Potential media: Webcomic, animated shorts.

Scene 1

Music inspiration:

Artist: Linkin Park

Album: Meteora

Song: Faint

A village burns, and the Neranoid villagers are being led away by a well organized army of Lightning tribe Neranoids. Nueka bursts through a village wall, his fear turning to confusion as he sees the villagers ahead. The village chief turns and sees Nueka. He has a dead look in his eyes.

Nueka lets out a primal scream and launches forward as the chief stands still. Banging on the back of Nueka’s head, the chief quickly side steps. He catches himself and spins to face the chief again, his eyes widening before dodging a blast of flame. The chief does not speak, but his eyes plead Nueka to stop. Nueka gets into close range and claws at the chief, but is repelled. Nueka refuses to hesitate, and launches back forward again. The chief emits another burst of flame, but Nueka does not dodge. He presses through it, his carapace searing, and tackles the chief to the ground. The chief’s head smacks the ground and he lays there, dazed, while Nueka brutalizes him. Nueka emits a wild scream with every slash of his claws. With a final smash, Nueka crushes the chief’s skull, and roars in anguish. Flames begin to catch around him as the chief’s connection to Nn is absorbed.

Scene 2

Nueka chases after the captured villagers, coming upon a monolithic factory. He sees the villagers being brought to a lower level, but before he can catch up he is assailed by Lightning Neranoid guards. He kills them, testing out his new fire powers. The guards here use some sort of shiny black metal rod that intensifies their lightning powers, and allows greater control over them. Nueka gains access to the facility as some guards run inside. Weapons are being mass produced in the factory, and the guards do not hesitate to use them on Nueka. Nueka sustains some injuries, but fights through the pain. The facility enters an emergency mode as Nueka wrecks infrastructure, engrossed in a war trance. The commander of the facility is attracted, and briefly spars with Nueka. The enraged Neranoid’s body has grown taller, and his antennae longer. Steam pours from his mouth as his mandibles hang open, baring his savagely sharp teeth.

The commander retreats, and releases a beast from a cage. The beast has the body of a Neranoid, but a strange artifact is consuming its head. It immediately clashes with Nueka, and the two enter a brutally quick fight. A short war of attrition takes place, each beast trading slashes and punches. The two knock each other away, and as they recover their bearings a faint crying can be heard. Nueka’s antennae bristle as he attempts to locate where the sound is coming from. Suddenly, he realizes it’s coming from within the artifact. Nueka breaks out of his battle trance, and regains his composure. The tortured villager does not relent, however, and launches forward. Nueka’s form shrinks back to its normal size, his hair following suit. He reaches out to the villager but is met with a flaming fist. Desperately, Nueka attempts to communicate with the villager, but it only emits weeps interrupted with unnatural screams. Nueka is pushed against a wall, and the artifact begins to glow and spark with energy. With his arms pinned, Nueka is left with no choice. He slams his forehead against the artifact, and a resounding crack is heard. The villager falls backwards, limp, as the artifact shatters along with their head. Nueka falls to his knees, holding the deeply cracked carapace of his face together.

Scene 3

The Lightning commander flees the facility and heads southwest, looking to meet up with an army in that direction. Nueka escapes the facility as it begins to collapse, wounded but determined. He heads south.

Music inspiration:

Artist: Yoshida Brothers

Song: Storm

Meanwhile, Wunaeth and his small band of resistance are resting in a tunnel underground. Most of the Neranoids sit and eat or sleep; but Wunaeth is examining their map, attempting to get bearings on where they are. This is suddenly interrupted by an explosion that collapses the tunnel. All of the resistance are killed, but Wunaeth is able to escape upwards to the surface. A Lightning tribe army advances, and Wunaeth begins to fight them off. Their numbers and technology are overwhelming, however, and soon the Wind Neranoid is surrounded.

