazed with a black and red flame and their bodies had been corrupted by demon possession. Their horns were black

and ragged, twice as long as they would have normally been, and their coats were thick and tangled barbs that made them sharp when they ran their bodies in their targets. They also spoke human language with booming voices that mocked their victims and as they charged at Alia and Kevin on the razed plain that had been a forest before the possession of the Southern Carpathians in Romania by the High Demon Fon, Mbrwiri.

Kevin could have easily healed his body. His time as a corpsman of the Interstellar Panel meant that he spent time assisting in



Demonic Bison of Mbwiri

the facilities of the Universal Infirmary on many planets aligned with the IP, and he'd learned things about human anatomy from the nurses there who were fascinated by human biology and Kevin's abilities. He worked closely with Nurse Sevi Swite on Oin, the home of the first and largest Universal Infirmary facility, to test his ability to create tissue to repair his cells after difficult battles, and because it piggy backed on work he'd done with the CIA years ago, he was a quick learner, and much more difficult to defeat by enemies of the universe's peace. And the damage he sustained opposing the demon-possessed inhabitants of Romania, both man and beast, should have been easy for Kevin to heal. But it was easier to just cough up blood and wait for the end. The battle would not be lost without him, Mbwiri would not overpower Alia in the end, Kevin knew that. She had a cosmic power, a yellow-white light that she could focus on anything to be impacted however she dictated. She usually used this light as concussive force, as she did against the demon bison and managed to scatter their stampede sufficiently to save herself and Kevin, but Alia could also wield the light to other effects. Kevin witnessed her reveal ghosts to those who could not see them; she had frozen a large stretch of the Mississippi River in order to prevent an aquatic predator of the planet Druont from escaping into the Gulf of Mexico; and she could even survive the vacuum of space when she suffused her body with the light and attained her Hyperion form. She could blast concussive force beams quickly and increase the strength of them by gathering the light, but to do the other things, freezing water or revealing spirit energy, she had to concentrate for an extended period and this could slow her down in battles with powerful entities when she fought alone.

When Mbwiri attacked Europe, many brought their powers to bear to save the innocent, and the team of Alia and Kevin had traveled to the location where the demon



activity was the strongest, in the mountains of Romania. And because Mbwiri did indeed dwell in those mountains, the force protecting him was fierce and pushed both Alia and Kevin to their limits.

The bison raged around them in the ruined forest for a while as Alia defended the two of them on her own and eventually all of the bison had been incapacitated.

"You just left me alone to die!" Alia yelled into his face that was obscured by the blood that spouted from his mouth when he coughed.

"Nothing..." Kevin struggled to say, "...can kill you..."

Alia lifted a hand over his face and as the light of it intensified, Kevin felt heat, and he screamed despite the pain that racked his body when the light blasted off of her hand and into his face. She stood and widened the scope of the light to encompass his whole body, and she made sure that it caused him pain. After more than twenty minutes of Kevin yelling in agony, Alia finally stopped the flow of her power and Kevin was completely healed on the ground, though he still lay on his back, looking up at the sky. Alia staggered toward him, dropped to her knees and then fell on her side next to him. She would be alright soon, the light of the sun replenished her powers quickly, but for the moment, she was spent.

"You should just let me..." Kevin couldn't say it.

"Are you really this sad?" Alia asked with anger, but there was concern there as well. The two had loved one another for a long time, even if their romantic relationship had been doomed from the start.

"I'm not sad at all," Kevin said and looked her in the eyes. He loved her eyes. It was like arriving to a familiar place after wandering in strange territory for a long time. He wanted to live there, to have everything else disappear around

them. "I'm just..." He was thoughtful. "I just wish things were different. And no matter how far I go, no matter what alien world I go to, the stuff I'm trying to escape always find me. This thing in my fucking head, it doomed me. All I ever wanted was just a normal life. Imagine if things had been different for us? We could've had kids that were going off to college by now. We could be on vacation in Hawaii."

Alia nodded at him. "You know I done seen those realities before. We always look real good together, like a movie or something. But you know movies ain't real, Kevin, and you shouldn't waste your energy wishing you lived in one. You think if you had just died out here, you would've woke up in a movie? No, you would still be doing the same thing probably, but just as a ghost. You thinking about it wrong and that's draining your spirit, I see that now. But don't you ever pull some shit like that with me again, you hear me?"

Alia was closer to full strength by that point and she sat up, looking down at him. He still hadn't moved.

"If you want to kill yourself, don't do it out here when I'm depending on you!" Alia was on the verge of tears, but she spoke forcefully and it roused Kevin from the position on his back and they both sat with their legs crossed before one another.

"I'm sorry, it just hit me all at once. I know that ain't an excuse, but it won't happen again."

"Will it?" Alia asked, looking him in the eyes and even when they were angry at him, he wanted to live inside them, cozy up next to her rage; she was always better than anything else the world had to offer. "I'm sure Mbwiri is somewhere around here, but we have to be sure before we call everybody else off they search. So that mean, we might be about to face him. Are you ready for that or should I get Tin to finish this with me? Wendy and Aile said he stayed back to help keep the shield over North

America, but Kyrie can do that on his own. If you would rather be dead, I'll let you go die."

"That's not what I want," Kevin said, looking down at his crossed legs. "I just want to know that when this is over, there's more than just another big fight waiting for me."

"Come stay with me," Alia said. She said it quickly enough that he didn't doubt that she meant it. "Ivan and Clay would be so happy to have you. You need a family, Kevin. You can't walk this world alone. Or

you can, but then you end up pissing off the person in the world who loves you the most."

Kevin laughed. "I'm sorry," he said again. "And I think I will come live with y'all. That's something to look forward to."

"Let's go shut this shit down," Alia said as she stood, swiping at the dirt on her pants, then she offered a hand to Kevin to help him stand. "There are a bunch of Clay's cookies waiting for us at home."

Alia, the Hyperion



* * *

Uneb is an elegant whirl of aggressive force and Kevin worries for everyone. Her tendrils are thick and long, and they move through space at a speed that defies her size, even if Kevin and the forces supporting him are small enough to be quicker than her. Nebuchad had been badly injured and was on one of the Oin medical ships hovering in the space just beyond the scope of Uneb's deadly reach, that has only grown over the time the battle rages. The Queen Ravelith has gone completely berserk after she tried to connect to Uneb's mind. A Kazi of Eel monitors her on an IP ship to keep her from hurting herself, though he knows that she maintains enough control to avoid hurting others with her extensive capacity for telekinetic and telepathic attacks, but it seems that Uneb managed to influence her to harm herself. She has calmed and currently, she pants with deep breaths and insists that she has regained herself inside of the ship infirmary as Kazi Lograt floats next to her bed.

"I saw something," the Queen Ravelith says.

"What did you see?" Kazi Lograt asks with concern.

"I saw her, I saw Une," Ravelith says and a shiver shakes her body when she says the name. "This is just a puppet she pilots. She is rooted in existence itself, rotting it out and she has only just now reached us. Other existences have not been so lucky. What we face, Lograt, is not even the tip of the iceberg, that raging monster is but a grain of sand that threatens to ravage our reality from a vast sandy coast of death and destruction."

"What are you saying, Queen? This thing we face is not the greatest threat?"

She shakes her head slowly. "She has summoned something dark and it will be upon our existence soon. Where is Alia? There has never been a greater need for her presence,

her power."

"She is nowhere we expected to find her. Some of the Kazi worry that she is lost in the Cavern of Tranquility, and if that is the case, we can only hope that she will find her way back soon. There are Kazi keeping watch in the Cavern."

"I will try to reach out to her through the mental plane," Ravelith says earnestly. "Join me, Lograt."

He agrees and they both sit to attain the mental realm.

Kevin and Yuri can't create constructs fast enough to do a dent in Uneb's tendrils and Yuri has taxed the machine in his brain that allows for his ability. He is lucky that Desperation Jackson and Kal Qor are raging against the tendrils in his vicinity. Yuri's nose starts to bleed as he floats space in the suit with jet boosters and eventually he loses consciousness and the functions of his suit cease, causing him to fall down where he is slapped around by the tendrils before Kal swoops in to save him. And Kal only brings Yuri safely to a ship because Desperation Jackson is strong enough to grab a tendril and he plunges his fingers into the muscular trama of it, digging into its fibers and ripping them apart.

The Druintes arrive and they transport the fight far away from Earth and other inhabited planets, which give them all solace, but the ships do not follow Uneb enthusiastically through the wormhole created by the Druintes because of the grueling battle they had already endured.

Kevin can't help but feel the faraway feeling of defeat. The feeling that regardless of the outcome, he is still doomed and it might be best to just die and leave the fight to others who are not doomed and actually have a stake in the future. But seeing what he has seen so far, he knows that he has never experienced anything like this before. This thing that threatens them is from the nightmares of his worst enemies sent to finally end everything he loved once and for all, and the feeling of

defeat are subsumed by the resolve to ensure that everything isn't destroyed. He is not sure where Alia is, but he knows that she will eventually come home and she deserves a home to come back to. He would not falter like he had in the past, there was no time for it.

Kevin imagines a large bear to match the size of Uneb in space and he imbues it with the strength of mountains and boulders, and the swift and disciplined battle techniques of the Kazi, and the large construct alleviates the assault on his allies for long enough that all retreat for rest to spectate Kevin's assault and plan their next move.

Thomas Eakran, as e is known on Earth, Eakran 15 to eris fellow Druintes, watches the battle aboard an IP ship where many of the strongest combatants have come to recuperate. The Druinte Halgod stands next to erim.

"Are we doomed?" Halgod asks Eakran who never takes eris eyes from the scene through the windows.

"We are not doomed, God. This is not over until that thing is dead or we are no longer able to fight against it."

Halgod nods and chuckles. "No one has called me God since I landed on Earth. Pegraf said the humans would be offended by the name given to me by Falstraq."

"Really?" Eakran arches an eyebrow and e looks angry for a moment. "Humans still indulge in religion? Is it still a widespread practice?" Eakran hadn't been to Earth in a while, but e eagerly joined this conflict once e received word of it.

Halgod nods.

"Shame, that's the worst part about Earth," Eakran says. "Even the most rational and intelligent among them take part in the shared delusion."

Halgod shrugs, "I don't

really care. Pegraf and I have found a home that we love and won't let this monstrous thing take it away from us."

Eakran watches as the large bear construct that Kevin had created, slashes its impossible claws through the void and manages to separate many of the tendrils from Uneb. Some cheer, but Eakran does not.

"Kevin is formidable," Halgod says, curious why Eakran doesn't share their enthusiasm.

"Celebrating prematurely only makes defeat sharper, harder, and more difficult to reverse."

Kevin arrives at the ship to the cheers of his compatriots. They know that his construct will fight until it no longer can and while it does, Kevin will rest and recoup his strength. Eakran follows him to his quarters and the two talk alone inside.

"You are our best hope," Eakran sighs. "What are our chances?"

Kevin falls back on his bed as two more enter his private quarters, Kazi Lograt and the Queen Ravelith.

