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|  | Desert Saga **Chapter II**    **Cast**  Qumi ……….……**Prime Saga Master**, Original Idea  Lord Marko………………….. **Gigel** (human, farmer)  Dane…………………… **Himself** (human, inquisitor)  j0hN\_UsKgLa55….…….**John Hastings** (/, librarian)  Sentry……………… **Hiekatthanasul** (elf, summoner)  **-The departure -**     "Sorcerer?" Hastings looked genuinely flabbergasted, his forehead folded into confused creases. "If you're referring to that little incident down in the tunnels, I assure you, child - That there is not a soul more surprised than I am."  The Elf-Child studied Hastings, his eyes narrowing but for a split-second in suspicions. Hastings, however, had turned back to the old texts - almost as if he's attempting to avoid Hiek's scrutiny.  "Do forgive the fancies of a young mind, good Sir... I meant no offence" apologized Hiek after the passing of an awkward moment. 'Good liar,' thought the child.    "About Musty, Sir?" reminded Hiek.    "Oh.. The... the... marten, young master?" replied Hastings, appalled at the thought of handling such a furry, little beast - and its lice... fleas... and a myriad of possible animal-borne diseases. "Um... just leave it on the floor. I'll keep an eye on it to the best of my ability. Run along, now. The guildsmen are preparing to leave the mansion as we speak," said the scholar, with an attempt at a winning smile (and once again, displaying those ever-so-slightly pointed canines of his)...  "Nice teeth." remarked the boy and left the marten on the floor. He pets it and left the room to join the rest of the adventurers.  Hiek, the young elf, emerged from Dante Mansion and joined the adventurers gathered there. There were actually two groups, Dane and the guild officers stood just a few steps removed from the rest, discussing what to do next.  - Where’s Hastings, elf? – asked Dane when he saw the boy elf with the corner of his eye.  - He desired to remain in the Mansion – the boy answered, but not stopping from his walk to meet up with the rest of the adventurers.  - Guildsman !! – Dane shouted at a man-at-arms.  - Yes inquisitor! – responded the warrior in a military manner.  - Go upstairs and inform Mr. Hastings that his presence is required this evening in Sandburgs Seven Deserts Inn. – Danes eyes opened wide and demanded action. The guildsman was about ten paces when Dane turned back to his discussion with the guild officers                The guildsman ran, almost breathless, into Hastings in the large room with the glass dome. Hastings did not notice the guildsman, starving for air, as his attention was dedicated in all its vastness to the words of a brown leather covered book.  - Mis… Mister… Ha… Mister Hastings… - Hastings ignorantly passed by the guild warrior, which by now took a good breath into his lungs and shouted  - HASTINGS !!!  - Yes, man… what is it, your shout lifted the sand from its calm slumber on the furniture, you know I’m not deaf, in Highfathers name. – his eyes just vaguely were removed from the pages.  - I’m sorry sire, Inquisitor Dane desires your presence this evening in the…  - …Seven Deserts Inn, I know, go and inform his holiness - a smirk appeared on his face - that I shall be there, hopefully with new and exciting information. – Hastings eyes sloped back into the pages of the book, but after a moment his eyes reemerged from the book only to see the guild warrior still there, Hastings gave of a cynical smile.  - The language here … - he said - …hasn’t been spoken in ages and it will abandon it’s secrets to me, only if I do read it, so if there is nothing more to add please leave so my attention is not distracted in so many directions … - Hastings cliched his eyes looking annoyed.  - Yes sir, I shall leave. – the warrior said in his usual military fashion, bowing, turning and heading in a normal pace towards the door, but as he neared the wooden frame, Hasting slowly removed the book from his sight and looked at the guildsman.  - Emm... guildsman? - said Hastings in a pleasant tone.  - Yes sire. - the guildsman stopped and turned to face Hastings.  - I want you to pass a message to that serf, Gigel, I think his name is ... - Hastings lowered the book even more and delicately placed it on a near table - you know him, gray shirt, brown pants, walking stick, this high... - Hastings raised his left hand to the corresponding height.  - I know the person. - the guildman reported sharply.  - Ah, good, then tell him that when he reaches the village he should inform a mister Daruv ... the Baker that his presence is requested in the Mansion, the serf should know the details. So, is everything clear guildsman ?  - No worries sire. The message shall be passed onwards.  - Grand, now if you don't mind ... - Hastings turned his head towards the book. The guildsman warrior understood, bowed his head in respect and exited the room. Hastings waited for the sound of steps from the warrior started to fade until he returned to his book, he picked it up and headed to a window overlooking the Mansion courtyard.              Hastings stood by the window and watched as the guild warrior first reported to the inquisitor. Hastings gave of a laugh filled with pleasure, as he did not see a happy face on the inquisitor. The assembled group started to move, two guildsmen ran to reach the door and open them, while in that time the guildsman that Hastings spoke to approached the serf, who after hearing the message shook his head. Then new master of Dante Mansion remained near the window until the adventurers left the courtyard.    "Now, if my memory serves..." mumbled Hastings to himself and proceeded to the South Wing of Dante's Mansion. "It'll be there... It has to be..."    As Hastings continued with his habit of conversing with himself, he was not aware at all of the soft pit-pattering paws of that little beast of Hiek's, shadowing his every step.    The Chamber in the South Wing belonged to her Ladyship Myrrah, the wife of Lord Dante. However, their marriage was a short-lived one as she very soon succumbed to a strange illness that no physician - near or far - could diagnose or cure. She was a hauntingly beautiful woman - albeit a surprisingly venomous one. Often, she ordered young chambermaids who so much as looked at her husband to be strussed up and whipped. The elderly servants usually get the worst of her attention; as she'll command them to work from dawn till dusk without a moment's rest - saying that they were lazy for being slow with age. Many speculated that it was the servants that plotted her eventual death, slipping grounded sand-viper fangs into her Ladyship's powder box.    The sight that greeted Hastings was one of a once-luxurious chamber left to host dust, dead moths and cobwebs - bleakness personified. Lord Dante have ordered that the Lady Myrrah's chamber remains untouched - like a memory he wished to freeze in his mind for eternity.    Hastings, strolled across the room and came to the Lady's dressing table. There stood a box, exquisitely adorned with carvings of little cherubim’s and pegasi. With a click, the scholar opened it.    "There you are," proclaimed Hastings to himself smugly. "Just as I have suspected..." The marten hid nearby under a opulent four-poster bed, watching Hasting's antics - but strain as it did, it could not see what the scholar had removed from the little wooden box.    As he slipped the object into his pocket, a soft, sneering laughter was heard -so soft that it almost sounded like the passage of wind through some unseen cranny.    "Who's that!" exclaimed Hastings, turning around and scanned the forsaken chamber - finding nothing at all. Cold beads of sweat rolled from his forehead. He wiped them off with a silk kerchief and quickly left her Ladyship's room, slamming the door in his wake - and imprisoning the marten within its gloom.      **- The search begins -**    By the order of Inquisitor Dane, counseled by the guild officers, the guildsmen split up when they reached the outskirts of Cali'manash. One, lead by Bulth Evan a mid-aged guild officer, went togheter with Gigel the peasant to investigate the strange Obelisk in Cali'manash. The rest, under the leadership of Dane and two more guild officers had plans to return to Sandburg and report their findings to Bishop Bethune and other authorities.    Only a brother of the sun could walk free into the desert, the relentless heat baked merciless upon anyone out into the open, only speed and ingenuity allowed for a quick and safe transition through the open range that separated Cali'manash from Sandburg. Dane and the guildmen made good time and entered Sandburg by the Red Gates somewhere in the late afternoon. The city was crowded like in any given day, merchants of any position and wealth sold their merchandise in the local markets, taverns and inns roared with the voices of its patrons if you were new here in Sandburg you would think that everything is in order, but the ones that made a life here could feel tension in the air. Turns out that more people have been reported missing, or so says a small merchant on a random corner in Sandburg. Inquisitor Dane escorted the guildmen to the Central District in order to split in smaller groups each with its own agenda, the inquisitor entered a weapons shop, its owner an old fired of his. Information was his goal. And there were worrying news for him. Sandburgians and greenskins from Hagfang are at each other throats blaming the other side for the disappearances. Luckily there has been not blood shed, not yet. And the authorities of Sandburg will send an envoy to keep relations with the masters of Hagfang from deteriorating.    Later in the day, Inquisitor Dane found himself waiting for Bishop Bethune to come down from his chambers. To loose time in his wait Dane was browsing the selection of herbs that were decorating the main hall of the Orders headquarters, he could not stop thinking about the events that are going on. He must complete his job fast and find answers before it is to late and chaos, blood and suffering will drown the city that has been kind to him and given him a shelter for so many years. A servant drew Danes attention.  - Inquisitor Dane, the bishop will see you in the garden. – said the servant  Thank you Milius. – Dane used a small wooden door to emerge in a long hall decorated on the left with gothic columns and arches, their shadow made patterns on the floor, decorating it. At the end there were two doors, Dane entered the one on the left. Infront of him a beautiful garden, with a cloister surrounding it and at the center a pool of water, but that image became secondary when Grand Inquisitor Roland, bishops bodyguard, took up a position in front of Dane. He knew what Roland wanted so he raised his hands to be searched. The two keepers of faith exchanged only a few words, Roland didn’t have any new information and Dane was too eager to speak with the bishop.  -"Highfather be praised..." - said the bishop, his face lit when he saw the inquisitor  -"Good evening your holiness, I do hope I am not interrupting."  -"Nonsense, come inquisitor, sit." - Bishop Bethune pointed to a stone chair beside him.  -"I was unable to write a complete report on all events that happened in Dante Mansion but this sums up the major events..." - Dane passed a sheet of paper to bishop Bethune and said with sorrow - "... another front has been open". Bishop Bethune quickly read the inky text written on a brown durvian paper, folded the paper, and took a minute to clear his mind.  -"Demons in the Western Mines and now this... how do we find them..." - he paused.  -"Find them?" - inquired the inquisitor  -"Enemies... we seam extremely proficient in finding enemies to fight everywhere we go..." - Bethune placed his hand on an old wound he received in his witch hunter days - -"It is our job to find them, in order to keep the innocent safe."