Mirra crashes onto the scene with a wave of water, greeting Wunaeth. The Wind Neranoid takes a moment to catch his breath while Mirra presses the Lightning troops away. Mirra and Wunaeth stand back to back as the tides fall and the Lightning Neranoids push inwards. The duo separate, and begin carving paths through the assailants. Wunaeth takes on one at a time, sparring in close range and subtly manipulating gusts of wind to knock his target off balance, before delivering a killing blow. Mirra focuses on a larger scale, tearing water down from the air to knock troops down, then swirling it around to limit how many can advance at once. Mirra swoops around to Wunaeth again, and tells him to make a vortex. She covers his retreat to the center of the swirling waters by lifting spears of ice behind him. Wunaeth centers himself, then spreads his arms out, wind picking up around him. Mirra continues making obstacles, simultaneously throwing water into the air and aiding Wunaeth’s construction of a tornado. Soon the tempest roars, lifting Lightning Neranoids off their feet, and Mirra capitalizes on this by forming tiny shards of ice to fly through the storm. The Lightning regiment falters and then breaks as many are caught in the tornado and torn to shreds. Once Mirra sees the army in full retreat, she rushes to the center of the vortex to reconvene with Wunaeth. The two are exhausted, with not enough energy to even speak. Mirra motions to a stony hill nearby, and the two limp towards it.

Scene 4

Nueka makes his way slowly south. He ascends to a cliff overlooking a river to try and get his bearings. Further to the south and slightly east he sees the dunes and mesa of the Earth Neranoid tribe lands. North he sees the ruins of the facility, and further beyond, smoke rising from the mountains. Squinting, he’s able to see a dark patch on the plains to the northwest. It seems to be an army moving westward, further into Fire tribe land. Nueka curses and gets up. He walks down the cliff and begins travelling west, hoping to cut off the army himself.

He heads directly into a forest to continue his westward path, burning his way through single mindedly. A sudden yell catches his attention. He turns to see an adult Earth Neranoid and a child Lightning Neranoid. The elder one approaches him, and asks why he’s burning the forest. Nueka pushes past him, walking menacingly towards the child. Hate burns in his eyes, his fists wreathed in flame. The Lightning tribe child backs away, terrified. She calls out for Onuth, and the Earth Neranoid wraps his arms around Nueka from behind, restraining him and lifting him off the ground. He asks again, angrily, what Nueka is doing. Flames draw up around Nueka’s arms as he screams in rage, and Onuth is forced to let go.

Onuth yells for Lintyr to run, and the Lightning child does. Nueka moves to chase her, but Onuth’s fist impacts his head from the side. Nueka is knocked into a tree, and before he can get his bearings, another heavy blow impacts his stomach. Onuth looms above him, readying his fists to kill. He hesitates, however, as Nueka looks up with a hate he’s seen before. The Earth Neranoid tries to get through to Nueka, asking him to stop and just talk. He asks the enraged Neranoid his name, and Nueka hisses it out. Onuth shares his name as well, and Nueka asks if he knows what the Lightning Neranoids are doing. After a pause, Onuth says yes. Before he can explain more, Nueka leaps up and delivers an uppercut to the cooling Earth Neranoid. Nueka accuses him of collusion with the Lightning tribe, and rushes him.

Onuth spits out a protest through the blood, but is only met with flame. Nueka blasts the area with an inferno, pressing towards Onuth. In a flash, Nueka gets into close range and slams his knee into Onuth’s stomach. The Earth Neranoid is barely able to get his hands down to block it, and is pushed back into fire. Nueka’s flames quickly catch on to the rest of the forest, and now the two stand surrounded in an arena of heat. The combatants clash, Onuth having grown silent. Nueka attempts to goad him on, clearly enjoying trading blows. He soon realizes, however, that Onuth’s body has grown harder, and his fists hit heavier. Before he knows it, Nueka is pushed back. Onuth roars and the earth rumbles beneath him. He tears earth from the ground, covering his fists in it, and dashes forward as if lighter than before. Nueka is forced to dodge and retreat, blocking such a mass being impossible. Seeing a line of rock attached to the Earth Neranoid’s back, Nueka ducks down to avoid a blow before sliding behind him to kick it, shattering the reinforcement. Onuth collapses forward as his balance is offset, and Nueka delivers a rain of claws to his back. The silent Neranoid suddenly rears up and bashes his elbow into Nueka’s chest, knocking him back. Nueka takes a moment to recover, but when he looks up, he sees Onuth leaned fully forward, his arms buried in the earth. The ground begins to turn, and Nueka realizes the Earth Neranoid is lifting the entire area. He scrambles off of it, away from Onuth, as a dust cloud explodes from the compacting earth.

