**First Major Arc (Book 1?)**

The goal of book 1 is to establish the major characters (Adyn, Zo, M-Jenn), and introduce pseudo-antagonists Elyse and Vylith, as well as the two major factions (the Guild and the Alignment) as well as the general setting. The driving conflict behind book 1 will be Adyn and Zo’s journey to attend the University of Pharphesus in order to hone their abilities.

**Act 1**

**Adyn:**

We introduce Adyn as a twenty-something year old cocky little shit who already has some weak mastery of his magic, which he uses to charm girls (with rare success), fight rough-types who should be able to put him in his place (and do, with great success), and awe the crowds with his illusions as he travels in his troupe of circus performers. He has few major issues, and is more or less content with his life, aside from the fact that he actually \*can\* do magic, which is his great secret. (Everyone thinks he’s just a clever illusionist, and in fairness, many of his tricks are simple illusions he learned from another performer who died when he was young.)

**Scenes:**

1. **Perspective: Adyn -** Adyn is interrogated by an Inquisitor and is able to wriggle out by showing his tricks are just illusions. He explains about who he learned illusions from, etc. He still ends up with a black eye and a cut lip, as well as some bs citation for portraying the occult (which he promptly throws away). Adyn gets out, his magician friend immediately following him. They exchange words. The Ringleader calls him over to talk about it, very nervous about the Inquisitor, but Adyn shrugs him off and heads over to the sweaty dressing tent, where other performers are changing out of their clothes. He has some raunchy exchange with some of his coworkers, then leaves and plops into a tent to soak, tipping the kid who drew his bath. He sighs and leans his head back.
2. **Perspective: Inquisitor** – Cool conversation between Inquisitor and someone on a radio (framed as a magical box) about Adyn. Is he the one they are seeking?
3. **Perspective**: **Adyn** – Adyn dreams of Ol’kir’alkhai and then of Narzha’s world (Vylith’s world).
4. **Perspective**: **Narzha** – Narzha sees Adyn and is like oh shit a human who can channel. She’d only seen one other (Vylith).
5. **Perspective**: Adyn – Adyn has a conversation with the Ringleader, who gives him a stern talking to about his tricks. This is where we get some more context on the nature of magic in this world.
6. **Perspective: Adyn -** Adyn puts on a show, then meets a pretty girl in a bar later. They have a nice long conversation (where we get some more characterization of Adyn and his friend). He steps in to bandy words with a heckler who is bullying his friend, and uses his sleight of hand abilities to shame the man. He promises the girl he will show her something truly impressive the next night, then is knocked the f out.
7. **Perspective:** **Adyn** – Adyn dreams of Narzha again and this time she burns the connections into his mind. She gives him visions of Olkira, Pharphesus, and another Demon homeworld.
8. **Perspective: Adyn -** During the next show, Adyn is wincing as he smiles and performs his standard tricks. He goes through a few, then notices that his lady friend is watching! Feeling like he needs to do something spectacular (and egged on by the presence in his mind), he taps into his magic to do something epic in order to impress the girl, but at the last moment notices that the Inquisitor is there watching, and messes it up. Aside from kids who don’t understand at first (but quickly quiet down), the crowd is silent when it becomes apparent that something is wrong, that *actual* magic was just done. The Ringleader steps in to try to play the whole thing off as a trick, but the crowd is unsure. Eventually some people start clapping but it’s obvious people are nervous. When Adyn looks around, the Inquisitor is gone.
9. **Perspective: Adyn -** That night, Adyn freaks out and tries to pack up his things to flee. He’s in the middle of an argument with the Ringleader when the circus is attacked. They are trying to capture him, but he ends up trapped in a tent that is set on fire. With Narzha’s help, he escapes by teleporting away to Olkira.
10. **Perspective:** **Inquisitor –** The Inquisitor searches through the wreckage of the tent, though he is unable to find any signs of the body. He uses some kind of device (which is totally anachronistic), and a woman (Vylith) appears. She asks for a report, and he relays the information about Adyn. She is silent for a moment, and the Inquisitor sweats. Then the feed cuts out. He sighs and shakily puts away the strange device and walks over to pour himself a drink. As he pours he hears something behind him and whimpers. He feels his chest seize up as he has a heart attack. He turns to find a man with shifting features, skin and flesh flowing and reknitting until the man looking down at him is an exact copy of him. The copy steps over him and begins to pour himself a drink.

**Act 2**

**Zo:** Zo is a genius but timid Tengling who aspires to become Olkira’s ambassador to the Alignment. Zo is a strong supporter of civil rights and believes the current administration is super corrupt (which they totally are). Coming from a middle class family but with relatives and friends who are lower class, Zo has a unique perspective and wants to change things.