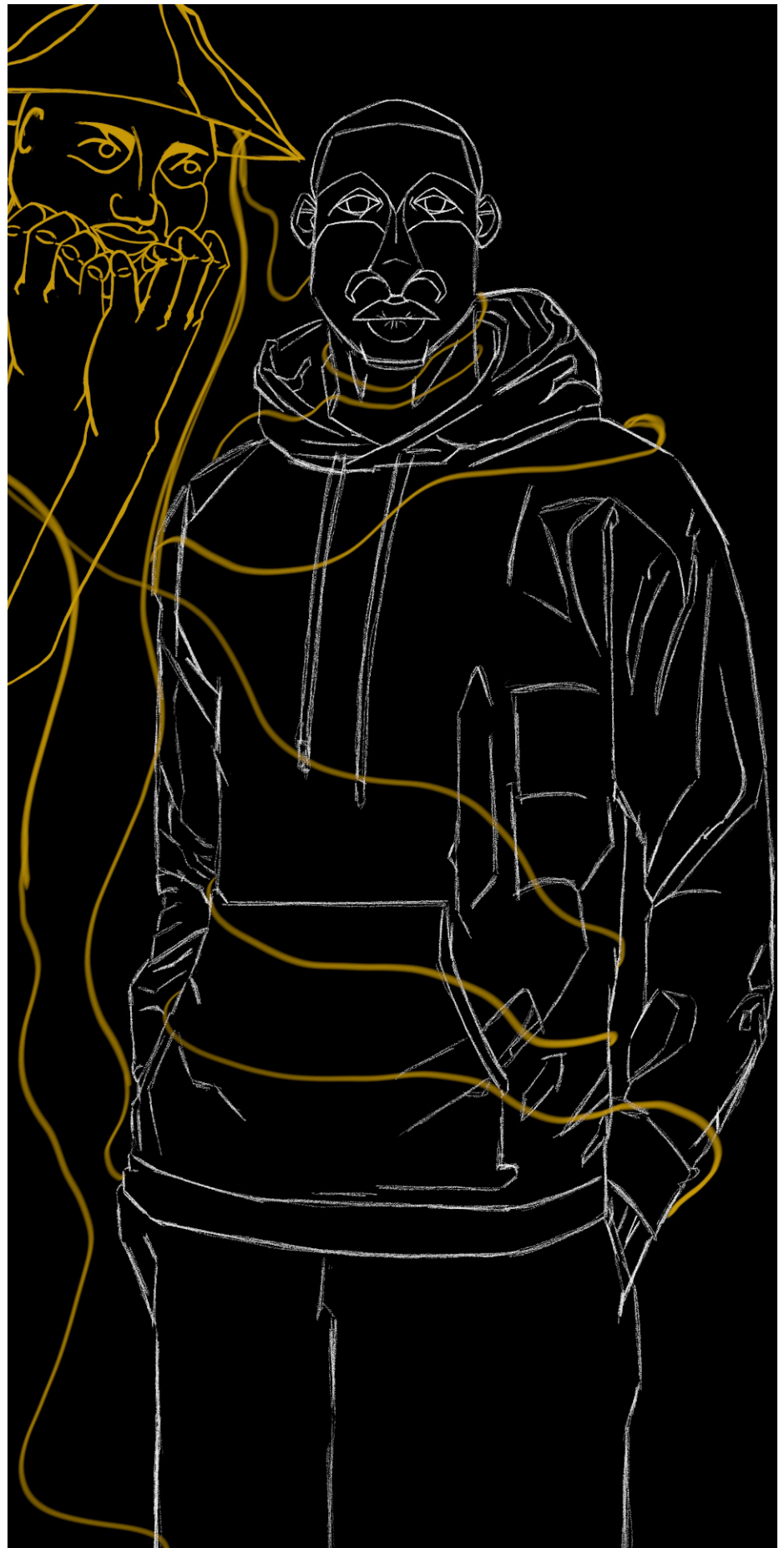
"There are so many more coming," the Queen Ravelith says urgently and she and Lograt explain what they discovered.

"How long do we have?" Eakran asks, not doubting the duo for a second.

The Queen shakes her head and looks down at her feet.

"Not long at all," Lograt explains. "Soon, a wall of dark power will be upon this existence and it will move across it until everything in its wake is infected by Une."

Kevin seems alert and listening, nodding along to plans and suggestions, but it is a facade. Deep in his mind, Une welcomes him to a place of tranquility and he can't stop himself from enjoying it.

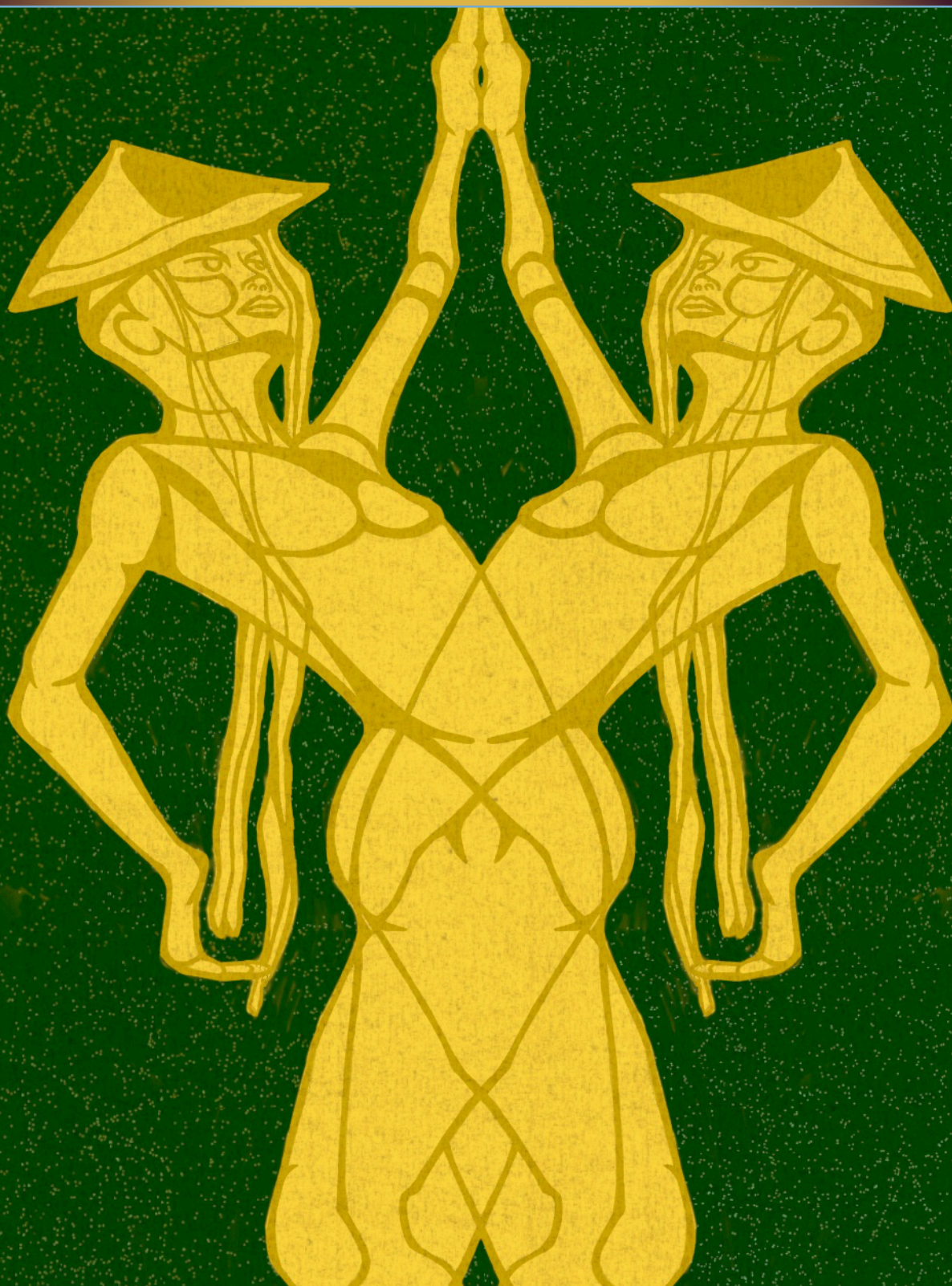


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THE DESCENDANT



- UNE ADVANCES -

BY ROY CURETON

Une is sleeping, but not a sleep that many would recognize. She doesn't have dreams that bleed across the blackness of sleep to expose the details of her subconscious hopes and fears. Her body, the planet-sized ball of rough, hairy tendrils, slumbers as many things do, but unlike many things, Une can think and operate the two distinct bodies that contain the two halves of her conscious will; Unea and Uneb. She can operate two vessels of her consciousness, but she is vulnerable in her home, suspended in the space that she had conquered long, long ago.

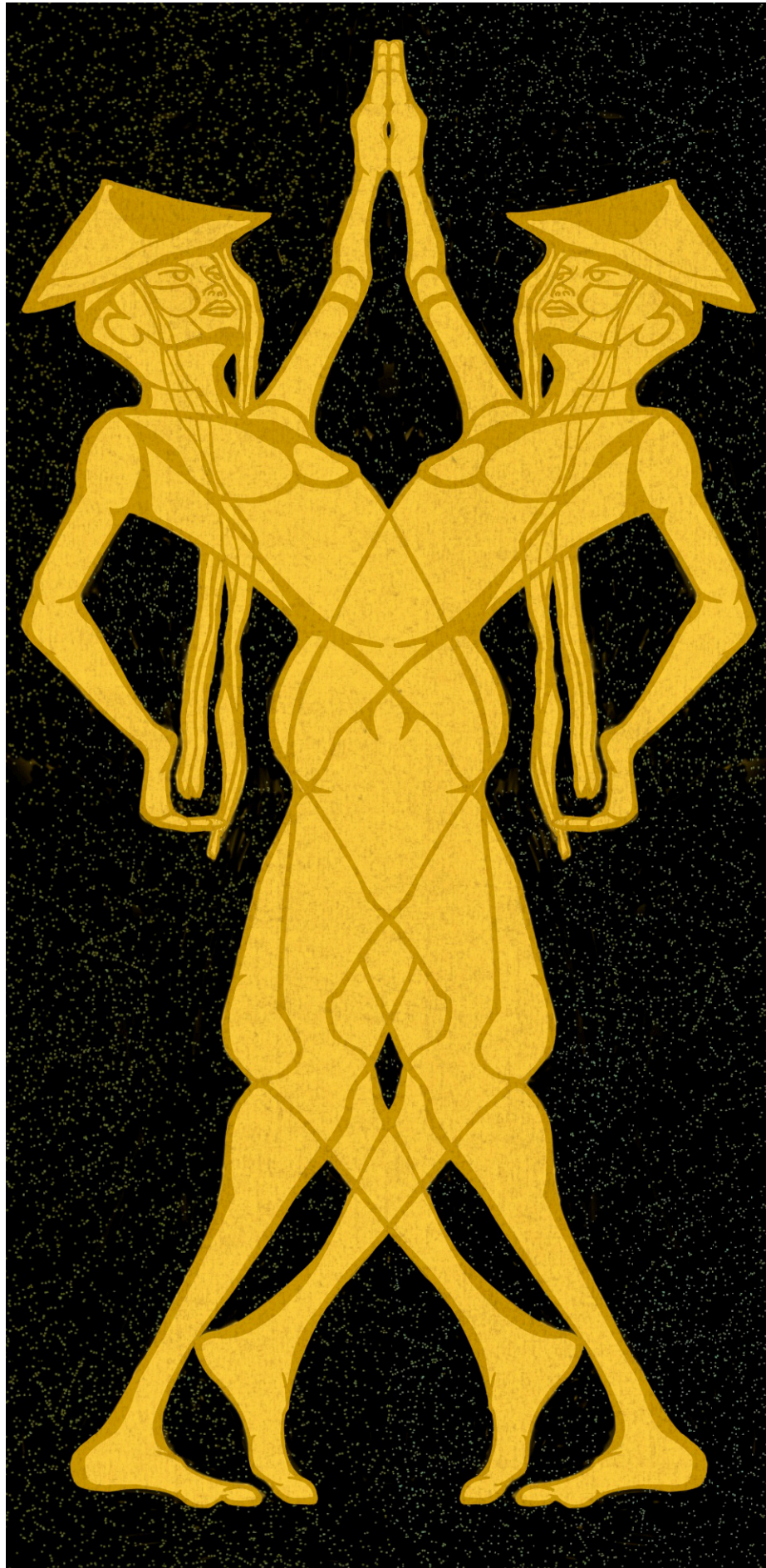
She sees and understands Uneb's conflict in the Hyperion universe. Uneb has been met with the force of formidable beings from the planet Earth, and also from other planets who have joined in the battle. Uneb is surprised by the resistance, but she is compensating, drawing from the immense stores of power that Une had stashed across the multiversal structure in her

conquest. Uneb faces a complex fight with beings bringing strange magic and technology to bear, and they even manage to transport her to an empty corner of the universe far away from Earth, but they all tremble at the sight of her. All of them have to goad themselves on to overcome the fear of her fearsome form that is large now, large enough to grab planets and hurl them. She can feel their fear and it delights her, she can hear their doubts and she is happy to play this game until she has eliminated them all. She has no intention of corrupting any of them, she will delight in each of their deaths and the fear it instills in a universe that bears witness to its end.