- Boldly said the young inquisitor  -"Yes Dane, that is our job, but I was talking about our entire race and its master skill to make enemies of all the peoples of this world."  -"Some attacked us...without provocation."  -"Outspoken as always my dear inquisitor... but times are not for this sort of discussions" - the bishop unfolded the brown durvian paper - "...I see that investigation have already started."  -"Yes, guild officer Bulth is in Cali'manash to search for a supposedly ancient obelisk..."  -"Guildsman Bulth?"  -"He's not the 'sharpest blade' but he has the leadership skill. Officer Bertram and Gurash are in Sandburg reporting to their guild leaders. Furthermore the librarian of..." - Dane paused.  -"Yes inquisitor..." - bishop looked at Dane.  -"...emm, yes,... the librarian of Lord Dante has agreed to help us."  -"Really... he should be of great use..." - the bishop didn't want to pursue why Dane made a pause so he continued after a short moment of considering all the pieces of the present puzzle-"...we need information inquisitor, that is why I am sending you to the Librarians they should guide you to the right knowledge."  -"Yes your holiness!”  -"Gather as much information and then we shall build further plans."                Dane left the headquarters of the Inquisition heading for the Tavern of the Seven Deserts. The great stone building dominated the marketplace of the Central District. Owned by the Order of the Kerdumal Librarian Monks it was and still is the best hub for information. The Librarians Order, as they are more commonly known, is an odd combination between spies, scholars and artifact merchants. They are also credited of being one of the first orders to establish themselves in Sandburg.              The Tavern stretches through most of the stone building but it also holds a large library and artifacts shop. The library is on the corner while the tavern and shop 'look' upon the Marketplace Square.                Hiek was amazed when he saw for the first time the city of Sandburg. Built on top of a rock formation that pierced the sea of sand, it resembled a crown with high spires launching themselves from the rock and buildings that made up the city.  - So much stone. - said Hiek walking through the streets among the guildmen, placing his hand on the sun warmed stones.  - What's that ? - asked one of the guild officers.  - Oh nothing Lord Bertram. - answered Hiek  - Please, call me Tefas, I never liked titles and family names to be used when I talk to friends.  - I shall try to fulfill your request. - answered the elf  - Now that we have cleared that issue lets hear what is bothering you.  - Not that it bothers me, more it fascinates me, to see all this stone and no leafage. It still puzzles me how this place can be so barren and yet quite alive.  - Ah, yes, I often forget how elves see us desert dwellers and our existence. But you'll be suprised to know that this is only a crust, an illusion. Every house, home and building in sandburgian society has a garden. Smaller or bigger, depending on the owner, these are the places we retreat to, after a long day.  - But still it lacks that wild feeling...  - Yes you are right young Hiek, but the desert is the one that offers us its wild beauty to experience. To you, perhaps it's only an overgrown pile of sand. To us, well it's a different story. It has its own poetry of light and textures. One that you might understand someday, you only have to see all its wonders. Speaking of which do you have anyplace to stay?  - Sadly no, but I can't abuse...  - And miss the opportunity to teach an elf of how great the desert is.  - You are welcome to try.  - A... a challenge.                Gigel and the guildmen under officer Bulth were just passing the last ridge before the village of Cali'manash. Small settlements near the Dante Mansion that grew on the shores of Cali oasis.  *"Ah good ol' Cali'manash..."* - Gigel stooped onto of a dune and watched the 70 or so, mud brick dwellings covered in lime milk that formed the Cali'manash desert settlement. Cali'manash is a farming village that thrives on the water of the near oasis. It is one of many such villages that support with food the urban center of Sandburg. A large stone tower dominates the landscape. Home of the local garrison. Made out of brave locals that are hired as archers and horsemen by the merchants and urban authorities of Sandburg to protect nearby settlements and the merchant roads in the area. Its own urban cohorts defend Sandburg itself.  *"Right this way sirs."* - Gigel guides the guildsmen down a narrow street. *"This is probably the best place in the whole world... peaceful...quiet"* - but Gigel was silenced by some arguing in the street...  "Who is she?" - was heard from inside a beautifully decorated house - "Who is she?" - rang again followed by the sound of ceramic bowls braking. After that, nothing really made any sense just a long string of loud shouting between a man and a woman. "Well..." - Gigel tried to explain - "...we do get a little excitement every now and then. Plus it makes a very good conversation topic..." - Gigel said proudly taking a left corner near the beautiful house.  "Conversation topic?"- asked one of the guildsmen  "Yeah, sure... this will be discussed for a month... or until something more interesting happens..." - Gigel smiled and tough of the possibilities - "...ah, there is nothing better after a long day in the field, I tell you, then to discuss the days hot topic..." - Gigel enters with his group in a larger open area of the settlement, full of people, it was the local bazaar - "...come to think of it, we where getting bored of the Bardin feud discussion, now this, milord Fershab is having an affair..." - Gigel stooped, he was looking down the streets, trying to find someone in the crowd.  "The Bardin feud?" - again the guildmen, trying to find out, after Gigel stooped talking about the feud.  "Oh, yes The Bradin Feud..." - Gigels eyes filled with an arrogant look - "...Jeron and Serevia Bardin, were brother and sister, they cared greatly for each other, well that lasted until they got married. Emm, perhaps another time I'll continue the story..." - Gigel waved at someone - "...it's enough to say now, that it didn't end all that well."- from the crowd a figure emerged. A woman, caramel skinned, brown eyes, and covered in a capuchin hooded garment.  "Gy ! There you are !" - said the woman  "Emara, nice to see you, in one piece..." - Gigel opened his arms - "...em, I mean how was the desert patrol?"  "Boring as always, not like in the old days of grandfather..." -Gigel and Emara embraced themselves.  "You and your hot blood..." - said Gigel looking dismissive in the brown eyes of Emara.  "It is more interesting then digging earth..." - Emara moved away from Gigel.  "Why do we always have to start, we need new subjects to speak about..." - Gigel grabbed the shoulders of the female warrior - "...how about this: Is commander Ishar in Cali'manash ?"  "Yes he is..." - now Emara had a suspicious look in her eyes.  "Ishar?" - officer Bulth moved in the conversation, also suspicious.  "The man in charge of the local militia..." - Gigel turned to the guild officer - "...he can give you a better report regarding the surroundings and the deep desert."  "Fine. But next time tell me what you intend to do." - Bulth gave a glare first to Gigel and then Emara, after which moved deeper in the group of guildmen.  "Why Gy, I didn't think of you as the adventurous type... guildmen... report... deep desert" - Emara smiled cynically.  "Oh, don't worry it still has to do with digging earth ..." - Gigel smiled - "...I have to go, will you inform Ishar to meet us at Ebuns place?"- Gigel stole another hug from Emara, then he turned to join the guildsmen group.  "I'll tell him" - said Emara with a smile on her face. She ran back inside a building guarded by two armed men.    The group entered a small street. Near Gigel appeared the always-inquisitive guildman. The peasant knew of his presence since they left Emara in the bazaar. Gigel didn't need more to start:  "Emara..." - his confident smile showed itself on Gigels' face - "... childhood friend... best archer in the area. Her grandfather was a general in Sandburg’s army. She often told me her grandfathers war stories. They were very interesting, I had the chance to hear them straight from the old veteran himself. But they didn't have the same effect they had on Emara. Since she was a little child she wanted nothing more then to spend everyday of here life on a battlefield, or the next best thing, on a military campaigning..." - their conversation again cut short by their arrival at Ebuns home, just on the outskirts of Cali'manash.  "Just there, behind that dune is the obelisk I was telling you about" - said Gigel pointing to the area with his walking stick - "Ebun will take us there..."    **- New age at Dante Mansion -**                 Screeching a little form the lack of oiling, the bronze key unlocked the safe in Lord Dante's study. Hastings had retrieved the key from behind the concealment of Uther's portrait. He knew the key's little hiding spot long ago - he had studied Lord Dante's habits extensively. For reason unknown.                The safe appeared empty, black and gaping like the maw of a ravenous wolf. Hastings reached within the dark and drew out an envelope sealed with stationary wax embossed with Dante's Coat-of-Arms. With the aid of a dinner fork, he carefully prised the seal loose and extracted a sheaf of folded parchment from it. He set the document upon the Lord's desk and quietly read the content to himself;    ***The Last Will and Wishes of Lord Alfonsus Dante***    *Should I pass on, by Mishap or by Age, to the promised Realms of the Highfather, all titles and properties belonging to the name Dante (which includes this Mansion, all of its content, the Land it stood upon and all-lands recognizing me as their Liege and Vassal) shall henceforth be the property of my Wife, Myrrah Dante, for her to do as it pleases her Heart*  It was a simple declaration, with Librarian Albert as the witness (his signature at the bottom) and Lord Dante's seal of Office marked at the bottom right corner. This will was drafted before Lady Myrrah's demise and Lord Dante had neglected to rewrite a new one to replace it.   John Hastings dipped a quill into the inkpot, deliberated a short moment before adding the following in the ample space immediately below the text;  *Should however, any Unforeseen Misfortune also befell upon my Wife and renders her unable to inherit this Legacy, the above-mentioned Assets shall hence pass into my Nephew's, John Martin Defoal Vermisius Hastings' Ownership. May hes authority be a guiding light.*   Holding the parchment to the candlelight, Hastings admired his handiwork - regretting that he cannot write more for the scarcity of space. He allowed it to dry for a minute or two before replacing it into the envelope. Then, he held the wax bit carefully over the candle-flame, melting it slightly (without marring the coat-of-arms) and firmly relocated it to its original duty as sentry of the envelope.   Hastings then placed it back into the safe - closing the safe's iron door and locking it again. Just moments after his actions John heard a repeating sound coming from downstairs. Someone was knocking furiously on the doors of Dante Mansion, but John moved slowly and without haste knowing exactly who was at the door.   "Can I help you?" - said Hastings opening the door, his cloak rushed outside while the stranger retreated a few steps back.  "It's me Alric !" - the person outside spoke with annoyance.  "Ah, Alric..." - John smiled - "...or should I say Devun ?!" - his eyes became suspicious.  "Yes, you are correct, its Devun now." - he climbed one more step but keeping his annoyed stance.  "Alric, was a better name, it had that..." - John fell in silent meditation, but don't let his philosophical allure fool you.  "Snap out of it John, I know you have called me here for more important reasons then my names and aliases." - Alric leaned on the door.  "Yes you are right, but that name... "  "Oh would you quit it..." - Alric pushed the door and entered. John moved away from the visitor’s path and laughed copiously, his voice and Alrics steps echoed in the high halls of Dante Mansion.  "You are insane, John." - Alric crossed his arms and stared at the laughing librarian, he himself barely was holding out.  "Now, flattery was never you good point, Alric." - Hastings turned and walked into the Mansion  "Of course not..." - replied Alric and mumbled something in silence, John choose to ignore him, proceeding into a large room built and decorated specifically to welcome visitors of Dante Mansion.  "I see the serf contacted you."  "Yes, I was amazed to see him again."  "Please sit. Yes he was useful in the past."- urged John placing a bottle on the table. Alric watched the bottle for a few minutes and then glanced at John.  "What?" - John quickly replied  - "I have many skills Alric, but servantship is not one of them."  "Fine, just tell me where to find glasses..." - Alric stood up.  "Glasses... glasses... now that is a hard one... discovering ancient stories comes easier to me" - Hastings placed his chin in his palm, in a meditative way - "...oh, look in that cabinet, I think the servant stored some cupware in there" - John finally said, then rotating back to some scrolls.  "I have a feeling that this is the reason why you have called me." - Alric concluded after sensing the lack of servants.  "Yes, you are right." - acknowledged John still keeping himself dedicated to the scroll-like documents - "I need you to recruit sevants and people to help me run the estate."  "Me run the estate?!" - Alric faced John - "what do you mean, you run the estate?"  "You are looking at the new Lord Dante, so the duty of managing the Dante fiefs and enterprises falls on me..." - John stooped examining the scrolls and dedicated his full attention to Alric who was visibly awe stricken.  "But milord Alfonsus is..."  "Dead... yes, and a most tragic death it was" - John wasn't exactly smiling but a joyful glow was emanating from him - "...oh, and so are Albert and his son."  "Also tragically... " -Alric paused - "...you didn't have anything to do with this tragedy, did you?" - suspicion was clouding Alrics eyes.  "No I did not, I place my newfound noble honor on that statement" - John defended his own person - "More insidious creatures claimed their lives and I don't like your presumptions Alric."  "We both know that between you and milord Alfonsus, friendship was a useless word."  "Correct, but conspiracy to murder him was another thing not present in our relationship, at least unilaterally from my point of view." - John looked at the furniture next to Alric and spoke - "Second drawer on the left" - Alric pointed to it, John acknowledged.  "Why do I find it hard to believe..." - Alric pulled out from the drawer two cups, upper part made out of glass and the lower made of dark decorated metal, placed them on the table and took away the bottle.  "I am hurt to know that your thrust in me is limited." - John sat also.  "I can see the pain in your eyes, John." - Alric laughed as he poured the wine.  "Laugh all you want, but I have this." - John produced a piece of scroll paper that had a large signature on the bottom.  "Inquisitor Brohemund Dane..." - Alric read the name in the signature.  "Yes, the inquisitor was a witness to the undemanded demise of our lord Alfonsus." -  "By the insidious creatures." - spoke Alric trying to retain a serious face.  "Correct" - John pulled back the scroll of paper folded it and began to sip Nestorian wine from his cup, leaning into the soft armchair, his left hand feeling the delicate fabric and his eyes became empty  - "...I'll miss our arguments..." - John said in a melancholic tone remembering old lord Alfonsus -"...but we must look at the future" - his awareness catapulted into the present. "When can you proceed in the recruitment Alric ?" - spoke John keeping the glass cup next to him.  "It depends on who you desire." - Alric broke the grip of his lips on the cup to say that, after which he resumed savoring the noble wine.  "I think this list will cover that point" - John gave another scroll paper to occupy Alrics eyes.  "Emm..." - Alric mumbled as he read the list - "... I think I can fulfill all the post on this list..." - he took another sip of wine - "... two - three days, perhaps..." - he looked at John.  "Fine." - said John shaking his head. Alric pushed the scroll paper back to John, but he stooped him - "No, keep it. All the details you need in your negotiations are in there." - John raised his glass - "To the new age of Dante !"  "Aye !" - responded with much heart Alric.    **- Mystery within pages -**                Inquisitor Dane proceeded throughout the crowded marketplace. Using his hands and a polite word he succeeded in sailing the sea of people that had gathered in the Market Square. The library was on the corner with a large sign of a book hanging above the main door.                I enter the library brushing off a little sand, my eyes searching for the librarian. It would be best if I can read through the diary I got from Hastings here in private. "Where is that fool of a librarian?” Sensing that no one is coming I proceeded into the depths of the old library. I pass rows upon rows of shelves with books of many secrets, I could not help wondering how many books respect the honor of our Highfather and how many dedicate their pages to forbidden knowledge. I was fighting the urge to stop, open one book and go:"Aha!!", but the tough became secondary when I stumbled upon the librarian in a clearing, a space with no shelves. There he was, stacking large tomes onto their rightful place. An older man, but looked as still having life in him despite the short white hair. I smile in a polite way.  "Greetings Edmund, you wouldn't happen to know a place in here where I could have a little privacy ?" - I wait for his answer clutching the diary, who knows what answers it may contain ?    "My name is not Edmund, it is Haquim, you should know it, Dane" - the librarian spoke giving no attention to the visitor - "Yeah sure go into the basement, it is a bit tight, but I think the great inquisitor will manage to survive there a hour, but no more." - said the librarian as nice as he could.    "Thank you Edmund, an hour should suffice." - I walk quickly into the basement, not wanting to continue an argument with the old librarian. As I arrive I quickly locate a chair and sit down to read the diary. "The Librarians should have records of recovered artifacts..." - I was pondering while browsing Hastings diary - "... lets see if I can make Edmund surrender them for my scrutiny." - I walk out of the basement and locate Edmund, he was at the front desk.  "Edmund I am glad that I found you as your aid is required, can you locate and show me a catalogue of the artifacts that your merchants are selling. Also I shall require the use of the basement for as long as I am here" - I give Edmund a big smile before going through some of the library books myself. They where on the font desk so why not.  "The catalogue of all the items is yours but my demand still stands." - barked the librarian.  "Why can't you give me a space for more then a hour." - I jump at the uncooperative Librarian.  "It doesn't concern you inquisitor." - as tempers were close to exploding a woman entered the Library.  "Harquin, darling!" - the woman’s exuberant voice bled my ears - "Oh, you have visitors, should I leave?" - she winked at him.  "Don't be silly, come enter" - as she entered, the strong and bright colors of her dress broke the gloom of the old, gray and dusty library. As if the bright color weren't enough, the amount of fabric on that woman was enough to make me a glove. Instantly I knew the reason why she was here so naturally I protested.  "We don't have time for your leisure activities, Librarian"  "Of course you don't, you have to read these..." - the librarian threw two books at me and as I struggled to keep them from not falling on the floor the little rat slipped with his mistress in the basement locking the door behind them. "If I kill him..." - I tough - "... I'll only start a 'tiny' guild war..." - a moment passed as I contemplated ways in which I could damage that damnable, whoring, fools soul but as I said before, business before pleasure.  The two books, with good Imperial leather covers, documented the artifacts that the Librarians Order recovered. One of them was the catalogue of the items available for sale in the Artifacts Shop of the Seven Deserts Inn. Since I could not stand to be in the same building as the unholy act done without the blessing of the Highfather I exited the building with the books under my arm.    Inquisitor Dane decided to go in another part of Central District to a tavern owned by an aquaitance of his. It wasn't a long way from the Seven Deserts Inn. Going down the street you had to pass two corners until you reached a butchers shop, just next to it was the Green Tavern, named after its oblivious green color. "At least here" - Dane tough - "I can have some peace and a cup of hot Hill Tea that only Meren knows to make."    As it was late afternoon, shops were closing and people retired for a drink of somekind to unwind after a hard day’s work. Taverns were filling up as yellow lights began to spring to life in windows. The Butcher was closing shop when Dane reached the corner near the Green Tavern.  "Good evening, inquisitor." - he said politely.  "Good evening, Lerbin." - I responded to the greeting.  "Goin' to the tavern, milord?" - his eyes grew bigger as I remembered how much he loves a pint of Griffin Ale savored in the Green Tavern.  "Yes I am, but I have some work to do." - I show him the books.  "Ah, I was hopping to tell you the rest of the story, but if you have work." - he finished locking the door and gently slipped the key in his pocket.  "Perhaps another time. The wife?" - the small talk continued until we've entered the tavern. Moderate crowd and very silent, a thing very rare to Meren's Tavern, maybe with Lerbins arrival things will pick up, but it is possible that the recent tensions with Hagfang made everyone a little on the edge. No matter the reason, this means more silence for me to enjoy. As I progress through the tavern and pass Merens serving area. I gently tap two times the wooden table, salute Meren and he responded "One Hill Tea coming up". The others near him smiled so I returned the gesture. Finally I reached my little corner, a separate part of the tavern with a large glass window bridging the gap between the main floor and this intimate area. I take a seat, open the books and start to analyze. The books listed the names of the items, a registry number, a short description and the location where it was found. Quickly browsing the items, I couldn't find an item that matched the description of the Tears. One odd thing captured my attention, the registration number jumped sometimes. #345...#346... and then #357... #358. This happened a few times about 12, I counted. In the records the registry number appeared but no details were listed under those numbers. "That Librarian is going to get another visit from me, this time..." - I sip the last drop of Hill Tea - "...I'll forget my manners."    Dane exited the tavern, with a determination that not even the Golden Fists, the Emperors faithful bodyguard could hold down. He hastens his pace heading towards the Library of the Seven Deserts Inn. "Try and hide something from me, eh?" - he was thinking - "No matter, I can be persuasive, an inquisitor always is."    **- Obelisk summit -**    "Who is Ebun?" - the guildsman asked  "Ebun..." - Gigel stooped infront of a stick fence - "...Ebun is my friendly neighbor, him too I know since I was a child, you could say we were inseparable..." - the farmer was trying to see if someone is home.  "Neighbor?" - said the guildsman, and the others where very curios at this point - "... that means that your house..."  "Mister Fesh ..." - bursted Gigel in a thundering jolly voice - "... how wonderful to see you..." - Gigel quickly opened the stick door and entered the dried mud inneryard of the Fesh "estate", home of Ebun and his family, pa' Fesh and ma' Hunda.  "Mister?!"-an old mans voice was heard behind a mudbrick wall -" Have demons finally possessed your mind Gigel ..." - the voice was moving from behind the wall.  "Now is that anyway to treat your guest Mist...Fe" -Gigel swallowed a couple of letters when ol' Fesh emerged from behind the wall. A mountain of a man, old, but huge.  "Guest?!... hmpf..." - ol' Fesh first saw only Gigel - "... I never invited you... OH guest..." - ol' Fesh saw the guildsmen, then silently said to Gigel - "...why didn't you tell me you had guest-guests with you ?"  "Must 'ave slipped my mind pa' Fesh " - said Gigel disappointed. Ol' Fesh moved infront of the adventurers.  "Welcome, good sirs, please enter..." - ol' Fesh greeted the group with his arms wide open. The adventurers moved inside the yard one by one through the small opening in the stick fence. Gigel asked the old man:  "So, where is Ebun?"  "Ebun is in Sandburg selling Bulla..." - Gigel had seen again the eyes of the curious guildsman that was now like his personal shadow, to him he said quickly:"A cow..."  "Who... the wife?" - said ol' Fesh smiling - "...yes, she is, but she's my ol' c--are to tell me what are you doing here with these fine gentlemen, Gigel?"  "Oh, just a little adventuring and treasure hunting pa' Fesh !" - Gigel said taking a more heroic posture.  "You, a treasure hunter...bwahaha..." - ol' Feshs' voice roared through the desert air, finally stooping himself after a good laugh - "... you hate going to our near Sandburg ..." - ol' Fesh stooped seeing that Gigle was serious - "...so, you are here for the old pile of rock back there..." - Gigel shuck his head, so did the "shadow" guildsman - "... fine, follow me, it's been a nuisance, can't plow my field in a straight line because of it, but you know good ol' superstition has a way with your wife." - said ol' Fesh.    Soon they were on top of the rock formation and in front of them lay the broken remains of the obelisk. The leader of the guildsmen. officer Bulth and an assistant quickly took notes about what was the obelisk made of, what symbols were on it and the location where they found it. In the mean time commander Ishar arrived at the obelisk location, followed by three militiamen.  "Gigel, I knew a generals heart burned in you, nice troops you've gathered" - said the forty-ish militia commander. Commander Ishar was a courageous soul, strong and wise, but he had another love beside the military, dwarven ale. He would make most drunken dwarfs look like empire clergy members.  "Oh, no commander Ishar..." - Gigel said with a smile - "...you know me, hate the military...em...present individuals excluded of course."  "You would make a good officer, Gigel." - said commander Ishar placing a hand on the shoulder of Gigel.  "And leave his land, his horses?" - entered the discussion ol' Fesh putting much passion in the last part of the sentience  "Farming will get you nowhere." - said commander Ishar with a proud voice.  "Yes you are right, the military lets you see the world..." - said ol' Fesh.  "The other-world perhaps!!" - intervened Gigel with a cynical remark.  "Why do you still use that defense, your father..." - commander Ishar was interrupted.  "We have finished here..." - said officer Bulth.  "This is commander Ishar...I tough he could help with the search" - Gigel introduced the militia commander to the guildsmen officer.  "It is a pleasure..." - commander Ishar presented his hand for an official handshake. The guildsman accepted the offer and continued - "...both of you are invited for this evening meeting..." - after that the guildsmen saluted and left. Commander Ishar preferred to continue the conversation with Gigel but had other pressing maters to attend to. Gigel soon found himself alone, he started moving, but stooped after a few steps.  "You can go with the rest of the adventurers, I'm not going home yet, guildsman ..." - Gigel smiled because he considered himself at that point the most intelligent man in Nevandaar. The "shadow" guildsman, the one that was so curious, emerged from behind one rock. Smiled and off he went.    **- The trap -**       The maze like streets of Sandburg, sheppered two individuals down a narrow path. The two, a tome of differences. Lord Bertram was a jovial always laughing man leaving the bloom of his life heading fast onto his grandfather years, the one next to him, a young elf just crossing the line that bordered his adolescence, shy by reasons of being in a foreign land. The lord’s outfit was decorated with geometrical motifs, straight with sharp corners and colors that matched the nuances of the desert, while the elf had a vegetal based decoration adoring his clothes that flowed in curves and irregular shapes. Brown, dark green and blue, were his colors with gold and small silver jewels made the elf look much more important that he would like to admit. It complimented his shy attitude that matched his young years  "Right after this corner, Hiek" - said Lord Bertram rasing his hand and index finger to an intersection dividing the street. Once this point was reached a small square space opened in front of them, on the sides a number of stairs going up the walls of this particular area.  "More stone..." - said Hiek with a tint of disappointment  "And some wooden support beams." - added Bertram leading the way.  "Dead wood, I might add."  "Details..." - the wood that made up the stairs cracked and screamed in its own language - "Don't worry, you will feel as you were back in your forest home."  "I think I shall..." - the elf’s words did betray what he was thinking, he did not believe possible to find comfort in this landscape, it would have been rude for him to express his feelings openly. But as the two immersed into the space of the Bertram Residence, Hiek could feel the space welcoming him in a manner similar to what he experienced entering elven homes when he was back in the Elven Territories. The way everything was organized made him feel this way. His intrigue grew even more when he saw a human woman dressed and prepared in elven style, the Miru style, to be exact.  "Oh my dear, there you are." - said the lord opening his arms, towards the woman.  "Yes. And tell me my chivalric husband have you been searching for me, a long time?”- the woman placed her hands on the hips covered in fine fhindarian cloth.  "From the Griffin Heights to here, milady. And look who I brought to your presence." - he bowed in a knightly fashion, behind him emerged Hiek.  "Amra'si, good lord." - the lady bowed her head, reading the joy and also the amazement on her face was easy, blind man easy. Hiek was now awed and amazed in his own right. He could not believe his eye to see someone in this part of Nevadaar practicing elven traditions and above all that the person involved was human. Hiek answered to the elven greeting with his own acknowledgment. Best to be prudent for now and not place the questions that where amounting in his head.  "Will you be so kind to take him to the guest room, Tefas" - she looked at her husband with sweet eyes - "... I would, but there's dinner to be finished. Tura is sick."  "Really?! I had no idea, I told her to stop tasting every item that she cooks."- milady looked at her husband giving of a small smile.  "No my dear, it's her heart. I've already sent for the physician and I have to finish dinner, so could you?" - she pointed with her green-blue eyes to Hiek  "Then by allmeans I shall escort our guest, my flower." - Lady Bertram continued on her path after addressing a short goodbye to Hiek in the elven tongue and winked at Bertram.    Hiek and Tefas where on the hallway heading to the guestrooms when the elf couldn't hold the cork on his curiosity.  "Milady Bertram is from Isliru..."  "Isliru?!" - said Tefas - "... oh, yes, yes she is. Of course, humans call it Dewdale. But yes she's from there. Came here with her family and many others a few years back from Dew... emm...you know, Isliru."- Hiek twitched a little from the mispronunciation of the name. "I'll tell you the story someday, it's actually a funny one, but you have to rest now. Tonight you’ll have a great treat. Someone will be up here soon to help you clean yourself after your long journey."- the elf gave off a polite smile as Tefas exited the room. And as he did, Hieks heart could sense a cloud of grief coming upon him. He didn't know for sure but when he was back at the elven court he heard some news about Isliru, at the time it was trivial to him, but now it gathered much interest for him. Isliru is in the north of the Merchants Sea and human and elven settlers colonized it long ago but roughly at the same time. The colonists decided that the river Jurilu would divide the two communities. Peace lasted and they exchanged ideas and often cooperated. But as the War of the Oracle planed the capture of Temperance the human population of Isliru was slaughtered. Since that war, humans despise elves. That is the reason why Hiek was sent to this land after his departure from the Elven Territories. This place among the dunes was acknowledged as the best place for sanctuary. But his bad luck has guided his destiny to the only home in this Sand Realm that has a potential Urundi (\*elf hater), one that was elevated to this status by the grief for a friend or relative among the dead of Isliru. Hiek felt the walls collapsing on him and his mind racing to give meaning to everything that happened until now, certainly in the light of this new discovery. "Bertram told me that milady’s story is a funny one..." - Hiek was thinking - "... and milord proved many times to be over sarcastically in his oratory, and the way milady winked at him, surely that's a sign also. And perhaps the cook is not sick, maybe it's a trick of her to play with the food, poison it." - and many more connections Hiek made laying on that bed until a moment that in his head an brilliant idea emerged - "Escape!”- he shouted in his mind - "...but I can not from here. I must gather more information." So the elf went to the door and opened it a little to see if there was a way out in the hallway, a window maybe. But wait he was on a higher floor. Yes he was, he concluded looking out from his bedroom window, then perhaps he can find a window pointing to a roof and from there proceed to terra firma. As his head emerged for the second time Hiek saw a servant coming to his room, probably the one that should help him clean himself. "Or kill me..." - Hiek concluded, closing the door and resting on it.    **- Crashing Inquisitor -**                A rushing figure appeared near the entrance of the Library in the Seven Deserts Inn, determined to challenge another door. Dane the Inquisitor didn't even slow down as he crashed trough the Library door, which opened and slammed into the wall making a dreadful noise...  "Edmund !!!" - shouted the inquisitor, his voice pulsed in the hollow space of the Kerdumal Monks Library - "...your presence is required, now !!!" - Dane threw the books on the main desk. "Edmund !!!" - he repeated in a stronger tone - "a man requires one minute to dress... you have half that time" - Dane sat down in a well mannered fashion on a chair next to him, raised his hand and started counting, in a loud voice. He didn't even get to five when the basement door opened just an inch for the librarian head to pop up.  "Yes!! What do you want..." - his eyes, at first, didn't see Dane, but after a short look trough he sighted the inquisitor with the biggest, most cynical smile an inquisitor can have - "... ah it's you, come back later." - and he furthermore disregarded Danes presence by locking the door again.  "Oh, I soo hoped he would do that." - enthusiastically said Dane getting up. He aligned himself with the door, took a few steps back always looking behind him to see if there is more room and after about three meters from the door, Dane decided to charge the door. His only concern "to use one leg or both?". The door was eventually hit by only one leg, decided on the fact that the floor was too dusty. From the basement an explosion of sound and light erupted from were the door was. Dane waited a moment as to not be hit by the recoiling door and then rushed down the stairs to capture a dazed, half dressed librarian and a not so dressed woman.  "You ! Upstairs !" - he ordered the woman - "...you too Edmund" - Dane grabbed a robe and threw it at the librarian. Edmund started walking but protested all the way up.  "You have no right inquisitor!" - the librarian was confident.  "Believe me, I do." - Dane responded in a cold manner, behind the librarian, both going up the stairs.  "My Order will demand your head, I'll make sure of it." - the two joined the woman in the library, she looked at Edmund and said - "You are still on the clock." - the librarian grinned and turned back to his conversational enemy.  "First I'll make you pay for the doors and then whatever financial difficulties you gave me..." - he winked at the woman, she giggled - "and then you, Dane, shall be punished for your brutal and short-tempered actions." - the confidence did not fade from his face, but it rather grew.  "Stop. Edmund, please stop." - Dane looked at the librarian with uneasing compassion - "... it's easy to see that you don't have the upper hand. See that woman there, which I'm sure will find a proper job, consider her a witness. A witness I will use to dissorder you from the Librarians, \*if\*, and pay attention to this \*if\*"- Dane exchanging his crazed jovial look, specific to his job, with a serious face and cold voice, also specific to the job - "... only if you do not cooperate with me."  "You have no idea of what Librarians laws are about, if you did you..." - he was interrupted by a presence near the almost shattered front door.  "I am afraid he is right brother Edmund." - a metallic voice intruded on the discussion of inquisitor and librarian.  "Ah, Mister Hastings ..." - Dane stood there with a blank face deciding if he was glad or abhorred by the presence of yet another librarian.  "Brother John, how good to see you, but please step aside as I am on the path of making this individual regret of rasing his voice on me as he will be publicly whipped in the Communal Palace Square..." - his confidence grew and exploded into a full fledged anger storm directed at Dane.  "Do not threaten my acquaintance... Edmund," interrupted Hastings, with cold courtesy, "Or whatever name you choose now as your social curtains. This is Dane... "The Mace" himself. Apologize for your impertinence or I shall inform the Guildmaster of your... deviant activities... during your duty hours in our Shrine." - John traversed the room and stooped at Danes side. Dane looked at him and in a whisper he said.  "I hope this is not a desperate attempt to get on my good side." - John smiled and replied  "Ah, Dane you are ever so altruistic, I am just mearly trying to save a brother librarian from his inflexibility and salvaging any good blackmail material on the way."  "What?" - Edmund lost his nerve - "John, you little desert snake. You'll sell me out ?!" - his jaw lost its rigidity - "Ah, but I am more protected in my order then Dane is in his, he will suffer more." - he smiled slightly until he saw Danes crazed jovial look, half hidden under his palm.  "And what is so amusing, dear inquisitor." - asked John after a few moments.  "It's just funny." - said Dane briefly.  "What is?" - John wanted to know.  "He still thinks he can bring me down. But, the more time I spend here I find evidence to give him a longer and longer vacation to the Inquisitorial Dungeons. If we would turn, Mr. Hastings, to the girl behind us." - John and Dane turned casually to the courtesan, but Dane was startled and raised his palm to the edge of his eyes to block the view of the naked woman. -"Mighty Highfather, art thy piety rain upon us and give strength to..." - Dane recited a prayer  - "What are you mumbling there inquisitor..."- John couldn't hear the words of Danes prayer - " ...oh, right. Her." - John winked at the girl - "and the purpose of our glaring at this beautiful woman, is?"  -"Tell me, Mister Hastings do you see any blue tattoo on her left thigh."- Dane faced Edmund again.  -"Emmm.... nnnno...." - John turned his head to the left.  -"And, what does a blue tattoo mean on a girl as her." - Dane took one step closer to Edmund.  -"Oh, now I understand. Edmund, I tough you were smarter." - John confronted his brother-in-order.  -"I'm bored of the rest. She was fresh..." - he said it as a normal, mundane fact.  -"Then let us complete our search here and we'll be on our way." - said John. Edmund the librarian was calming down and began to see that he could not fight on two fronts. As it was not wise to go against Danes inquisitorial attributions, nor Johns insidious plotting. He said yes and escorted the woman outside until he demanded her skills later. Hastings, then turned to address Dane.  -"Sorry I am late in my coming, Master Dane. I've pored through every book and document I suspected to be of help to our cause in Lord Dante's Library (may his soul finds rest) and I regret to pronounce to you of my utter failure to do so."- he then ran his fingers across the spine of one of the old, voluminous tome that Edmund had provided Dane with - "Perhaps the gold we seek is within these mines."  -"Bah... men of the letter!" replied Dane, characteristic of his cantankerous nature. "Cease the hot air and help me translate these squiggles!" - shortly the librarian joined them. He equipped himself with old beady glasses and opened the books. "Right, so your question was?"    **- One thing to another... -**                Gigel was walking home from Ebuns house, moments from his destination two shouting riders were rushing from a nearby dune. Gigel turned his gaze towards them:  - "What the...?" - he said covering his eyes from the glaring sunset.  -"Sand Storm !!!" - they yelled, followed by a - "prepare yourselves. Sand Storm !!" - the riders, rumbled trough the improvised street and stooped in front of a house. Anyone that was on the street quickens their step to reach their homes to make ready for the storm.  -"Tulli, you must go and inform the tower guards to sound the storm horn." - said the older rider coming off his horse.  -"Yes, Pasi" - said the young one, smacking his horse and disappearing in deep Cali'manash. Probably hearing the commotion outside. From inside the house of the older rider exited a temptingly beautiful woman.  -"What is going on Pasquah?" - said the woman to the rider.  -"A sand storm from the west." - he was guiding the horse to the stable.  -"That means we have time for ourselves" - she leaned on the wooden railing of their front porch, smiling.  -"But Jil I'm tired and we already did much, look at those in our house, one more and we won't have room."- muttered the rider. "  -"Oh come on, or else I will need to take that one." She pointed at Gigel, the only one left on the street.  -"Then take care of him..." - he looked at Gigel and smiled -"I have to lock the animals and secure the stable" - he went into the house  -"Well Gigel, I see it is your happy day" - she smiled and whispered - "just go with me until the end of storm, we will just wait, I must see his face when he hears about this, don't worry I won't hurt you, I really won't touch you" - she said coming closer to Gigel.  "Oh miss Pasquah, I'm not all that worried about you hurting me..." -he spoke in an awkward voice - "...I'm worried about a third party wanting to do that..." - Gigel said pointing to her husband now with his back turned and heading to his house.  "Who mister Pasquah? Pasi?" - the woman had a childish-innocent voice - "Noo, his not such a violent man..." - miss Pasquah moved her body next to Gigel.  "Him, violent, no..." - Gigel pushed the woman from him and looked in her eyes - "... brutes, paid by him, yes. Very violent in fact. You remember, well you should because you were the cause miss Pasquah... em ...remember Girus..."  "That was just a little misunderstanding."  "A little bloody one...I like my blood where it is right now, in me" - Gigel opened his eyes wide - "I should go, I must get to Loreb to see when he leaves for Sandburg. He's selling apples from my orchard in the Sandburg Bazaar, and I have to speak with him about the price." - this time miss Pasquahs' expression turned from innocent child to mad spoiled brat - "give my greetings to mister Pasquah..." - concluded Gigel walking quickly to enter one of the narrow streets of deep Cali'manash.  "Must stay away from that woman if I want to live..." - he was thinking.    -"It's a waste that such a young handsome man like you is afraid of women, I only wish that my husband will be jealous, please Gigel go with me, I... have some contacts in the city and I think you would be happy to know them, I mean really happy..." -she stooped and looked directly in his eyes -"... believe me there will be no blood shed this time."  "Are you certain, because I'm not!" -Gigel said placing no creed in her words.  -"And even if it happens..." - she looked suprised - "What? My friends will compensate it even more that you can imagine, more then enough to heal a few bruises and make your life more enjoyable. I only wish to spend time with you, we may just talk if you wish, my husband is so cold this times, I wish he took more attention into me and the only way to do this is to make him jealous." - her arm extended to grab Gigels hand.  -"Weird way to work this out, miss Pasquah." - he was reluctant to grab her hand.  -"I know my husband. Please Gigel you don't need to do anything but just sit with me.... you will save my marriage. And you'll have those contacts.  -"Contacts in the City?" - said Gigel - "Why do you think that I need contacts in Sandburg?" - she sighted  -"My poor, poor little Gigel what had that man "- referring to gigel father -"tough you? Not much about women’s and life I suppose. I'm saying you won't regret it" -she winks-" Now come, we have much to discuss, maybe we start about that little mansion where you were, oh and don't ask how I do know about it, I will tell you but first come, we need a quiet place" -her voice sounded to tempting to easily dismiss.  -"The mansion, you say..." - Gigel smiled and grabbed miss Pasquahs' arm, pulling her next to him and with an arrogant silent voice he said taking his time- "... plenty has happened in the 'little mansion' and I'm only gonna tell what has transpired there to people I trust, so start earning trust points my dear miss Pasquah" - Gigel let go of the woman - "... and miss Pasquah, don't play games with me, in his short life, my father has tough me enough..." - when miss Pasquah was about three paces from Gigel, he started talking louder then normal.  "So, Miss Pasquah you want to go to the Cali'manash bazaar and buy some spices?" - Gigel winked at her.  "But what about the storm?" - she played along.  "Don't worry I'll get you back before it arrives" - Gigel presented his arm in a noble way.  "Alright then Gigel, but only if you get me back in time." - she attached herself to Gigels arm.  "Yes I will miss Pasquah." - the new couple entered the narrow street that led to the settlement bazaar.  "Now, you where saying about some contacts..." - Gigel turned to look in her brown eyes...  -"This place is not safe enough, I have a ... special place, over there" -she pointed to a two stored building with an entrance to an underground room, safe from sandstorm.        As soon as they entered the building the sandstorm unleashed its fury. An odd event because it takes time for one to arrive and there are always signs to its coming. But this one appeared from nowhere.  Gigel didn't see anything except miss Pasquahs face lit by the light of a torch. She stooped and said:"Welcome" - and as she did her face split and a cloud of sand engulfed Gigel making him lose counciousness.    **- Survival -**    Hiek raced in the room given to him by the Bertram family. If he could walk upon the ceiling, he most certainly would. "The servitor was not the weapon of my demise that leaves only a poisoned dinner, but if..." - he was interrupted by a knock on the door.  -"Master Hiek, you are formally invited dowstrairs for dinner." - the elfs heart skipped a few beats. He opened the door but looked only to his left. No sign of the servitor, "where is he..." - then a cough from his immediate right just near the window.  -"Ehm. This way master..." - the servitor said, Hieks heart skipped again, but he exited the room and headed downstairs with the servitor right behind him. A sequence of rooms went by, until the elf found himself in the dinning hall. A beautiful decorated room with carved marine life and a painted mural on the ceiling representing an artist’s impression of a Mer People city, deep under the waves. "Do they worship Sollonielle ?" - Hiek was thinking after seeing the mural - "And what facet of her soul do they respect more?"  -"Please Hiek sit down..." - instructed Lord Bertram as he entered the room with Lady Bertram by his side.  -"What is for dinner?" - Hiek tried to keep a normal atmosphere and still poke around. Lady Bertram smiled and spoke:  -"It a suprise !" - she sat down with the help of her husband. - "...now please Elme(Mister) Hiek, sit down." - Hiek accepted the proposition in elven fashion, which he loved to show at every opportunity but he keep his mind focused on the fact that death is coming. Dinner was ordered and until its arrival Lady Bertram quizzed Hiek about his impressions of Sandburg. It was a matter of moments until servants brought dinner. First course was enuli soup and as the plate was placed before him, lady Betram said:  -"Surprise!" - Hiek didn't know what to say at the moment.  -"See my dear he's dazzled by the surprise." - said lord Bertram to fill the silence.  -"Yes I am..." - Hiek eventually said - "...as I left the Elven Territories I tough I had my last bowl of enuli soup." – tempting, he was thinking and a good way to force me to eat their Poisson.  -"Lets eat !" - proclaimed lord Bertram. Spoons were in mid air when a servant entered the dinning hall and said with a terrified voice:  -"Sand Storm!!" – sweat was rolling off his forehead.  -"What?" - lord Bertram was on his feet and running to the nearest window. Lady Bertrams curiosity got the better of her and joined her husband. But Hiek sensing his opportunity, got up and retreated to what he tough to be the kitchen. As his steps moved him closer to that particular room, from were he could exit this house, he bumped into the servitor that escorted him from the guestroom.  -“Milord Hiek wants more soup?” – he asked in a bland voice.  -“Yes, but I would like to see what ingredients have been used.” – Hiek tried to smile.  -“An awkward request, good sir, but I think I can satisfy this demand, follow me, milord.”- Hiek was happy as a necromancer stummbling into a ancient cemetery, as he saw a window leading to the street, to freedom. Two hands grabed him, it was Tefas. Hiek paniked, seeing himself between Tefas, his wife and the servant..  -“Alright, confess!” – Hiek screamed.  -“To what?” – Tefas said. Hiek started to explain his fears about him and the lady. As they would kill him to account for the loss of life in the human villages of Isliru. Tefas, as he was, bursted in a thundering laugh, the lady gave him a nudge and said:  -“Tefas!! Elme Hiek, no worries must cloud your mind. My entire village left Isliru five years before the war. And I have no hidden grudges against elves, I’m not an urundi.”  -“You mean there’s no poison?”  -“Posison? No, young elf.” – said Tefas, but seeing that he was still suspicious – “I’ll taste all the food presented to you.” – Hiek was convinced and started to pour out apologies.  -“Don’t excuse yourself Hiek, because you gave me the best laugh in ages. My wife an urundi,.... hahaha....hah... good one. Now lets get back to dinner, it’s getting cold.” –everyone wanted to finish before the storm.              After dinner Tefas was going to show the young elf the treat he was talking about earlier. As the storm ended its fury, Hiek and the lord went trough rooms and descended upon a ladder to enter what seamed to be a stable of some sorts. The sun glanced trough the windows filling the space with orange and yellow light, Hiek could see with the corner of his eye a white and blue glow.  -“Hiek, meet Archus.” – Tefas said with a proud voice.  -“A pegasus?” – Hiek turned his attention to the magical horse  -“Yes, he is, my own pegasus, Archus” – repeated Tefas.  -“But that means you are a Pegasus Knight. I mean you couldn’t have a pegasus in your house and not be one.” – said Hiek leaning on the railings of the enclosure where the pegasus stood.  -“Yes you are right, I was trained by the great pegasus knights from the last war.”  -“Amazing creature, I still don’t understand why it choose to live with human folk and leave the forest.”  -“Perhaps it got tired of your paranoia...” –Tefas paused – “... I’m sorry it was a cheap joke.”  -“I forgive you as you did me.” – Hiek said filling the silence that had fallen over the stable, only the pegasus breath could be heard – “ How did you manage to keep him alive in the desert, I know for a fact they dislike it.”  -“A little enhancement by a wizard in Capitol City and I don’t use him more then I have to. That’s my secret.”  -“I hope to see him in flight.”  -“Maybe you will.”   **- Tear of joy -**                    Edmund the librarian had Dane and John by him as he was browsing the artifact catalogues.  -“Aha!!!” – he said.  -“What?” – the spectators bursted.  -“I see what the problem is...” – Edmund continued to read. The inquisitor grew tired.  -“Again the same question Edmund: “What?”, but this time it’s the last.”  -“You should study with us Kendrumal Monks and learn a thing called patience.” – Edmunds voice had a proud twist to it.  -“Edumnd shut up and tell us what you have discovered.” – quickly said John.  -“Well, these record were written before the first undead invasion, before the port of Gurthal fell to their skeletonic hands...”  -“So?” – asked Dane.  -“So... most of the artifacts of our Order were stored in the dock district, to be shiped, if necesary, to customers back home, in the Empire. But then, as you know, the Horde marched its walking corpses in our lands and ocupied the port and everything in it. To this day no expedition was succesfull in reclaming the port. Of course there is no desire to reclaim it, but that’s a story for politicians and not a humble monk.” – Edmund took of his glasses and closed the book – “Your task now is to find a way into the Storerooms of Gurthal.”  -“I don’t think ...” – started Dane.  -“What, you don’t belive me. I’m sure you can ask John to arrange a audience with the Order Elders but they will tell you the same thing.” – Edumnd said without letting Dane finish his sentence. Dane smiled and continued.  -“... we have anything more to do here. Shall we?” – he adressed John.  -“Great. Get out !”- said Edmund seeing John accept Danes proposition.  -“We leave you now, Edmunt," said Hastings, turning to the vile librarian. "We await your dismissal as soon as the Elders find someone equally as verminous as you to replace you - one that'll at least respect the sanctity of this Church of Knowledge, but until that day i wish you the best of luck" – Dane only smiled.              As john and Dane exited the Library they could see a Sand Storm beging to cover the city. It’s good that Sandburg has strong walls that protect the city from such whims of nature. A little child with a cherubin face and redness on his cheeks smiles and runs in your direction. A few steps before the two he stops, waits a bit, takes a deep breath and with a smile and an erie voice he says: “You won't win !” – the child said that as if it was the funniest thing in Nevandaar – “It is useless. Anything you do will just help us in the end. This city is lost, soon the walls will crack and a crimson tide will drown it, you should run away as far you can if you don't want to share its people fate” – the child took another deep breath, tired he was from running –“The unsealing will proceed thanks to the key that we retrieved, one of our kind... “  - the boy begins to cough and takes a series of deep breaths – “This body is too young and weak... The coronation will soon begin in our great citadel, you're welcome to join us there, but it would be pointless to interrupt, nevertheless you are...” – before the child finished his sentence he explode into a cloud of sand. No one saw it because lots of sand was already in the air. But as the child exploded the storm ended.  -"This certainly is an ill omen, for dark spirits to change into such forms is proof that something powerful has gathered here. What their purpose is I do not know." – said Dane cleaning himself from piles of sand gathered on his clothes.  -“We must proceed with caution from now on inquisitor, ancient forces have awoken.”- responded John.  -“Caution, but speed is esential, I wonder where is that citadel?”  -“It could be the old ruins in the deep south, you know, the Golden Fortress.” – said John.  -“Perhaps...”    **- Communal meeting -**                It was Sunday night and the Communal Palace of Sandburg was echoing with voices, especially a small chamber deep in the palace. The Seven Lords of Sandburg, the merchant guild leaders, the craftsman leaders, old medal filled generals and others filled the chamber. Lord Fusk called for order repeatedly hitting a wooden hammer upon a table. At that moment bishop Bethune entered followed by Grand Inquisitor Roland, and Inquisitors Dane, Leroon and Frederick. From the Lords group, near Lord Fusk stood Lord Bertram and his older brother Lord Gunther Bertram, behind both lords we could see Hiek watching the proceedings. At the end of the lord group, the new Lord Dante stood, John tried to adjust in the uniform of House Dante. Opposite we recognize Ridelur the lider of Sandburgs Merchants and Hundar the Grand Master of Sandburgs craftsmen. These were the important figures among many others that gathered here to announce the next step in the Search for the Tears. Lord Fusk marched in the middle of the room.  -“Dear guests we have gathered here to make known the past events and future plans...” – Lord Fusks voice was high pitched but carried well the message – “... as you have been informed about the successful actions of the adventuring parties sent from Sandburg I shall make this short. There is still much to do but first findings are promising. We are faced with a worrying prophecy that on many occasions was proven true. An older god possibly connected to the old inhabitants of this desert may rise once more. The nature of the god is still a misery but we should take steps in assuring our towns safety. The people that have been sent to Dante Mansion have revealed a way to do that. We have to seek out the artifacts called Tears and with these artifacts stop the rise of the god known as Alk’nar. So after many discussions we have decided to send a party to Gurthal and try to locate such a Tear artifact. Our lord Bertram Tefas, Pegasus Knight will lead the party because his leadership is well known in Sandburg joining him will be Inquisitor Dane, Cleric Finsha, White Wizard Ermand, Imperial Knight Tural and by his request also joining his party will be the elf know as Hiekathasd... – Lord Fusk stooped but resumed after Lord Tefas whispered to him – “and the elf Hiek. Besides them there will be two more party sent to Iru’bav Oasis to investigate the ruins there. My the Highfather keep you safe.”              