Upon turning around, Nueka sees Onuth’s figure enshrouded in dust, his eyes glowing a menacing white. Above him he lifts an area a village could fit in, and with a rumble it begins careening towards Nueka. Dodging is not an option, so the Fire Neranoid braces himself. A massive dust cloud explodes outwards from the impact, and Nueka is buried beneath the unwieldy mass of earth. Onuth runs in the direction Lintyr did as Nueka slowly digs his way out.

Scene 5

Wunaeth and Mirra rest on the stony hill as night falls. Wunaeth takes time to mourn his lost comrades, marking the collapsed area of the tunnel with a stone marker for each. The two discuss what to do next. Mirra suggests going to the Earth Neranoid tribe, but Wunaeth is unsure. He tries to pitch the idea of returning to the Water tribe, but Mirra shoots this down immediately. The two begin to argue. This is interrupted by Lintyr scurrying up the stony hill they sit on. The duo jump up, ready for battle, but Mirra quickly relaxes upon seeing the intruder is a child. Lintyr falls to her hands and knees, exhausted. She wheezes out her name as Mirra rushes to her side.

A rumbling interrupts Mirra as she tries to question Lintyr, and Wunaeth readies himself again. He looks to the south, but the low light makes seeing nearly impossible. He generates a gust down the hill, and commands whoever is coming to stop. The stone of the hill begins to crack, and Wunaeth steps back, intimidated as the rumbling intensifies. Lintyr yells out over the cacophony that it’s Onuth, a friend. Wunaeth backs up, and the lumbering Neranoid comes to a dusty stop a few feet from the group. Lintyr stumbles towards him, and he falls to his knees to embrace her. After the visitors catch their breath and the groups exchange names, Wunaeth and Mirra ask them what happened. Onuth explains that he fled the Earth tribe with Lintyr. He wishes to protect her from the wrath of the Earth Neranoids that have been driven mad with war fervor.

Onuth recounts his run-in with a Fire Neranoid that attempted to kill Lintyr, and his spar with him. He noted the rage of Nueka was similar to that he saw in his brethren, but Nueka was still able to converse. He seems shaken, and Lintyr looks at the ground. A moment passes in silence. Mirra breaks it by asking where they plan to go now. Another moment of silence passes. Mirra is about to repeat her question when she realizes Onuth and Lintyr have fallen asleep from exhaustion. Mirra and Wunaeth decide to do the same, and rest through the night.

Scene 6

In the morning light, the extent of Onuth’s wounds is apparent. Wunaeth and Lintyr bandage him while Mirra acquires food and water from a nearby grove. Over their meal, the four converse on where to go next. Onuth rules out the Earth tribe. Wunaeth asks Lintyr if she wants to return to the Lightning tribe. Lintyr asks if Onuth can come, and he says no. Lintyr decides she doesn’t want to, in that case. The final decision is to travel west, towards the Water tribe.

Wunaeth spots a dark smear on the horizon, and sees smoke rising in the distance. Knowing it may be a village under attack by Lightning troops, he and Mirra rush ahead. As they crest a hill, they find the wobbling mass of a Lightning army, but instead of a besieged village they see a single Neranoid fighting in the center of them. Bursts of flame erupt from the area, and war screams echo in the valley. The two sit and wait, unsure if they should intervene now. Suddenly, a loud crack followed by a quickly silenced roar unceremoniously ends the battle. The troops form back in formation, and the duo see Nueka chained, dragged behind the troops as they head west.