She doesn't intend to corrupt any of them until she feels the one called Kevin. He had been one of the first two who had stood against her and kept her from landing on Earth, but she hadn't paid attention to the two of them. Uneb had assumed that Kevin and his companion Nebuchad, all of the beings she faced really, were constructs of the voice that had

spoken to her. She thought that the voice was controlling them like Une controlled her and she delighted in the voice despairing over the failed efforts of its constructs, but none of the beings she face have a commanding voice in their heads, though many of them share a mindlink.

Kevin stands out among all of them. He commands many of the beings through a mindlink and he coordinates with leaders of the beings who look very different from the Earthlings. His mind is steady, he is not shaken by the appearance of Uneb like the rest of them, and he can bring gargantuan constructs into being that manage to wound Uneb, a feat that always necessitates a break on one of the flying ships like the ones that shoot lasers at her, though the ships for resting are bigger and floating at a distance from the fray. When he is resting on one of those ships, Uneb can hear his mind that is bitter, exhausted, despite the fierce facade he displays before the others. Kevin is weary of battle and though



he will fight to the death of him to avoid the fate that Uneb promises, there is a part of him that wants to curl up and disappear, or allow Uneb to kill him so that he never has to fight again. This mentality is very attractive to Une, and in turn Uneb, who was practically salivating at the chance to sink into Kevin's mind and seed her taint. He would be a formidable convert to her side and his mental link would allow her to turn many others before they even realized what was happening. Even though he does not wield arcana, Uneb recognizes the Black on him, he is a powerful manipulator of reality with the very weak resolve of meat brain and body.

Uneb keeps up the battle in the dark corner of Hyperion and she begins the subtle work of worming her way into Kevin's consciousness so as to be undetected.

* * *

What Une sees through the eyes of Unea is puzzling because for a very long time she beholds the splendor of the Fonlands in the distance of her view, and she feels the sensation of Unea's body barreling towards it, but the view of the Fonlands never advances, it always hangs very far away as though Unea is not moving at all. For a while, Une thinks that the distance between Unea and the Fonlands is just larger than can be easily judged from the aether outside of it, the physics of the Fonlands is very unique to it after all, but soon, Une recognizes that the view through Unea's eyes is somehow unnatural, as though she has been made to see something that is not actually there, and it is then when Une spots the faint sign of the pattern, very faint lines of gold that run line a grid on spacetime. There was magic active all around Uneb but it was being hidden from the view of anyone not well versed in arcana as Une has become over her long existence consuming the bodies and knowledge of beings of the multiversal structure.

Unea does not panic at Une's realization, she merely remains in

her position as she charts the traces of the pattern around her. In doing so, she eventually identified the prison she was being suspended inside of and she instantly saw the face of her jailer who floated the space in front of her, observing her closely. She smirks at him, basking in immense power. The humans are always pleasant to look at, Une has always thought so, and their form had inspired the form she created for Unea and Uneb, and the form she had presented when she was insulted by Pultine and Alia. Unea's human jailer seems familiar to Une, and she searches her memories that include the consciousnesses of everything that she had ever consumed. She found things that resembled him, but nothing threatening, nothing of note and this made her apprehensive. She had consumed enough that very few things were ever unfamiliar to her and when she encountered things that defied her expectation, like Pultine and Alia, she knew that she had to eliminate the threat, and convert it to her cause. Her human jailer was a bright beacon of the pattern and his magic had been strong enough to fool her for a significant time.

But she won't be distracted any longer and she overpowers her jailer, wraps him up and disposes of him. She will see the Fonlands fall, and then she can come back to collect the human who amuses her. But then the Vodun arrives.

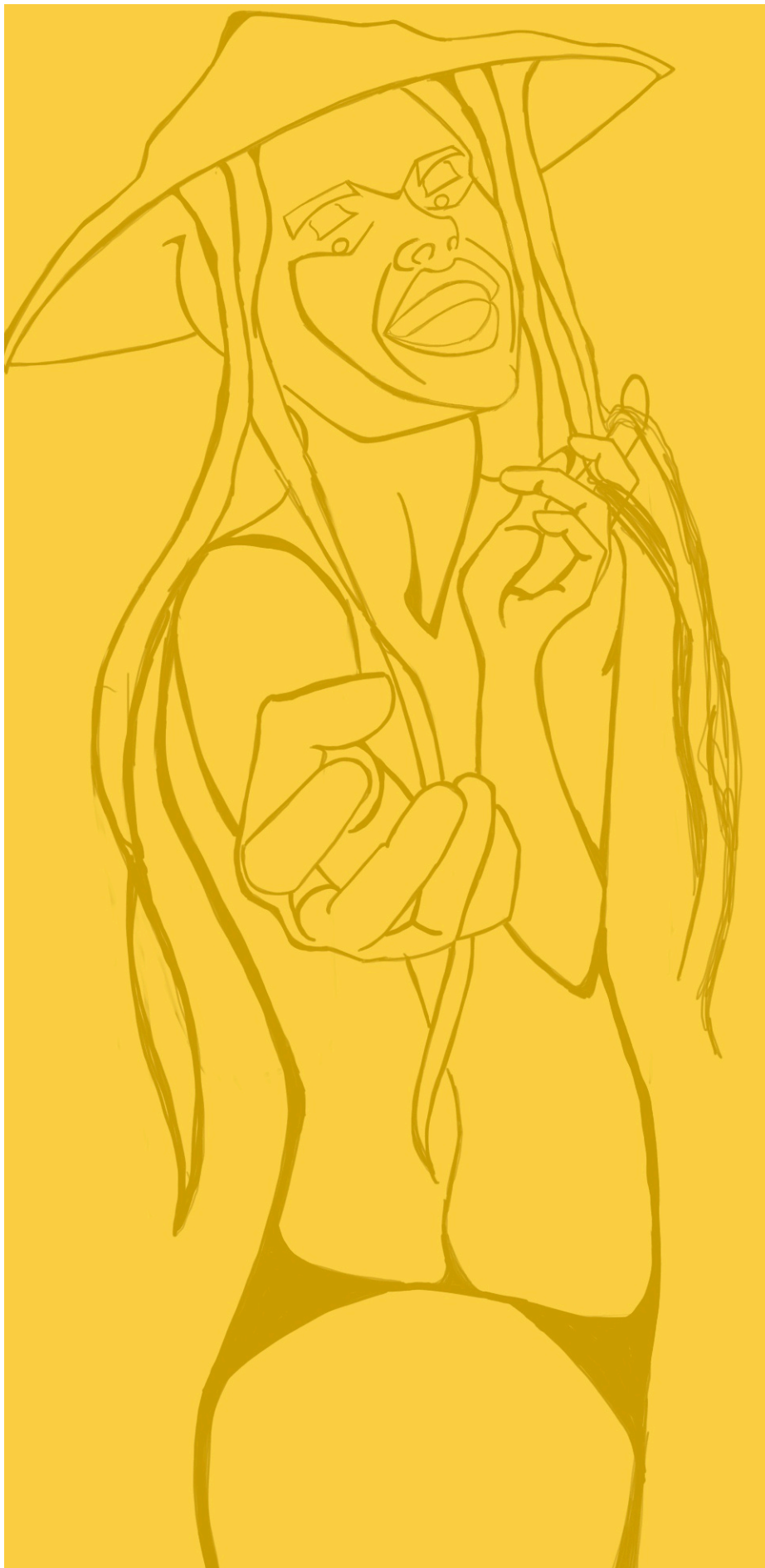
"You will come no closer," Jo says and even though Uneb wants to seize on the Vodun, she cannot move.

"Not this again," Uneb calls out to Jo. "More traps, I see. You all must be terrified to face me."

"I am not terrified," Jo responds resolutely, "but I am also not an idiot. We will fight, and our power will shake the aether, but not before I know you better."

"Then learn fast, Vodun," Uneb sneers. "I am eager for a fight."

* * *



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THE MASTER OF MULTIVERSAL ARCANA



THE ARCANE WIZARD vs UNEA!

- THE BATTLE COMMENCES -

BY WESLEY LIVINGSTON

In the aether where Aido Hwedo dwells, I was focused on Unea, but I allowed myself to take stock of what was happening in the Fonlands. Xêvioso, Agê, and the new Vodun Fâ appeared briefly at my location to look Uneb in the face before they rejoined the party headed to the Une-verse, the home of our enemy. Though I did not see it, I knew they led a force to face Une that was large because I had been in those meetings with the Vodun at their conference table in the Meta Chamber with the stacks of enchanted Smiting Cards they used to build their teams. The mission to Talj, regardless of the outcome, was an extremely important opportunity to see how planning with Smiting Cards translated to the actual confrontation with the enemy and we all agreed that the Vodun had developed a system that worked.

My time with Uneb stretched on and the Fonlands took eager advantage of the additional time to fortify against the attack. A glowing white planet appeared to move

around the Fonlands, in a revolution that included the great serpent Aido Hwedo, and the white planet left a trail of glowing white magic in its wake. Inside of the glowing orbit, an ocean in the shape of a hollow orb was forming as Fonlanders from the Disc of Agbe arrived to transform into water. I couldn't see it, but Fonlanders from the Disc of Gu were constructing a hollow orb of iron around the Fonlands beneath the layer of ocean.

When I turned my attention back to Uneb, something felt different. It was clear that my time loop spell still ensnared Uneb and it didn't appear that she had recognized the trap; her power hadn't reconciled the anomaly and I wondered if she would be trapped in it for longer than I had anticipated. It suggested that Uneb, Une the whole, wasn't actively wielding magic and if she had gathered any knowledge of arcana from consuming beings of arcane power, she didn't bring that knowledge to bear during this encounter. I had her restrained for a

long time, but as I watched her, I could see that she was growing ever so slightly the longer she was being held up.

There was a strange moment, the moment, when I could swear that she looked at me in her frozen state. I quickly checked to be sure that the spacetime loop spell was holding but it was expanding around her, not being reconciled by her arcana as I'd anticipated.

"Very clever, meat," I heard inside of my mind because the full lips of Uneb did not move. She was smirking at me, laughing with her eyes and taunting me. "It took me a while to understand what you were doing to me, but even when I did, I let it continue because you are formidable and I needed the time to reinforce myself. To bring my own arcana to bear."

I hadn't planned to let her speak, I would have attacked, but somehow, Uneb had expanded the time loop spell to encompass my very



Issac Washington, Arcane Wizard

being and I knew that anyone observing would be unable to detect any change because the two of us had been suspended like statues in the aether for a long time already.

“So you do wield arcana?” I asked her, while I ejected my spirit

form to hopefully send word that Uneb was stirring and that I was in need of assistance, but Uneb was adept enough that even my spirit form was trapped with her. I set my spirit form to looking for other means of escape or notifying the others while I occupied Uneb’s

attention.

“I am arcana,” Uneb sneered. She was no longer in her horizontal flying position, though outsiders would still see her that way. She was vertical and the lithe feminine body she had seemed to stretch and arch within their private timespace as she sneered at me. “Whatever rules and practices that you have committed to memory will soon be under my control as well, as soon as I make landfall on the Fonlands.”

“They will never let you conquer them,” I said defiantly. “They have prepared for you, you cannot sneak up on them like you did Talj or the other existences you have devastated. They know you, they know your name and they do not utter it with fear.”

“Good that names hardly mean anything to the Fonlanders,” Uneb chuckled as thick, wooly tendrils began to extend from her body in my direction. “I know them well enough to know that once I take their Lofted Disc, nothing in the Fonlands will be able to resist me because I will taint the Divine Essence itself and it will bring them all to me.”

“So you know how to defeat the Mother-Father?” I asked, genuinely curious if that is how she took the other Fonlands that Legba had told us all about.