The crowd dispersed, John exited the hall and was approached on the corridor by his old acquaintance Alric.  -“Ah, Devun, still the Palace parasite.” – said John  -“You really want to keep that title, do you...” – asked Alric  -“I don’t particularly desire to hold it, but I have to, if I don’t keep House Dantes lands out of Lord Fusks grasp he fill become to powerful for my liking. I just hate to see people more devious then me win.”- John started to walk.  -“You considered once Fusk to be a friend.” – Alric walked beside him.  -“A tough I learned to regret. Dante was demanding and to stay alive I did this to me, but Fusk was no better, at least Dante showed sportsmanship in his requests. But Fusk is just evil. And I hate that about him, the fact that he can be more then me.”  -“Then you’ll need all the help you can get, here’s the list of the people I hired for the estate.”  -“Thank you Alric, emm, I mean Devun.” – John smiled.   - Between the enemies teeth -   Gigel started a long trip to consciousness. He tried to open his eyes but they felt heavy. He placed his back to the wall and started to breathe regularly, the air felt dry. Moments later he opened his eyes, but he couldn't see much, first because it was a dark room lit only by a couple of torches and second because of his headache.    The detail become clearer and I see that I'm in a square huge sandstone room. The room has 3 entrances, massive, steal doors with ancient symbols decorating them. The room is full of luxury, huge bed, personal library, there is even some food on a blackwood table with mysterious painting, legs of the table look like half naked women in provoking stances.  On a gold chair in the left corner of the room someone is sitting and staring at me.  -“So you finally awakened. It's nice to see that such an important guest feels better.” – the person has his lower body dressed in white cloth with a blue band hugging the edge. On the band there were symbols, ancient symbols. His upper body was undressed and had a huge round medallion hanging round hanging from his neck. He had a warn smile, for a moment I felt ashamed for the trouble made by me, but quickly I remind myself that I was forced to come here.  -“I know it wasn't a friendly trip, but you must understand, we are just humble servants of Alk'nar. DO you imagine how it is to be buried under the ground for ages? Still conscious, but helpless? It is a very gruesome feeling, you must understand that we will do everything to not repeat that experience again !” - this time he's face is cold and full of anger. After a while he calms himself and leaves the chamber. When he left I charge the door trying to open it, but nothing happens. "Is there some other exit" - I say looking around the room, also I look up at the ceiling, but no exit is found. "Uff, this headache is killing me, I must lay down".    Time passes in an unchecked manner, until I heard one sound. The door was opening. And from the darkness of the places outside this room a figure appeared. It was a woman this time, but I couldn't see who it was. As she came next to me I noticed she was wearing the same cloth as the first one, but her face was covered. She bends over me, my face turns red. She extends one arm and presses a stone on the wall and passage opens  -“Quickly! This place were tunnels used by thieves until we came here. Quickly, come on! I will help you leave this place”  "Allright" - I say holding my head, what else could I do...    I walk for a long time undisturbed. If I would estimate I would say about an hour I walked until a stone wall blocked my path. The women stood before the wall, presed another stone and clear was the way again, the wall disappering.  -“From now on you are by yourself, so be careful... And name’s Akrisha.” - after that she explains to me how to move in thse tunnels undetected by the dozens of underground vermin and creatures. I leave the tunnl after another hour long walk and I enter a huge hall with a window to a carved building. It looks like a pyramid in it's original shape, but I also spot irregular buildings attached to it. It looked like an old temple. The hall was filled with skeletons.  From the clues that Akrisha gave me, I must head towards the great column in the room. The column should posses leafs and waterfalls adornments”Oh, there it is, right in the corner of the next room” – I say to myself. The button was pressed and inside the column a stairway was revealed. I p[roceed further and spot a light in the end. I leave the stairway and enter the backyard of a tavern "Clumsy spirit" in the Sandburg. Still there is a question, why Akrisha helped, me and were are the others?   - Unexpected luck -   Hiek entered the clerics chamber coverd in bloodied cloth. Hiek looked at the girl clerics eyes for one more time. So damned blue! It almost hurt.  "So, what happened next?" she asked with the most innocent look the elf had ever seen.  "So I walked out this morning with Tefas. We went to a tavern then and ordered some ale. The next thing I remember is this dwarf putting this damned gem in my hands and the crowd screaming. Before I could realise that they were shouting at me a wooden stick almost went through my ear. "Heretic! Heretic! Kill the elf!" they were crying with hellish voices." Hiek looked up, then down, then sighed. "How a creature without a god can be a heretic?"  "Have Gallean left you?"  "Yes, he did it some time ago... that bastard! He could have done more for his people than give into his madness..."  "What happened after that?"  "Ah... I don't seem to remember clearly. There was a fight... and a wolf."  "A wolf? Here, in the desert?"  "I summoned it and then told him to defent me... it must have drained me... after that I don't remember anything. Tefas must have brought me here and left to find some clues about his investigation. I’ll meet up with him in Marketplace Square."  "Summoned a wolf... are you a sage?"  Hiek almost laughed.  "No, no. Not a sage, they are just some old treefellas. They bind the nature itself to their will and make it do whatever they want. I... talk to animals."  "And summon them?"  Hiek stood and got his sword.  "With this thing anyone can do this." He thought for a second. "I must leave."  "Be careful." she said.  He got his shirt on and then he threw the cloak he had asked for earlier on his back.  "Ï'll be."  He started to walk, then he stopped, then turned. She smiled. He continued to the exit. Before he could exit the temple the spoke as if to himself "What a beautiful face."  Then he exited and headed for the Marketplace.   - Journey home -   I try to mend my clothes as best as posible. And then I enter the Tavern. The sound of music was heard from outside but now it boomed into my ears. I keep my eyes fixed at the barkeep, not wishing to see who was playing nor how many patrons were in the tavern that evening. I simply didn't care. "Oh how I hate these east side taverns." - I say to myself sitting infront of the barkeep and noticing the quality of the drinks he was offering.  -"Good evening good sir, could you tell me what day we are in ?"    -“It is monday good sir. I'll tell ya, maybe you heard it already. Wierd sandstorm are coming these days, yesterdays it last only for few minutes and dissappeard completly, some say it is magic, sir, but i'm afraid to think so. I'm just a simple man so I don't want to meddle in those mage things, but for my misfortune they are interested in us. These are dark days, but in this age all days are dark. The darkness is around us, seeding its roots deep and decieving the puppets, which call themself "free". All is illusion and the greatest illusion is the fate. Beware of the false prophets and bad adviced... In those times even those who you hold dear can betray you or already did it. Hold your treasures and secrets tight and become the master of those puppets instead of becoming one of them. Anyway, what ya want? Something to drink or eat?” - the man talked for a bit more uninteresting things, but you cannot concentrate on it, because of his dark, deep eyes who seems to drown you. You shake your head and continue...    -"So a day has passed" - I try to give myself something to think about.  -"Yes I'll have a drink..." - first I check my pockets, and feel realived that my money purse is with me - "... one of your wines, please." - I look at the barkeep as he turns and ask him:  -"Can someone travel outside the walls in these "dark" days?"    -“Sure you can, but if you ask if it is save then no. Here’s your drink” - he gives you a glass of wine, it is sweet, but you can feel a delicate taste of mushrooms, mushroom wine... one of the cheapest wines ever ... in history... since the dawn of Nevadaar - ”I hope you like it, we don't usually drink wine here sir...”- little laugh is coming through the tavern, but it quickly dissappears. “We don’t drink wine” – I think to myself – “oh, how I hate these eastern taverns.  -“Something more, sir? A bed? Some food? ... A woman? You can ask old Gon for everything, well almost, these are dark days... Not long than one year ago I was a boss of the thief guild here in Sandburg, but those damn cultists have thrown us away from our hideout, damn cultists... many died, some after a few days.. from my old guild only I still "live" and 3 other guys.. keep it for yourself sir, we are maybe few, but we are still the best...” – he said it with an eyes wink.    -"No worries should cloud your heart, my dear fellow, your secret is safe with me, I'm a peasant after all." - I lift my "extraordinary" drink and take a small gulp - "... fortune is a tricky thing, one day you are up and the other day you are atacked by cultist, its just the way it works..." - I say this smiling and in a silent voice - "... soo, can this Gon fellow take me back to my home in Cali'manash?"    He seems to be laughing  -“My poor dear sir, I won't escort you if you want that and my men are too busy reorginazing the guild to help you, but in the future maybe I will be able to help you and I'm Gon if you haven't understood... you are really a simple peasant, aren’t you? If you have finished your drink and won't buy anything than go out, because i have a meeting with someone you wish not to know...”- he looks at the tavern patrons- “The same for you all, go out! Now!”  -before you can say you wish to buy something more you spot that you have lost all the money somewhere, thief boss... you know now why. When you begin to say "someone stole my money" all tavern patrons rush towards the doors and take you with them, before you can act, doors are closed.    "Why this always happens to me? Do the gods amuse themselfs, by cutting the branch under my feet and I can't do anything about it" - I say turning my back to the tavern - "... how much I had with me... 4 coppers, one copper should've been the mushroom wine... not a big los' ...but a los' non the less ..." - I start moving, leaving behind the tavern - "... who do I know in Sandburg.." - I stop - "...oh no, not them..." - I grab my forehead and look around - "...but there is no other way, again I have to visit the Berash family..." - I look to see were would be the shorter route - "... they still owe me for the extra food supplies, but they are so dull and ....and... aristocratic...." - Gigel shivers in disgust.    You stop for a moment nervously and check if you still posses your necklace.... it is still here.... wierd, why didn’t Gon take it, it was surely more worth than few coppers...but the tavern is closed, so Gigel cannot ask him.. for now....     - **The past -**                I arrive at the Berash Mansion. "Ehh... not much compared to other aristocratic mansions in Sandburg" - a courtyard surrounds the main building that is actually embedded into a cliff. I go by the palms that decorate the perimeter of the mansion and knock on the servant’s door. Behind the door sounds are heard, braking, shouting and in a moment the door was opened. "Oh no..." - I duck seeing a frying pan flying through the air.  "Get out you swindler" - is heard from an older woman’s mouth as one person exits the mansion, running as if the Legion was after him. I move my head to look inside when I see another pan flying to hit the one that exited the room.  "I come in peace!!" - I say placing my head again into the frame of the door - "... stop your firing Ferla."  "Oh is that you, young Gigel?" - says the big woman.  "Yeah it's me, less one head if you throw another pan." - I say leaving only my hand visible from the room.  "Don't be silly young one, come enter, enter" - when I hear her voice I enter as if my grandmothers soft voice was calling me. Ferla was a servant in the Berash Mansion, a big woman but a soft heart, good cook too.  "Jersh, come in here, quickly ... move it !" - her voice demanded action, then she turned back at me with that mothers smile. On the other hand Jersh, her husband, was a stick of a man that loved to sing and play the culibra, but had to do gardening for money.  "What is it woman, you howl as if the Emperor is at our doorstep.... oh even better" - the old man smiles when he saw the young one next to the door. - "... Gigel !! Come here you little rat." - the man limping thwarts me and grabbing me into a hug.  "Jersh you ol' bag of bone, who are you." - I say embracing him too.  "Uff, pretty well concerning the ... circumstances..." -Jersh winks.  “Circumstances? " - I say knowing that Ferla is somehow connected.  "Yes, her cooking ... ptiu ... poison... ahem..."  "Your drinking is your actual poison you crazy old man." - Ferla jumps to defend herself. They start to argue.  "Still the ol' Jersh and Ferla I know." - I say crossing my hands and watch to show. It all was interrupted when a young man and a young woman entered the room.  "Is that horrid man gone... oh visitor." - said the young woman.  "I've personally shown him out !!!" - said Ferla proud.  "And who is this?" - asked the young man.  "I'm hurt you don't remember me master Ashal." - I say bowing my head.  "Gigel, is that really you." - the young woman’s high-pitched voice was heard.  "Yes, miss Ursha, its me." - I lift my head and say again "Hello."  "Oh I must tell mother !!!" - the girl happy, ran up the stairs.  "Please do..." - said Ashar, moving close to me and looking at me with those aristocratic snobbish eyes - "... I see you return again."  "Vigilant as always master Ashar." - I keep my eyes fixed at the wall.  "Oh, that peasant humor I love soo much ... " - Ashar started to circle me, observing me.  "Well I am a peasant after all." - I target his eyes this time.  "Indeed you are ..." - he just can't resist being serious anymore and starts laughing. He grabs my hand in a handshake.  "How long has it been ?" - Ashar pats me on the shoulder - "... two, three years?"  "Two years and four months, but who is counting? Heh." - we both smile.  “Will you be staying?”  “Yes, until I find somehow to reach Cali’manash. The city is closed down.”  “Well in that case we’ll be having you to ourselves more, I’m sorry but business in pilling up. Until we meet again.”  “Farewell Ashar.”              Gigel stayed at the Berash familywhen his parents were killed serving their city. When he was old enought gigel decided that he wanted to make a life for himself and moved back to the village where his parents came from, Cali’manash.    **- They must be stopped -**                Gigel was in the Marketplace Square looking for people to go to Cali’manash. He soon discovered that he was not the only one there. He has already seen Inquisitor Dane and John in the Market. He introduced himself to Dane.              The Square is almost empty, only some merchants still sell their goods. Suddenly the ground started to tremble and sunk a few meters, then another couple of meters until you could not climb out of the market. People, merchants, goods, buildings, everything in the market square sank to that depth.  -“How is it possible?” – asked  -“We were lured here !” – said Dane taking out his mace. Small whirlwind rose in their area and on the winds a voice was heard.    -“A grand thing, isn't it? It's a little trick, I have learned from Alk’nar... Gigel come back, you shouldn't have escaped.” - his voice is warm and father-like, but Gigel refused by shaking his head.  -“Well in that case....Take them !”  - about 10 sand creatures sprung out of the whirlwinds, they looked like some peasant, some you even know, some are armored warriors but behind these another "thing" comes from the sand. It looks like a beast of merged animals, but the mutation is chaotic, somewhere a horse head is coming from the back, on the left you see a chicken leg, up there is a pig head, to sum up it posses 4 heads, about 20 legs, 6 arms and 10 tails. It is also made of sand and the animals seems to suffer a lot. This "army" is coming slowly in your direction.  Dane pushed back Gigel and any suvivors and retreated from the advancing sand mob.    Hiek awaken just to see Dane passing him by and yelling at him: “Elf, quick move back and seek a way out of here” – Hiek shook his head to wake up and said – “I will but wait one moment!” – he took out his own sword, jumped back thrusting it into the ground and started to murmur something silently.  -“No time to pray, elf” – but Dane had to react to another shout, it was John up on a merchants stall trying to jump on a high edge and to safety, but it was to high so he used rocks that he found near him to keep the creatures away from him, with no succes. Danes mace had a better chance of dispersing the sand creatures but they reformed after a few moments. John seeing a way out ran to join the fleeing survivors saying: "All this fighting business is no concern of a scholarly gentleman!"  Gigel found himself near an armour merchants stall, when a sand warrior jumped a closed the gap to him to a few meters. Gigel took up a large kite shaped shield. Just in time to keep him safe from the club swing of the sand warrior.  Trying to stop their advance Dane Charged the sand mobs ranks on their right flank  -"Begone foul demons, your trickeries shall not avail you ! Begone I say ! For I am an agent of the Highfather and I shall not falter in my holy mission !  Four of the sand-people arms changed into huge Scythes, 3 other posses now sand made sword and shield, 2 of them have now 1 meter long claws and one last made from his arm a bow and with sand-made arrows he's shooting at Dane. Dane is an easy target, because he is charging straight in their direction, but he use his mace as a shield and arrows don't hit him directly, but they stil exploded moving Dane a few steps back, if the arrows did hit him it would have caused him critical injuires. The menagerie abomination is slowly moving in your direction, crashing trough merchant stalls. One claws sand-man attacks Hiek, he hits his left arm, it's still useable, but hurt.    After the creature hit Hiek his face became convulsed with pain, but he still held his sword hilt. After several seconds he manages to pull his sword out of the sandy ground and with that action an average wolf appears in front of him. Hiek said something to the wolf and then he tries to fall back a couple of meters while the creature is preparing to attack again. Hiek found himself near John.  -“Ah my favorite sorcerer...Where is Musty?” – he growned because of the pain.  -"Your Marten, young master Hiek, it scampered off somewhere as soon as you've set it down," continued Hastings, a little annoyance seeped through his tone. "I expect it had went hunting for rats or something of the sort. You told me it'd come running to me should it be startled or scared - I've certainly no time to mollycoddle an animal with so many more important tasks clamoring for attention." Hastings then paused a moment, as if thinking about some matters before adding; "And stop calling me a sorcerer!"                Dane took shelter behind a tipped over wagon to rethink his strategy.  “Can someone se a way out of here?” – he asked.  “There is no way out !” – the sand voice was heard.    Gigel is stil suffering the repeated impacts on the shield from a sand swordman. He yells in despair. And some of the words could be understood, but then a wave of energy from Gigels body tossed the sand swordsman into the abomination. Gigel then proceeded in hiding behind the wagon where Dane is.    The sand creatures moved closer to our heroes. Wanting, lusting to destroy them. Gigel was allready take by two sand creatures that jumped among the ranks of the survivors and tossed him behind their line of ancient steel and sand. A masacre began as the creatures spined and cut down everyone in sight. Dane as an faithfull servant of the Church rallied the few half-warriors to protect the rest of the group. They tried to charge from behind their debris baricades, but two of the them where quickly mauled down by the sand archer. Hieks familiar was lost in an wirlwind of sand, blood and screams.  The menagery abomination swung his grand schytes against a few barrles and a merchant stall removing them from his path. Around him ran the other creatures, whispering in an ancient erie language, the archer drew an arrows in his bow, and was ready to claim a life, maybe all. Other creatures stayed at a distance, from the temporary baricades of our heroes.  "If you surender you will be spared" - a voice spoke from the darkness behind the abomination. A silence, came down, for the first time. The heroes looked at each other, moments passed. The creatures came closer, even closer, crashing everything in front of it. A blade struck the wood above Hieks head. And two arrows ripped Danes cape. One guildsman charged out of desperation, the abomination impailed him on a sandy spike, that grew from his sand abdomen.  "It is over, submit. Now!" - the voice was growing impatient.    A ball of blue light came from above and hit the sand archer. From the left a group of warriors dressed in white moved in, to place themselfs between the sand creatures and our heroes.  "Not this time !" - a woman spoke. At that time four of the white dressed individuals flanked the heroes.  "Don't worry about Gigel, I will take care of him, go with my companions, they will take you to safety.". The ground shook, the rock walls began to fall. And the voice from the shadow screamed in rage. A portal was opened by the mysterious individuals.  "Go now!" -begged the woman. And the heroes passed thru the vortex of magic just when the cavern was crubling on itself. The vortex changed colour from blue to blood red, it twiched violently. From behind, the shadowy voice could be heard laughing in a sadistic tone. The heroes, some guildsmen and the four white dressed individual were spit out of the vortex onto a dune. There, three of the mysterious individuals began to shake violently and decompose before the heroes eyes. Only bone and their white cloth was left from their bodies. One remained from the mysterious group. Old was his apperance. He bent over the bodies held a short incantation and the turned to the heroes. John asked:  "Where are we? And what happened?"  The person answered: "Your first question..." - his voice was indeed old, but warm - "...don't ask where, but when..." - after a moment of awe he continued "... my friends have died because of mana implosion, you are safe, now..."   End of Chapter II |