The two give pause, unsure if they should assist an apparent threat to Onuth and Lintyr. Wunaeth reasons that he’s certainly not in his war-fervor anymore, so it should be safer to interact with him. The two wait for nightfall and follow the army’s movement by treading the hilltops carefully. Wunaeth summons a gale to disturb the army, and they take shelter within their tents. Mirra sneaks in from the east. Nueka is chained to a post on the west side of the encampment. Mirra locates him and waits for patrols to pass. It seems the Lightning Neranoids take a moment to bash Nueka’s unconscious form as they near him. After the patrols leave, Mirra approaches the Fire Neranoid, breaking his chains and sneaking him out of the encampment.

Wunaeth and Mirra make a quick escape, meeting back with Onuth and Lintyr. They lay Nueka down on a bed of leaves and Wunaeth examines his wounds. His carapace is deeply cracked on all limbs, and heavy scarring covers his stomach. Older, healed cracks in the carapace of his face are also present. Onuth and Lintyr sit further from the disabled Fire Neranoid, Onuth keeping a careful eye on him while Lintyr tries to avert her gaze.

Intermission 1

Morning arrives, and with it Nueka’s consciousness. He emits a creaking groan, waking the others. Wunaeth questions Nueka, asking why he fought with Onuth and a Lightning army. Nueka stares at the sky, wincing every once in a while as Wunaeth reapplies bandages and disinfects deep cuts. Wunaeth questions him more, but silence is Nueka’s only answer. Eventually, he gives up and goes to talk with Mirra about Nueka’s condition. After a minute, Onuth gets up, surprising Lintyr. He slowly walks into Nueka’s view, fists clenched. Nueka’s eyes wander to his face, and he raises his mandibles in a greeting for friends. His first words since being rescued are a commendation to Onuth for his strength, and a simultaneous curse at him for protecting a Lightning Neranoid. Onuth is silent for a moment, then asserts Lintyr has done none of the killing that the Lightning army has. He asks if Nueka can say the same. Nueka’s smile fades, and he looks away. Onuth walks back to Lintyr and guides her away from the campsite.

Scene 8

Days pass, and Nueka recovers. He explains his village was razed by Lightning Neranoids, omitting his final encounter with the village chief. He says he followed the captured villagers to a facility, and destroyed it. His bloodthirst for Lightning Neranoids is obvious when he pronounces their name with a snapping venom. Wunaeth pokes fun at him for walking into a Lightning Neranoid army alone, asking if he thought he could kill them all. He stops himself, though, realizing such a suicidal move may have had just that intent. He asks Nueka if he went after them hoping to die. Nueka sits up, his bandages tearing and wounds spilling blood. His mandibles raise and he clamps his teeth together, shouting the opposite. He exalts his refusal to die until he destroys every Lightning Neranoid the land contains. Mirra smirks at this bold claim, noting that he definitely would have died if they had not rescued him.

Nueka also refutes this. He lays back down and Wunaeth, exasperated, begins reapplying bandages. He reveals his encounter with a Neranoid of his village, a strange artifact consuming their head and controlling their body. Nueka quietly admits he assumed a similar fate awaited him, as he knew it awaited his family. The three sit quietly, and Wunaeth breaks the silence by asking if Nueka could not be aggressive towards Lintyr. Nueka’s eyes flash with anger for a moment, but he stops at Wunaeth’s earnest and stern face.

Scene 9

A few more days pass, and Nueka is able to walk. The group has moved somewhat southwest from their original position, hoping to stay undetected by roaming Lightning troops. Wunaeth reiterates their plan to go to the Water tribe, asking if Onuth, Lintyr, or Nueka have any objections. The former two agree with the plan, and Nueka stays silent. Wunaeth stares at Nueka until he bristles. Angrily, he reassures Wunaeth he’s fine with the plan. Wunaeth smirks and begins to plan their route.