“Of course I do,” Uneb said. “Shall I detail all of my plans to you before I end this charade and blast through the laughable defenses around the Fonlands?”

I nodded. By that point, the thick tendrils were wrapping me, but I remained calm. My spirit form had been making progress against Uneb’s control of the spacetime loop spell, and with more time, I would be able to slip it without her notice. The tendrils were around my neck and with each loop they made around me, the weight on me increased and I could feel it constricting, tightening.

“Shall we trade?” Uneb suggested. “You answer my questions

and then I yours, until you are no longer able to speak of course. The tendrils will wring you out soon enough.”

“Ask,” I grunted.

“Tell me what you are.” she said and I told her my story.

“I should have known that the Hyperion wasn’t the only one from another universe lending their help. When I am done here, and Unea is done in the home existence of the Hyperion, we will find yours.”

I was shocked to hear this. We had all assumed that Une would attack the Paradise universe considering the help they had received from Ogi. Une had split into Uneb and Unea and was attacking Alia’s home universe as she attacked the Fonlands. I wondered if Alia’s home had others as powerful as she was. She had been accompanied by very capable arcana wielders, Ivan and Clay, when she arrived to the Fonlands, and I hoped that they had others like them still in their existence. We had to get word to them if there was still time for them to defend against what was no doubt an exact replica of Uneb.

“Are you powerful enough to corrupt or consume the Mother-Father?” I grunted. The tendrils were tight, but not so much that I was forced to attempt a spell to alleviate myself. I couldn’t spare the magic as my spirit form worked at hyperspeed to free us from Uneb’s hold.

“They can resist,” Uneb said, “and probably match any increase in my abilities, but I learned something from the other Fonlands that even the Vodun do not know. The Mother-Father has devised the only weapon capable of slaying them and I know how to wield it. Your turn. Where is the one called Pultine? I must take her first to ensure that she sees me lay waste to her realm.”

“She is on the Disc of Agê,” I lied without hesitation. Uneb couldn’t even suspect that Pultine and the Vodun and their immense forces had traveled to the Une-verse.

It was very likely that everything Uneb learned, Une would know instantly. “The Disc of Green Life Magic that outclasses even yours. If you ever land on the Disc of Agê, you will learn the lesson of quality over quantity, for even if you bring huge stores of your ill-gotten magic against them, they will repel you with the conviction of their craft.”

I was struggling to breathe by this point and if I hadn’t felt my spirit form escape the spacetime loop, I would have been panicking.

“What is the weapon to kill...Mother-Father,” I struggled. I wanted to learn this before I cast a spell to free myself, when it appeared that I was helpless and nearing death.

“Take this to your afterlife, meat,” Uneb said and she floated the space between us slowly to approach me and I felt the tendrils around my body squeezing, testing the strength of my bones. “There is a great weapon to be forged by two great powers of black magic, Lêgba as the hilt and Owuo as the blade, and I am the mastersmith.”

She smiled as she raised a hand and smacked my head with the back of it, sending me careening away from my position and toward the Fonlands, still wrapped in the tendrils that only got tighter. I am sure that she thought that she had incapacitated me enough that the tendrils would finish the work of crushing me, but she didn’t anticipate the sudden appearance of the Vodun Jo and once my spirit form had been reabsorbed, I managed to slice through the tendrils with a spell. I saw that Jo floated the space between Uneb and the Fonlands.

“This wasn’t the plan,” I said to the Vodun outloud, but she heard me through our mental connection. “You are supposed to be inside of that complete barrier that has been constructed.”

“That was never the plan, Arcane,” Jo said and that was the last thing she said before I was startled by

the appearance of another.

“Are you ok?” I heard through a new mental connection that felt very similar to Jo’s power and I saw the man next to me who looked like he could be Jo’s twin. “I am Damballah. We have met, but you were playing Smiting on my surface with the Vodun when I was in my star form.”

I smiled at him.

“Jo will continue to stall,” Damballah continued, “there are finishing touches on the defense that she wants completed, even if that means facing the enemy herself.”

“I could have continued to stall her,” I started.

“Wrapped up like you were?” Damballah chuckled. “You are lucky your spirit form reached help in time, no one noticed that anything had even changed out here.”

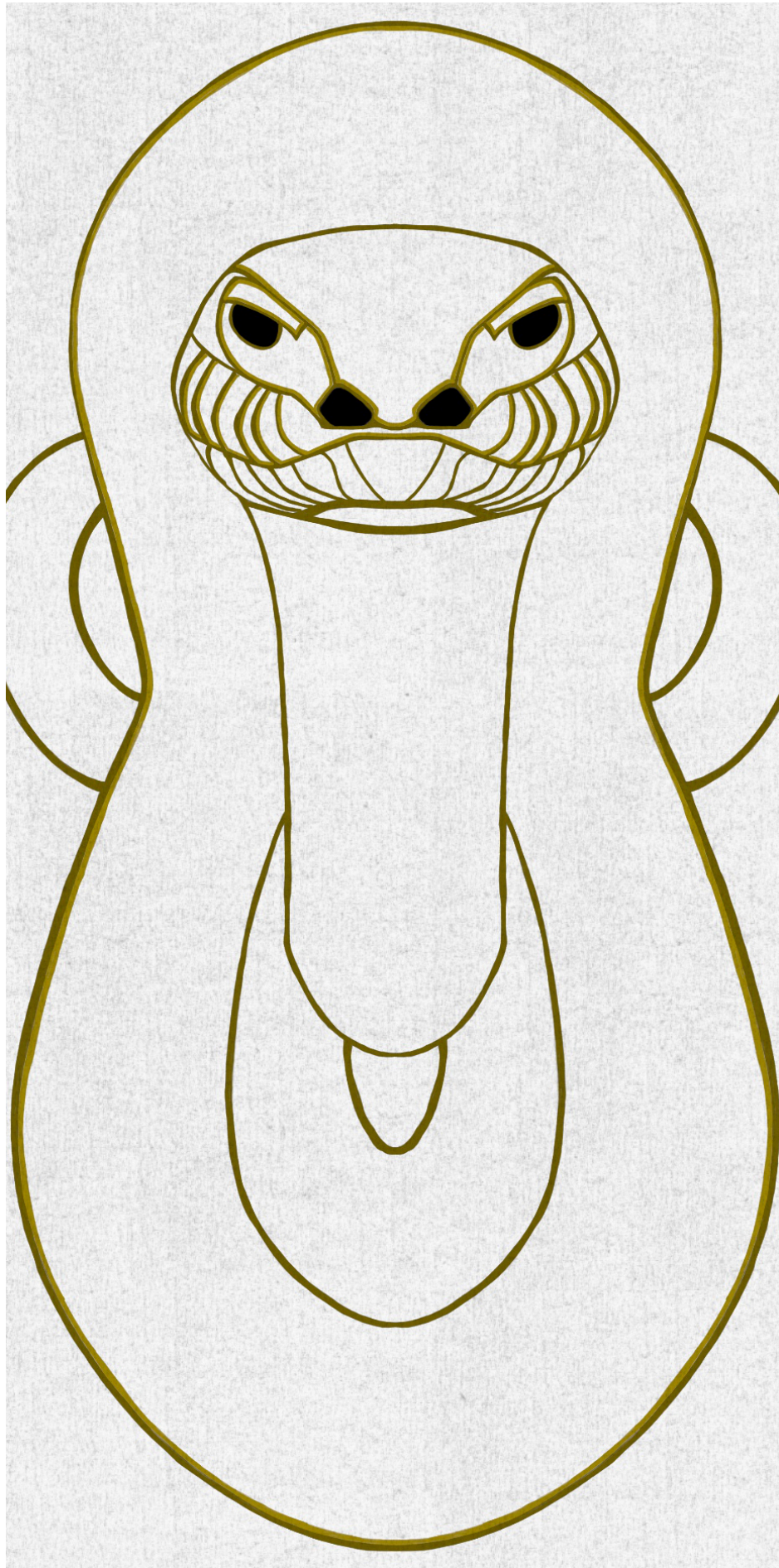
As he talked, I noticed the planet that had been glowing in its revolution around the Fonlands, hovered in space in the distance beyond Damballah like it had lined up beside us in the aether.

“We are all on alert in case things get tough for Jo,” Damballah said. “You should go inside the revolution of the stars and be ready to stall it if it manages to get through.”

“I’ll fall back if things get out of hand,” I agreed, but I wasn’t going to miss the confrontation between Jo and Uneb. They were still floating in the aether, facing off against one another.

“Fine,” Damballah agreed. “I will attain my serpent form. It is my favorite way to do battle.”

I watched as the male body next to me transformed into what appeared to be a cloud of white powder that expanded and elongated. Before long, a large serpent had materialized with pale green scales along its back and its serpentine face retained the



structure that it shared with Jo. Damballah was easily three, four times my size and I could only marvel at him.

“Are they going to battle?” I heard another power over the mental connection and I turned as the inhabitants of the glowing planet that still floated in the distance approached. I had met Obatala before, and knew about the other Luminaries of the Disc of Jo, Gleti and Nyame.

“Maybe they already are,” I said to them.

“If the battle is an arcane one, we should be able to see it,” Nyame said with annoyance, her arms crossed at her chest. “They are just floating there...and talking.”

“Every good battle starts with a treatise,” Obatala joked.

“We should be blasting that thing with sunlight,” Nyame said bitterly. “Even if it can survive it, it will definitely be wealoned and unable to toss wizards around space like an afterthought.”

“I feel like everyone is overlooking the fact that I held this being of immense power in suspended animation for a couple of weeks unaided.” The Luminaries hadn’t meant to, but they had definitely damaged my ego and I was really regretting my slipup with Uneb that allowed her to turn my own spell against me.

“Aww,” Gleti said condescending, and I couldn’t tell if she meant to be or not, “you’re a good wizard, we know that. A spacetime loop is no small feat, we were all very impressed when we heard what you’d done. But she seized it from you, didn’t she?” Gleti asked, looking at me like a kind teacher, though the comforting view of her was disturbed by the look of aspiration on Nyame’s face just over her shoulder.

“She did, and I don’t think I ever took my eyes off of her,” I admitted.

“She was playing you the whole time,” Nyame said, “if she is adept enough at seizing it from you, then you should have never been able to trap her in it in the first place.”

“You’re underestimating the enemy,” Gleti said to her as we all focused our attention on Jo and Uneb in the distance. “You’re right, the abilities she displayed to swat away the wizard indicate that she shouldn’t have ever been caught, but she was, utterly and completely for most of the time he kept her there. But she is not the same as when she arrived and it was this influx of power that gave her the knowledge to do what she did. She only acquired the knowledge over time because the immensity of her arcane ability allowed her to not only compensate and defend, but to seize and attack. She evolved before the wizard’s eyes and he will not be able to wield them the same way against her. We must approach this enemy very carefully.”

“Very assstute,” the large serpent form of Damballah hissed and I wondered how I had been able to forget that he was there with us. “Good thing that Jo hasss not engaged her yet, this is good information for the Vodun to know before ssshe decidess how to attack or defend.”

I saw Nyame roll her eyes and look away to the glowing planet known as Mosu.

“What else happened with that thing?” Obatala asked. “Is there anything else that we may have missed of your encounter.”

I recounted it as I remembered it and they watched my memories as I replayed them in my own mind. I hoped that we could deduce more about the enemy so that Jo could gain as much insight as possible. I wanted to believe that she could end this all herself, vanquish the enemy from the aether so that we could focus on the Pito and Descendant that were barring down on the Fonlands. We were all there to make sure that the victory would be final and thorough.

I made up my mind that I would not retreat. I would stand with the Mosu and the Luminaries, Damballah and Jo and trust that if the seven of us failed, Agbe, Gu, and Sakpata who was preoccupied with other things but still based on the Smiting Chamber, and the others still left in the Fonlands would not allow Uneb to take the Lofted Disc.

“She wants Pultine, Legba and Owuo,” I said aloud when they had reviewed my memories.

“What weapon does she speak of?” Obatala asked, truly perplexed.