1. **Perspective – Zo:** We introduce Zo hiding in their room and trying (and failing) to study as their [mother] is yelling on the phone. Zo catches snippets, and from those snippets, we hear the mother trying to claim that Zo’s sibling is needed at the shop, that they have rights as middle-class citizens. We also catch a snippet of the [other Planet], and how there are plenty of other Tenglings who can work the mines (the conscription is based on home address, not profession). The call ends and Zo can hear their [mother] weeping. Beside them, their sibling is also teary-eyed and looks frightened. They hear the father ask, “What happened?” The mother replies, “They said they are changing the rules. Conscription is based on home address, not just profession,” and she keeps weeping. After a pause, the [father] walks in and shakes their head, and Iko begins to cry in earnest. Zo hugs Iko close and tries to reassure them. Iko reminds Zo that they have to leave soon. Zo curses and checks the time, then leaves and promises they will be back soon, and leaves the burrow in the slums.
2. **Perspective –** **Zo**: Distraught, Zo starts up their hoverbike and facetimes their friend, telling them Iko was conscripted as a miner. The friend replies something like, “Shit, sorry. You gonna be okay? With the test…?” Zo says something like “Probably not, but I have to try, right?”. Reply: “You got this [man]. Iko will be okay. Takk and Zsitu work down there, too, remember. I’m sure they’ll take care of Iko.” Zo sighs and cuts the feed, not bothering to remind their friend that they lost one of their own siblings down there not even a year ago. As Zo drives toward the testing facility, we get a description of the stark transition from slums (Tengling) to downtown (alien), along with a rumination about the inequities that plague Ol’kir’alkhai. We also introduce the giant statue of Bini the Unifier, in their *auraspecs* and *voidblade*.
3. **Perspective – Zo**: Zo enters the building which is super high tech and swanky. All the Tenglings in here are wealthy corpos. First, the human porter looks at Zo and lets them know the service entrance is behind the building. Zo says they’re here for the test and gives their confirmation number. The porter lets Zo in. Zo speaks to the Tengling at the desk, who looks them up and down and (once again), asks if they need directions. Zo sighs.
4. **Perspective** – **Mozin**: The proctor notices Zo as they walk in, and we get to see from their perspective why Zo stands out. They are obviously a lower-class individual. They note that Zo must be the student from the low-class university. They see another student snicker to their friend about it, and Mozin tells them to quiet down and take out their holotablets. Zo’s eyes go wide, and they begin to look around panicked. Mozin pulls out a spare tablet from the desk and gives it to Zo, who looks grateful. Mozin tells them all that they have two hours to finish the essay exam. A prompt is displayed on the front of the screen. “Along with a variety of other heavy metals, large deposits of Zinc have been discovered on [other Planet], the most recent world to join the alignment. Researchers at the University of Pharphesus claim they are close to cracking the planet’s unique signature, allowing for largescale teleportation between the resource-rich world and the other Alignment core worlds. What actions are the Olkiran Coalition taking in preparation for this potential event? Do you agree or disagree with these actions? Justify your response. In your response, discuss the direct consequences the cracking of [Other Planet] may have on Olkiran commerce, both intraplanetary and interplanetary, as well as the planet’s social structure in general.” The other aliens look a bit overwhelmed, and they look up to meet their fellow test takers eyes as they finish the prompt. All of them look worried as well. All except Zo, who is already furiously typing away. As the first hour passes, and Mozin calls half time, they get a response. Zo’s submission. Zo steps up and hands the tablet back to Mozin, bowing slightly, then leaves. Mozin opens the submission and begins to read.
5. **Perspective – Zo:** Zo exits the building and texts their family saying they think it well, but they will see. The family doesn’t respond. Zo calls their friend and the two meet up for lunch. TACOS. They chat more about Iko and the mines, then Zo mentions they want to get something from the shop to fix up their hoverbike.
6. **Perspective – Zo:** Zo goes to the shop and opens up. M-Jenn is inside, cleaning up, and cheerily greets Zo. She helps Zo diagnose the issue with the bike, and Zo realizes they need some kind of part from the bazaar. Zo checks the time, and realizes they need to rush. They get to the bazaar and start haggling. Suddenly a flash of light appears (that goes mostly unnoticed in the bright sun) and there lies Adyn, coughing.
7. **Perspective –** **Adyn**: Adyn initially assumes he is dead. But would the heavens be so hot and so bright? As Adyn blinks and adjusts his eyes, he is greeted by the sight of Zo staring at him, and freaks out, scrabbling backwards and bumping into another Tengling, who squeaks at him. He tries to say something, but they stare confused. At this point, Zo pulls Adyn up and leads him back to the shop. There, Zo squeaks to M-Jenn, who squeaks back, then looks at Adyn and rushes up. M-Jenn squeaks to Adyn, and Adyn says something like, “I don’t speak squirrel.” The words are jumbled and repeated back to him in different pitches, then M-Jenn begins talking to Adyn. “It’s not squirrel, silly. It’s SAL, the Standardized Alignment Language, or a modified version of it that utilizes Tengling phonetics.” Adyn just stares, dumb-founded. “Wha- What?” Zo squeaks at M-Jenn something, and she thinks for a moment, then smiles, nodding. Zo hands M-Jenn their earpiece, and M-Jenn interfaces with it for a moment, before handing it to Adyn and telling him to put it to his ear. Adyn stares at the piece of metal mistrustingly, but puts it toward his ear. Zo squeaks, and at the same time, hears a voice from the piece of metal ask, “Does this work?” Adyn flips and drops the earpiece, which M-Jenn smoothly catches. She hands it back to Adyn, saying “It can’t harm you, it just translates what Zo says to your language so that you can understand them.” “Them?” Adyn asks. “You mean him?” and points to Zo. Zo frowns at the finger, and M-Jenn pushes down Adyn’s hand. “I would avoid pointing to anyone here. That’s a fairly rude gesture you just made. And no, I meant ‘them’. Tenglings are sexually monomorphic. Any Tengling can reproduce with any other Tengling assuming both are sexually mature. A few do use gendered pronouns, but usually only Tengs who frequently interact with humans or other sexually dimorphic aliens ever do so. Among those, the choice of pronouns is often arbitrary, but some do tend to feel a closer connection to one of the two forms. There’s actually an entire field of academia dedicated to interspecies gender studies. One Tengling theorist postulates that by the end of the century—” “That’s probably more than our friend needs to know,” Zo interrupts. “Do you have a name or other identifier?” “Uh. My name’s Adyn. Can you tell me what’s happening? What is this place?” “This is my family’s shop, in the city of [CITY] on the planet Ol’kir’alkhai, Alignment world #13A3” TBD