“Could she mean the Blight Maker?” Nyame asked. “That is forged of Fonlanders. If that is what she means, then at least that and Pultine are a long way from here. We just need to get word to Legba and Owuo that they cannot allow themselves to be corrupted.”

“She can’t mean that,” Gleti reasoned, “we know if the Blight Maker. She spoke of this weapon with Legba as the hilt and Owuo as the blade as something that is a secret of the Mother-Father. As if they created a way to end them, which doesn’t make much sense to me.”

“Owuo was made as a check on the powers of the Vodun,” Nyame explained. “The Discs of the Fonlands managed to override the will of the Mother-Father that created the seven Vodun and the six underside twins. The birth of Owuo and the emergence of the Vodun Fa only recently is evidence that the Discs have a will separate from the Mother-Father. Maybe the Fonlands created the tools that could slay the Mother-Father, but it has not seen fit to give that knowledge to any Fonlander. Not here anyway.”

“There is so much revisionist history as of late,” Obatala said with a sigh. “Everything that we thought was true was only a half-truth.”

It was easy enough for me to digest the history of the Fonlands, having only learned about it all



Gleti, Nyame, Obatala, Luminaries

recently, but Fonlanders exist for a long time and to have notions about your long existence upended must be very disturbing. Nyame contacted Legba to warn him about Uneb’s plan and then we talked as we watched Jo with Uneb for a long time.

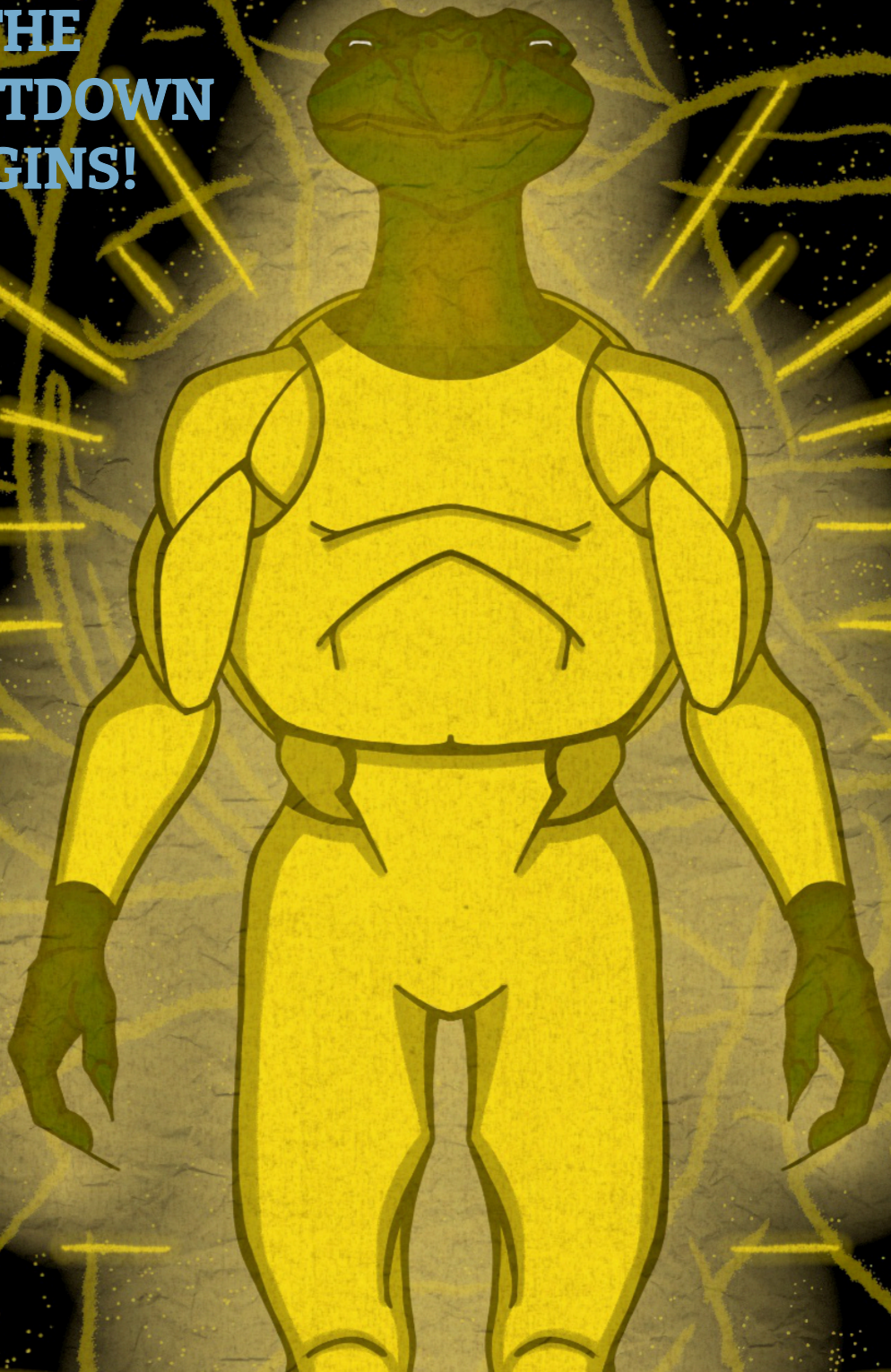
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The Divine Essence

**THE
COUNTDOWN
BEGINS!**



- COUNTDOWN -

BY VIV

Pultine and the Queen Rowen knew of one another, but they had never actually met before. They both had participated in the Dance of Hysteria, and both were friends of Maxx the Superguardian after spending substantial time with him on his home planet, Bludon, but Pultine spent time with Maxx after the presumed death of the Queen Rowen, who had given her life to save the life of a child infected by the very same taint that they battle in the Une-verse. She recovered from the infection because of her immense abilities to heal, but it took her a long time in sleep to be up on her feet again. She eagerly volunteered to join the Vodun's forces when she was at full strength, even traveling to the Disc of Agê to train her mental abilities, until the surprise appearance of Unea.

Before the explosion of Xêvioso's Cube, Rowen had been with members of the Death Witch Coven who were impressed by her mastery of the Green and teaching her how the Green overlaps with the

Violet, and when she came to in the eerie atmosphere of the Une-verse after the explosion, she used her telepathy to gently propel herself through space, not expending too much energy for fear that she might exhaust herself. She could feel the minds of her compatriots in the distance, but it was hard to really hone in and follow them because of the psychic din that the tendrils created, almost like a mental static that made it difficult for Rowen to truly focus and lock in. She navigated the Une-verse this way for what felt like a long time before she saw the beacon of yellow light and she decided to follow it because there was something familiar about the mental signature. She discovered Maxx as still as a statue and balanced on his head, presumably by accident. The beacon of the light that issued from his body intensified as she drew closer so she stood a distance, squinting her eyes as she telepathically flipped him over so he stood right-side up.

"Maxx!" she yelled from a distance. "Superguardian! Are you

alright?" Maxx never answered. This made the Queen panic as she looked around them. The tendrils weren't advancing on them, but hanging across the cosmos as they did made her keenly aware that she was in enemy territory and she lifted Maxx with her mind to a location that might obscure his very bright beacon. Then the most implausible thing happened, amidst all of the tangles of wild tendrils, a planet moved slowly across space in the distance. At first, she thought it must be a roving planet that was just wandering in the absence of the gravity of something else, but then it stopped and changed direction, and it advanced on her for long enough that Rowen chose to take cover and evade, but it eventually stopped, still at a distance before it changed direction. It was a planet-sized ship, like the one the mmoatia Llorv navigated in Rowen's home universe, Prime 5. Rowen stared at it, hoping that it wasn't looking for the source of Maxx's light that was well hidden from it by that point.

She sent out the mental projection so that she could keep an eye on Maxx and eventually Pultine and Alia arrived, all of them happy to see one another.

“I believe that we have cause for concern,” the Queen Rowen says to Pultine and Alia, “I spied a ship like the one your mmoatia sister navigates through Prime 5. Is that part of the Vodun’s forces that I didn’t know about?”

“You saw Lorv’s ship, Top? Here?” Pultine looks at the Queen with confusion. “That is not possible. Wielar commands that ship and he is still in Prime 5 on look out for the Pito there. Lorv is on the Disc of Agê.”

“Then we should definitely be concerned,” Rowen says and points in the direction the ship had gone. “It looked like a planet, but it was not. I recognized it when I remembered that I had seen something very much like it before. And if it didn’t come with us...”

“Then it was already here,” Alia says with dread. “Do y’all think there’s a mmoatia ship here, too?”

“Who knows?” Pultine says. “It might be a version of Top but devised by whoever constructed it here.”

“Haven’t we heard of another Top before?” Alia asks. “When we went to Paradise, that

other universe. The Ascendant lived in a city called Top. What if it’s their ship but they are Une’s Ascendant.”

“Descendant,” Pultine mutters. It is disturbing to think that the Ascendant they’d met in Paradise could be corrupted to do Une’s bidding. The Ascendant of Paradise are a race of humanoid, deer-like beings who are almost twice the size of humans with elaborate horns and large wings, and they traveled from the future of their original existence to the past. By some trick of arcana that Pultine doesn’t fully understand, countless copies of their ship Top were created when they jumped to the past and as a result, they exist across the multiversal structure. It is possible that a version of the



Ascendant had arrived here in the Une-verse and been corrupted, though maybe they had somehow survived without being corrupted. But if they really occupy a ship as large as the ship that Lorv piloted in Prime 5, then it is much bigger than the arcane cube Xêvioso had used to transport their forces, surely it would have been detected and accosted by the tendrils if they are not corrupted. Unless the ship's technology allows them to evade detection.

Pultine and the others say much of this aloud to each other as they decide what to do next.

"We have to figure out what is wrong with Maxx," Rowen says. "My powers have no effect on him."

"Maybe you can try to help Pultine and I will see if I can do anything for Maxx," Alia offers and she leaves the two of them to stand before Maxx in the large crevice of a space rock. She assumes her Hyperion form because of the intensity of the light off of Maxx and she stands before him. His eyes are open and he has a look of surprise on his face that shines like gold under very intense light, or if gold can be lit from within. There is a thin layer of violet all around his body, but the light issuing from him is golden and it overpowers the presence of the violet from a distance, she can only see it as close as she is now.

"Maxx," she whispers and she feels herself drawn into his mind, into a golden realm that is a vast ocean of sparkling waters with golden islands under a golden sun in a light blue sky that is dominated by the vibrant golden light. She descends to hover just over the surface of the gleaming ocean and she surveys the pristine and empty view around her before she screams, "Maxx!" The sound carries over the waters and is swallowed by the distance.

"The lean has set," Alia hears loudly. A hard male voice returns to her from the distance. "Maxx has attained Superconsciousness. Maxx will self-destruct in time remaining: four hours, when transference of

consciousness is complete. Please cease all functions."

Alia is confused. "Maxx? Is that you? We need you to come back to yourself. The Vodun's forces are scattered across the Une-verse. Things don't look good for us at the moment. Pultine is here, and the Queen Rowen. Please come back to us."

"Self-destruct has been initiated and Maxx will attain Superconsciousness in time remaining: 3 hours 57 minutes, at which time, the Superguardian will detonate. Do you wish to stop the self-destruct sequence?"

"Yes!" Alia yells. "Maxx, do not detonate. We need you alive and you will only kill your friends. Stop the self-destruct sequence!"

"Authorization is denied," the voice responds. It is cold and distant and Alia realizes that she is talking to an automaton. Apparently the disruption in the cube and the arcane scattering across the Une-verse had triggered Maxx's self-destruct sequence. "Voice command not recognized. Maxx will attain Superconsciousness in time remaining: 3 hours 49 minutes, at which time, the Superguardian will detonate."

Alia is frustrated and she leaves Maxx's mind to return to her own, then she rejoins Pultine and the Queen Rowen. Pultine looks better than she had been, she has managed to retract her wings which she hadn't been able to do before.

"How do you feel?" she asks Pultine.

"It is not enough, still," Pultine answers with frustration. "I need more time to recuperate my light. If I can reunite with Tracia or Agê I will likely be healed faster, but I can't ask you Rowen to keep expending your energy for me. We need your other abilities now more than ever."

The Queen nods and looks to Alia. "Good news about Maxx, I

hope?"

"If you call a time bomb good news," Alia responds glibly. "Maxx is in self-destruct, probably an accident from the cube explosion, and we have to figure out how to cancel it before he explodes."

"How were you able to reach his mind?" the Queen asks with astonishment.

"I imagine that the glow made it hard for you," Alia says, thinking aloud. "It's the Superconsciousness, so it's not just energy exuding from him, it's a mind and it's dense and Maxx's consciousness is being uploaded to it. Once that is done, his body explodes."

"How is that even possible?" Pultine says, also mystified by the news. "The source of the Superconsciousness is on Bludon. If he is uploading, or leaving his body, can he make it back to Bludon from this existence?"

"He cannot," the Queen Rowen says with confidence. "If we don't stop this, not only will he explode, but he will be cut off from his family, from the other guardians, even in his death and that will be devastating for him. We cannot let that happen."

"We won't," Pultine says. "Alia, we can't let that happen."

"I tried to stop the self-destruct, but I wasn't authorized to. I think that only Maxx can stop the sequence, but I didn't see him inside of his mind. It is beautiful ocean and islands, and a distant voice that sounded like it was programmed to respond. I don't know how we can get Maxx back inside of himself to stop what is happening."

"Can you take us all inside of Maxx's mind?" Pultine asks and when Alia agrees to try, the three of them sit on the large space rock.

* * *

from
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Codeine Crazy – Issue 16 – The Quest for Blight Maker

by Maxwell Roberson

The Queen Rowen works with Alia and Pultine to shut off Maxx's self destruct sequence. This excerpt takes place when Maxx was mad in Kútmómē and he discussed his self destruct sequence with Pultine and others.

“You must seal that,” Shini says, staring up at the rip in strange existence where he finds himself with Maxx. “We are in Kútmómē and I am not sure if that means we are dead, but random Fonlanders could fall in after us and I don’t want that to happen.”

The place where Maxx and Shini find themselves is very dark but there is light from the rip in existence. They are in what looks to be a large hole in dirt, a circular clearing with high dirt walls, but the nature of existence itself is hazy, out of focus and shimmering with a light blue glow. Shini recognizes this look of distortion, it is the oblivion he’d existed in before Maxx freed him, but seeing it now transposed over the location on the Disc of Agê where he had been before jumping into the large hole, made him realize that tales of Kútmómē were true and Maxx had told him the truth that he’d been sent to Kútmómē but to a spot far away from the landmarks he might have recognized.

Maxx stands tall in the hazy existence, face up toward the hole, moving his clawed fingers deliberately and chanting. Before his actions have any impact on the opening between Kútmómē and the Disc of Agê, both Shini and Maxx are surprised when two figures land before them inside the hole.

“Pultine!” Shini says with overwhelming surprise and he moves closer to her.

“Maxx,” Zacchaeus says just as Maxx stops the spell with his hands and the opening high above them is now closed.

“Why are you here?” Maxx asks with wonder.

“Where are we that Shini is here?” Pultine asks, distrustful of the dark muthi that stands before her.

“How do you know Shini?” Maxx asks Pultine.

“How do I know Shini?” Pultine asks, angrier than she had been. “How do you know Shini if he was killed so long before you were even manufactured on Bludon?”

“I never died, Pristine,” Shini says. “I’ve been here, in Kútmómē.”

“Which is where Fonlanders go in death,” Pultine says. “You were dead.”

“If I was dead, then we all are now,” Shini counters.

“This is not...” Pultine starts but then she is staring at the world around them, the view is familiar but completely new. She walks to the wall of the hole where they find themselves and she pushes at the dirt that is much softer than the Fonlands equivalent. Her hand plunges into the blue-tinted dirt almost up to the shoulder and she removes it easily. “This is not the Fonlands,” she says. “Have we died and gone to Kútmómē?”

“We are alive,” Maxx says confidently. “You will know when I die, I reprogrammed my systems to self destruct in the event of my death once I started this journey. Absent that, I believe we are all alive and well, but there is now a timer counting down to our demise.”

“How are we in Kútmómē?” Pultine asks, voice on the verge of nervous trembling. “This can’t be.”

“It is, Pristine,” Maxx says and he tries to put a hand on her shoulder to comfort her, but Pultine shrugs it off. “The magic that I used to arrive here allows me, I guess all of us, to dwell in Kútmómē for a limited time that should be sufficient to recover the Blight Maker, and once obtained, the wielder will be protected from the fear of succumbing to death in Kútmómē. We should start looking for it now.”

“We are not helping you!” Pultine growls at Maxx. “We are here to stop you! Take us home now, Superguardian, or I will incinerate you.”

Maxx understands the anger that Pultine displays, but rather than feel afraid at her obvious power, he is mesmerized by the way the light at her hand burns in this blue tinted existence, almost like a yellow-white flame rather than the ball of light that he’d seen in the other existence.

“I am sorry, Pristine,” Maxx says dreamily.

“You alright, man?” Zacchaeus asks, obviously worried about Maxx, but also unsettled and readying himself to assist Pultine if Maxx gets out of control.

“I am good,” Maxx says, never taking his eyes from Pultine. “You should realize this as well. There is no leaving Kútmómē without the Blight Maker. It is not possible to reenact the spell that brought us here, death magic does not work here. The Blight Maker is the only key back to the Fonlands.”

“So we might as well be fucking dead!” Zacchaeus says angrily and the arcana of the black cloak he wears flares, the black smoke pouring off of it intensifying.

“We are not,” Shini says and he tries to get Pultine’s attention. “Listen,

Pultine, I did not die and I was stuck in this place for a long time, but I was brought back to the Fonlands. I think it is impossible for truly dead Fonlanders to leave here, and your friend Zaccacheus would not be here if he were dead, nor would Maxx despite all of his arcane enhancements. Even though I have been here for a long time, I was far away from anything else, floating in nothing. I am sure that we can find other means to return to the Fonlands without the Blight Maker...”

Maxx interrupts him with a fist to the face.

“We are here for Blight Maker and it is the only sure way that we know how to return to the Fonlands. If you don’t want to aid me, then you are welcome to enjoy the rest of your existence here in Kútmómē. Let’s go.”

Maxx pushes into the wall of dirt and disappears. Shini steps in front of Pultine who seems frozen in place staring at the hole in the dirt that Maxx had left.

“Pristine, do not believe him,” Shini says earnestly. “He is mad and only cares about his weapon. If Kútmómē is real, if the stories are real, this is the place of our forebears and they must know how the living can leave this place.”

“But what if they don’t?” Pultine says, finally looking Shini in the eyes. She puts a hand to his cheek. “You look just as I remember you. I never liked you, but Ahdís loved you and she mourned for a long time when you forced her to kill you.” Pultine grabbed his pointed chin and squeezed until Shini was obviously uncomfortable. “I would be her revenge, you destroyed her home and made her kill her own companion, but it seems you have been truly suffering.” She lets go of him and crosses her arms at her chest. “I can’t risk Zacchaeus’s life on a gamble that we will find a way to avoid being stranded here. Maxx may be mad, but he is right, Shini. If the Blight Maker is our only known way to return to the Fonlands, then we will find it before Maxx so he can’t do anything reckless with it.”

“Do I get a say?” Zacchaeus asks. “I’m with Shini, Maxx don’t need anything with blight in the name. And I heard you and Ahdís talking about this place. He’s right, there should be a lot of really smart Fonlanders here who can help us out.”

Pultine is thoughtful for a moment. “Let’s follow him for now,” she says eventually, “keep an eye on him. I’m sure we’ll run into someone on the way and we can ask around.”

They agree and then follow Maxx into the dirt.



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.

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SECTION 6 - 3

THE DISC OF LEGBA

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 Lêgba.

DISC OF LEGBA

BY WESLEY LIVINGSTON

Celestial Library

A physical building that circumscribes the Disc as a great wall. The library is large and many travelers to the Disc move through it to arrive on the Disc. The Library is a mysterious place with many nooks and passageways that have never been explored. There are many sections of the library and many believe that there are books on any topic that can exist in the Fonlands. It is common knowledge that each book was hand selected by Lêgba and that he has read the countless books of the Library.

Changing Desert

Exists between the Celestial and Void Libraries. It was created by the first Golden Orb Weaver spider of the Disc, Aku, using her magic to transform her large web into the

perilous terrain that it is today. Because of the nature of her powers, the changing desert is known to ensnare travelers with elaborate mirages. There are many cities in the Desert inhabited by dwellers of the Disc familiar with the magic that permeates it.

Featherlegs

The Featherleg spider kin are known as the strongest of the spider kin on the Disc. They are large with long hairy legs. The hairs of the Featherlegs along the tips of their legs are stiff and sharp and they can flick the hairs at enemies or prey to impale thick hide or golden armor. They can quickly shoot their silk to ensnare or evade enemies, and they are adept at combat with their legs.

Golden Orb Weavers

Aku was the first of the Golden Orb Weavers spider kin and her nest has is located on the exterior of the Celestial Library. The Weaver kin are known to consume the insect kin of

the Disc and they inhabit both the Void and Celestial Libraries to rid the books of any pests that might damage them. Weavers build large, strong webs that glitter with gold and they are able to weave illusions that can fool the eye of their prey. The kin is strong in both Black and Yellow/Gold magic.

Void Library

A physical building that circumscribes the midpoint of the radius of the Disc marking the separation between the Changing Desert and the Shifting Planes. It is an extension of the Celestial Library and it is possible to enter the Celestial Library and navigate to the Void Library without crossing the Changing Desert. Owuo created the Void Library and chose many of the books that it contains. Owuo created the Labyrinth of Myriad Horrors inside of the library to dissuade those snooping around for secrets that Lêgba chose to bury there.

‘Young’ Vodun Chronicles: Lêgba’s Shadow

BY MAXWELL ROBERSON

“Come on!” Xêvioso whined.

“Hurry up!” Gu growled

“We’re going to miss it!” Xêvioso complained.

“If I miss it because of you, I’m never going to stop punching you,” Gu threatened.

They were in the overlap between the Discs of Xêvioso and Lêgba and the two older of the brothers had come to collect Lêgba so that they could watch Boromo, the legendary hero of the Disc of Sakpata, attempt to remove the grigri from the pillar on Sakpata’s Disc.

“I’m coming,” Lêgba said, floating from the platform that was far away from the one the older brothers occupied, though they were jumping platforms to approach him. He looked away from them and down at Owuo whose head and most of his torso protruded from a portal of violet on the surface of the platform. “You should come.” Lêgba said to Owuo who looked angry.

“We were on our way until they showed up unannounced. Why don’t you tell them that I am here and see if they will invite me along.”

Lêgba looks at him and sighs with his shoulders, then he turns and jumps two discs away from Owuo toward his brothers and they meet there to talk, far enough away that they could not see Owuo, but he could hear them.

“Let’s go,” Gu said angrily. “I should have just gone by myself, but

I had to tell Xêvi.”

“I’m glad you told me, I had no idea. Not even the Luminaries have tried to obtain the grigri from the pillar and they are the only Fonlanders who I imagine capable of the feat.”

“But maybe it isn’t even a



hard thing to do," Lêgba said. "We have no idea what will happen to Boromo when he tries to take hold of the grigri. Maybe they have always just been decorative, a display of our Veves big enough to be seen from long distances."

"Don't shit on my hope for a spectacular show of magic," Gu grumbled, "it better be explosive or I will challenge him to a fight to demonstrate the worthlessness of the grigri, and beat him down if he refuses. Let's at least get through a portal to Sakpata's Disc while you two talk about nothing. Conjecture is useless when the thing is happening."

"Owuo told me about Boromo attempting to take the grigri," Lêgba said as Xêvioso moved his hands to construct a portal. In those days it took them a while to master portal magic and even if Xêvioso was the most skilled at it among the three of them, it took him about twenty minutes moving his hands into precise formations to make the portal.

"I hope he isn't there watching," Gu said like he spat the words. He looked at Xêvioso impatiently and if he'd had a wristwatch, he would have been staring at it impatiently at regular intervals. "I haven't run into him in a long time and I would like to keep it that way. Nothing makes my spine shiver like being in his presence. When he smiles that dead smile of his and looks at you with those dead eyes, it's enough to make me crawl out of my skin."

"Gu is harsh," Xêvioso said, "but it is hard to disagree with him. I have tried on multiple occasions to engage Owuo in friendship, but he always shuns me. I know about his interest in Death Magic, I have heard the justices speak of it, and I have tried to engage him on that, but he just looks at me with that dead expression and

even a Vodun can only withstand that for so long."

"He will likely be there," Lêgba said, "why not invite him along? I understand your apprehensions, trust me, but he has taught me a lot about Death Magic, and he is interesting to be around."

"You like queer things, brother. Xêvi and I are fond of warriors, strong Fonlanders who embody the might of the Divine Essence. It's your prerogative to delight in songs and stories, spiders and changelings."

By that point, the portal was done and Gu went through it laughing uproariously. Before passing through, Xêvioso turned to Lêgba. "I would like to try to get to know Owuo, but this should be an entertaining spectacle and I'd rather it not be weighed by awkwardness."

Lêgba looked back at the portal where Owuo had been, but he was gone. He wondered how much of the conversation Owuo had overheard.

* * *

The first Spider born from the Disc of Lêgba was Aku, matriarch of the Golden Orb Weavers. Many spiders born on the Disc since her emergence view her as a mother of all spiders, though not all spiders share the large abdomen of gold and black shaped like an egg that is a characteristic of Aku. She is the largest spider to ever dwell in the Fonlands and this distinction is made based on the circumference of her legs that were as wide around as a field is long. There are stronger spiders than Aku in the Disc and in the Fonlands; the Featherlegs are the strongest of the Disc and they are the most intimidating with their hairy legs capable of flicking individual strands of their hair that are sharp enough to penetrate golden armor.

Aku, like all Fonlanders, has no real need for food, she is sustained by Divine Essence as most Fonlanders are, but she enjoys trapping things in her web and using

her venom to create a smoothie to slurp while spectating the changing desert. She mostly eats large insect kin that dwell in the Celestial Library, keeping it free of silverfish, booklice, cockroaches, and termites that attempt to enter. She is known to free things from her webbing that ask nicely or tell her jokes that made her laugh aloud.

Shortly after Aku's emergence from the Disc, the Celestial and Void Libraries were erected along the circumference of the Disc and at the midpoint of the radius of the Disc respectively, and Aku spun a golden web to bridge the libraries when the surface of the Disc she had emerged from disappeared in the gap. Her webbing shimmered golden in the light, for Aku was the first Fonlander born with a gift for Transmutation and Pattern magic, though her proclivity for the Black was stronger. As the Disc became more populated, Aku decided to make it easier for others to use her webbing as a conveyance between the two libraries and she cast a hand spell using all of her limbs to transform the webbing into golden colored sand, and the space outside of the Void Library and circumscribed by the Celestial Library became known as the changing desert. As a result of the magic she used to create the changing desert, it can sometimes be difficult for travelers to navigate and many have reported very elaborate mirages that held them in fantasy for many risings and settings of the daysource. Despite the tricky nature of the desert, cities would eventually form there.

Aku made her permanent web in the southern slope of the Celestial Library where she could spectate the travellers of the changing desert. She was mostly amused by the Fonlanders bumbling around the golden sands, and eventually she noticed a glowing violet dot in the desert of yellow that grew larger as it approached her web. When it was close, she saw the man, Owuo, coming closer with a violet halo as a disc that was always behind his head. He wore a tunic shirt with short sleeves, and form fitting shorts

that stopped well above his knees.

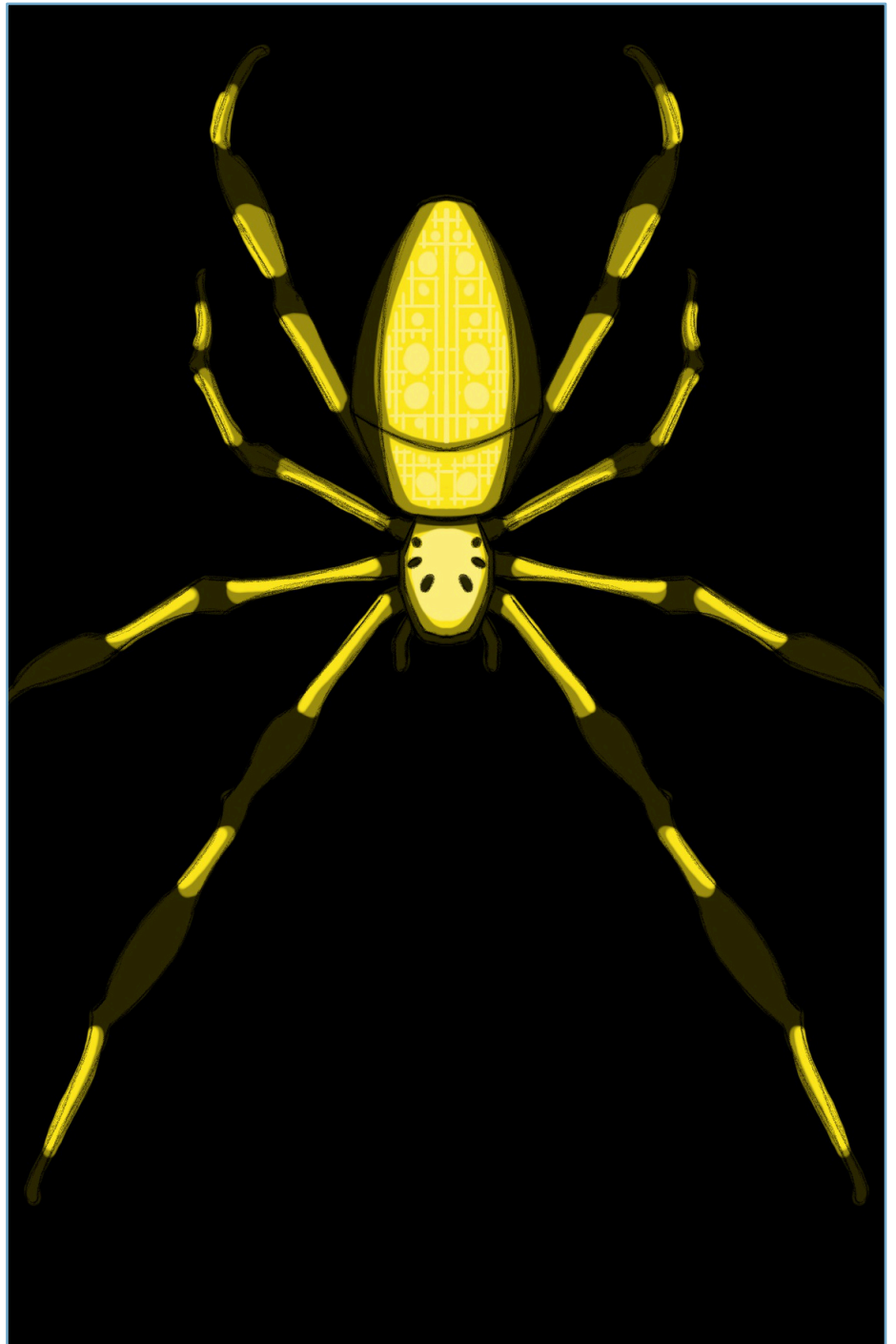
“Oh, the handsome demon has returned,” Aku said with delight and she made her way quickly to the bottom of the large web where Owuo was climbing up along the vertical strands of the web that weren't sticky like the radial strands. She spun a comfortable swing from him. “Sit, sit,” she insisted, happy to host the Abosom who had only ever been kind to her despite his wicked evil that she often saw on display in the changing desert. Aku wasn't a big fan of torture and suffering, she was sure to inject her meals with venom to put them to sleep until she was ready to eat them. She killed the insect kin of the Celestial library to protect the books of the library. She'd witnessed Owuo torture Fonlanders in the desert and at first she only noticed his cruelty and she watched like someone tragedy, usually out of curiosity and horror. But over time, she became amused by Owuo's elaborate traps Owuo set that seemed to only ensnare Fonlanders who were self-serving and had recently been the cause of another Fonlander's death.

“Hello, Aku, mother of the desert,” Owuo said with his dead smile warmed Aku. Nothing about the Abosom of Evil unnerved her and she found him pleasant to look at and to be talk to, which Owuo appreciated because he was used to the fear or loathing of other Fonlanders who knew that if he was present something was soon to die. Maybe it was because things always died around Aku, her web was full of insect kin waiting to be consumed.

“To what do I owe the pleasure?” Aku asked.

“I am recently returned to the Disc,” Owuo said and for a moment, his dead smile betrayed him and the flash of sadness that appeared on his face was noticeable enough to Aku, though Owuo quickly replaced his smile and continued. “I was meant to meet Lêgba. I made a breakthrough when I was on the Disc of Gu with Za Mane of the Hira because he leaves death in his wake. The bond between Red and Black magic is stronger than anyone

Aku, Golden Orb Weaver in Black



realized and I saw it while I was with Za Mane. Lêgba seemed excited to talk about it, but then...”

“Let me guess, the Vodun do not approve?”

Owuo rolled his eyes when he heard the word Vodun.

“I sometimes follow Lêgba at a distance when he is with the Vodun and I hear the way they talk about me. I've always known their feelings

toward me, they've never made it a secret. But there was a time when Lêgba and I spent a lot of time together exploring the Disc, back when there was less of everything. But I understand, the Vodun of the Disc can't be buddies with the Abosom who delights in the deaths of the dwellers of the Disc, it would make him appear to be cruel by association.”

Aku understood this logic. Many Fonlanders feared her because

of her web and her appetite for the insect kin, and it was for that reason that everyone expected her to be friendly with Owuo even before she was, and they would be surprised to know that Lêgba visited her every time he left the Disc and returned to it, like she was its gatekeeper. But Aku never visited the Opaque Castle of Lêgba or was seen in the Shifting Planes with him because she didn't want to be gawked at.

"The Vodun can't be evil," Aku said. "I wonder if Fonlanders consider me evil?" she mused aloud.

"Definitely," Owuo laughed. "You keep evil company, and you are constantly eating things in your web. And many don't realize your essential function, Lêgba does, and he is infinitely grateful for you and the other Orb Weavers of the Libraries. Without you all, there would be no library. It's the same for so many spider kin of the Fonlands, you all do more than anyone notices because you are subtle and quiet."

Golden Orb Weaver, in white



"There is nothing worse than the opposite, a Fonlander who is coarse and loud," Aku said and they both laughed at that.

"I don't question my place anymore," Owuo said. "There was a time when I wondered why I even existed, but what is the point of that? I exist, and I am delighted by the things that delight me. Does evil need to exist in the Fonlands? That is a question for the Mother-Father who has not removed me from it to this point. But without me, without fearsome figures like yourself and the other spiders, and other Fonlanders like us, the Fonlands would be innocent and frankly, boring. What if there is some great evil out there just waiting to descend on the Fonlands? Only Gu and Xêvioso would be able to stand up against it, everything else would be beautiful while it crumbled under the pressure. A realm without evil, can't conceive of it and will be shocked at the introduction of it. But again, I don't feel the need to justify my existence anymore, so let's stop talking about this."

Aku extended one of her long legs toward Owuo and slowly massaged his back so as to comfort him. "You are the Abosom of Irony. You cannot say what you mean, if even what you feel is apparent. You really don't need any validation from anyone. But if it weighs so heavily on you, Owuo, maybe it is time to let go of parts of yourself that are evil. You can still exist as a death dealer without luxuriating in the demise of a Fonlander."

Owuo threw back his head and laughed uproariously. "I thought so too, but then next thing I know, I'm in one-eyed ogre form eating corpses. It just comes out of me."

"Well, you are always welcome on my web," Aku said. "Are you hungry? I have a lot of things in the web."

"I'm alright. I don't like sleeping prey, but I will delight in watching you eat. And if you don't mind, I will tell you about the interesting mix of Chaos and Transmogrification that I witnessed."

Aku agreed and she barely listened while Owuo talked.

Lêgba is on the underside of his own Disc, the Disc of Deads and Wraiths, when he hears the voice of the Luminary Nyame in his mind.

"You are a hilt, apparently," she says in the detached way that she sometimes said things.

"What does that mean?" Lêgba asks out loud. He is in the field where Fa had emerged from the Disc, marveling at the magic that still looms here.

"It means that you are part of the enemy's plan to take the Fonlands. Owuo is the blade."

"Why are you speaking in riddles? This sounds like a serious thing but I don't understand what it means." Lêgba is nervous and it is apparent in his voice.

"I am not speaking in riddles, I am being interrupted," Nyame says with exasperation. "You are a hilt to wield Owuo as a blade to kill the Mother-Father so that this thing, Uneb, can corrupt the Lofted Disc. The two of you need to hide. We know from the Talj Rip that the assault of the enemy on a realm is slow moving, but Uneb has arrived to expedite the process. What will you and Owuo do with this information? The Luminaries and the Arcane Wizard are curious to know."

"I guess I have to go ask Owuo. What do you all think we should do?"

"I think you should hide, you have never been a fighter."

Lêgba chuckles. "I guess that is the truth. But Owuo delights in the death of things, he has trained long and hard to be able to humiliate warriors so that the last thing they hear is his laughter."

"Then I am glad to hear that you will have a capable bodyguard in hiding. We think that the best thing is for you to hide."

"I am sad to hear that you Luminaries have such a low opinion of me," Lêgba says.

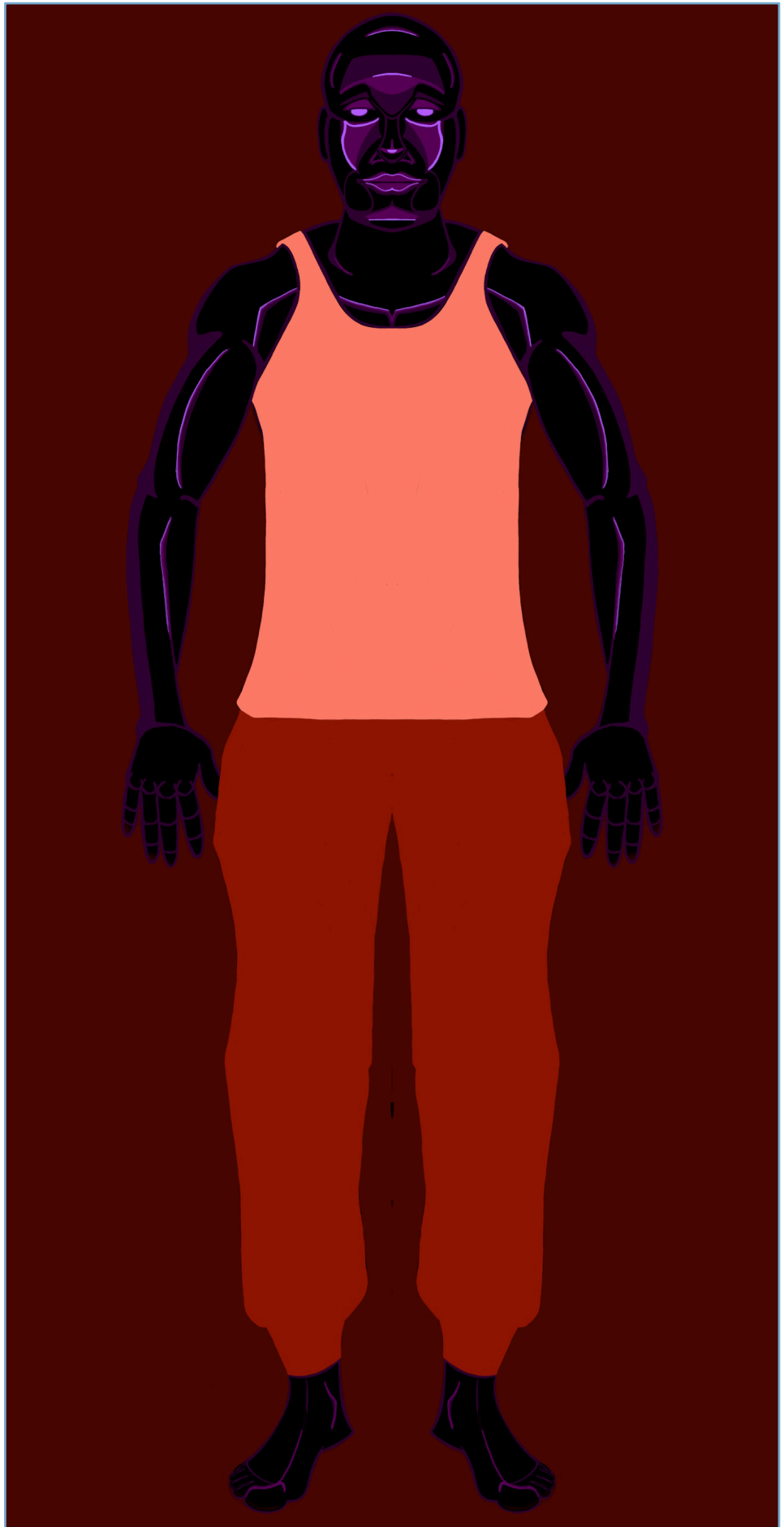
"Then it must be really devastating to know that the Earther agrees," Nyame adds.

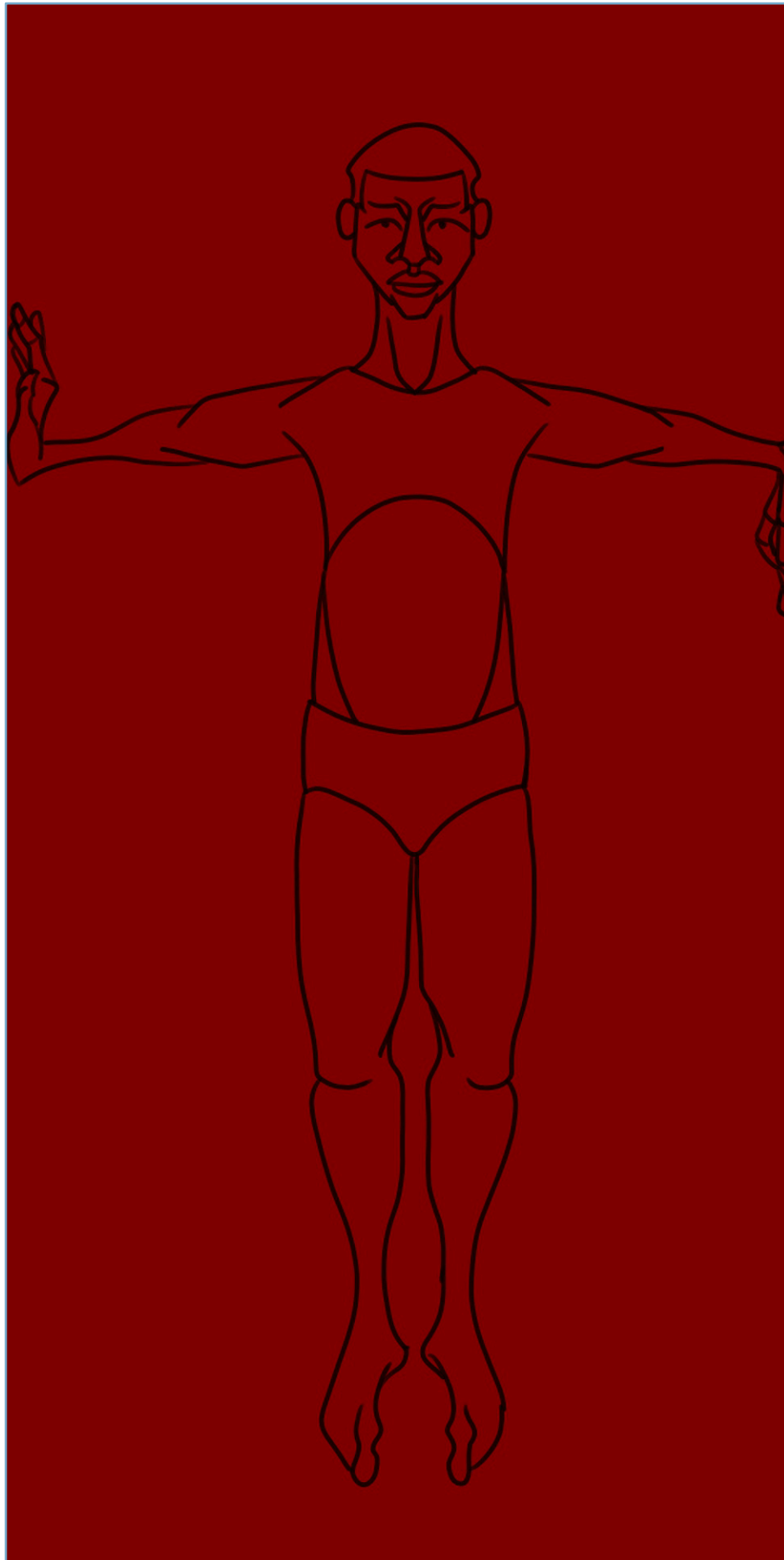
"Who is this Arcane Wizard?" Lêgba asks.

"The Arcana Master, he has upgraded to Pattern Magic, most impressive. Contact me when you have spoken to Owuo and let me know what your plans are."

Owuo is with Aku when Lêgba finds him and they seem to be having a good time laughing together when he lands high up on her web. He grows extra long legs to walk the web and both Aku and Owuo cheer with delight when they notice him.

"This has never happened before," Aku says with genuine delight. "The Vodun and Abosom





together in my web. I guess it is the time of unprecedented things. I heard that the enemy arrived unexpectedly.”

“Indeed,” Lêgba says and looks to Owuo who is swinging in a seat that Aku had spun for him. “We have a problem.”

“You just realized that you’re as useless as I am since Fa emerged from your underside?” Owuo said and the way he said it make Aku laugh out loud.

“No, I already knew that I was useless, but apparently neither of us is useless. The enemy wants to use us to kill the Mother-Father.”

Owuo looks skeptically at Lêgba until it is apparent that he is not joking.

“Can it do that?”

“The Luminaries think so. And I don’t like to underestimate Nyame, she gets violent when I don’t take her seriously and I prefer her loving on me.”

“When was the last time that happened?” Owuo says.

“It can happen again if I don’t agitate her. So what are we going to do? She thinks we should go into hiding.”

“She said that you should go into hiding and I should be your bodyguard,” Owuo guesses.

“Whatever,” Lêgba says dismissively. “Do you agree?”

He shrugs. “Get comfortable I guess. We will hang here in the web with Aku until it is no longer safe to do so.”

“And then you can go into the Celestial Library if things get hairy,” Aku adds. “Nothing not born in the Fonlands will ever find you in there.”

* * *

SMITTING

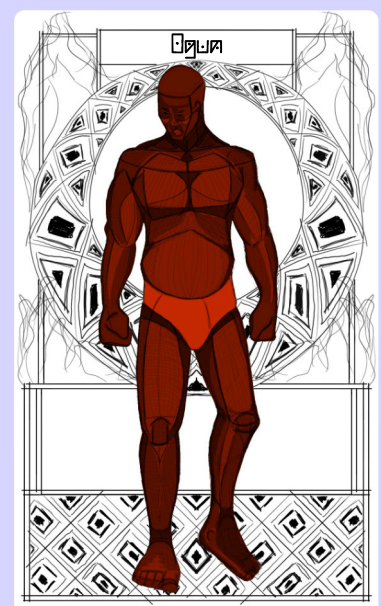
THE MOST POPULAR TRADING CARD GAME IN THE FONLANDS AND UNIVERSE PRIME 5!



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 from Jo's first deck, and Ogun from Gu's first deck.





**See you
next
month!!!**