The trip west is relatively uninterrupted. Onuth and Lintyr keep a distance behind Wunaeth, Mirra, and Nueka. Eventually, the great walls of the Water tribe can be seen on the horizon. At sunset, Mirra stands atop a hill and gazes westward. She slowly turns north, and utters a cry upon seeing smoke from one of the battlements. She rushes ahead while Nueka and Wunaeth try to keep up, Onuth and Lintyr lagging behind.

As the battle comes into sight, Mirra lets out a primal cry and impacting the throng of Lightning troops. Waves of water draw out and crash into their ranks, and they brandish their stun rods. The defending Water troops are able to press the confused invaders out beyond the massive, collapsed hole in the great wall. Wunaeth covers Mirra’s blind spots as she ravages the troops, forming chunks of ice and launching them through enemies by exploding bubbles in the water around her. Winds from Wunaeth trip and batter enemies that get too near to the epicenter of the storm.

Nueka collides with the confused Lightning forces, spouts of flame erupting from his hands. He tears a wild gash through the front line, roaring in the bloodbath. At this additional attack, the Lightning army declares a retreat. Their front ranks scramble while the main mass begins marching to the east. Nueka attempts to give chase, but Onuth appears next to him and holds him back. The Fire Neranoid rages in Onuth’s grasp, but eventually comes out of his war trance. Onuth lets go once Nueka is able to speak clearly. Nueka pushes him away and begins walking towards the collapsed area of the wall. Mirra and Wunaeth are already speaking with some of the troops, and the commander approaches them. Mirra is taken aside and spoken to. Guards refuse to allow Nueka and the others near, to his chagrin.

Eventually, Mirra is released back to the group. She relays what she learned. Despite her best efforts, the commander refused to invade the east to quell the Lightning tribe. She says he expressed genuine worry about the Lightning threat, but the Water chieftain has refused to allow the army to invade the east multiple times. Mirra says the commander thanks the group for their assistance and will send word that they will be allowed to stay for a few nights. He apologized, however, and said that they could not stay for too long. If the Water chieftain or the priests found foreigners, they would be captured. The group agrees to rest in the Water city for a while, and they enter the streets dressed in Water refugee cloaks.

Scene 10

After a few days of rest, Mirra has had no luck in gaining an audience with the Water chieftain. She suggests they all sneak into the high citadel and ambush him, not with malice, but simply to tell him what’s been going on. The group agrees, and just before dawn they set out on the streets. No one is out at this time, so the going is easy. They still keep to the alleys and side streets, however, just in case. As the group nears the walls around the citadel, Wunaeth says to wait. Nueka is gone.

Music inspiration:

Artist: Filter

Album: Short Bus

Song: Dose

Nueka awakes to find his arms held against his back, forced to stand in an unbearably bright room. An immaculately dressed Water Neranoid comes into view as Nueka’s vision clears. He descends the steps, holding a scepter, but stops when Nueka begins thrashing against the two cloaked Neranoids holding him in place. Flame bursts from his hands, and the two yell and let go. He kicks one away and descends on the other, ripping through the cloak with his claws. The archpriest yells out, commanding Nueka’s attention. The bloody Neranoid rises from his prey, and starts advancing upon the archpriest. Other cultists attack, Nueka having to block and move back from their sudden onslaught. They use sabers of water, a mobile, frozen cutting edge moving through it. The uncertainty of where the blade will cut makes damage mitigation impossible.

Nueka sustains many cuts, bleeding through his carapace, but begins to fall into war fervor as the onslaught continues. He feels less pain, and is able to grab a few of the cultists and devastate them. The archpriest has begun to chant, and the room has grown brighter. As Nueka ravages the cultists, the light begins to coalesce in the atrium. A simple cube can be recognized, formed of some sort of physical embodiment of the energy Neranoids use to control the elements. The cultists fighting Nueka suddenly jump away, and he looks around confused for a moment before noticing the block above. It descends upon him, and though he raises his hands to catch it, it forces him to his knees. The archpriest begins reprimanding Nueka for fighting back. They planned to purify his cursed form, to teach him how to be freed from elemental energy. Nueka tunes the monologue out as he strains against the immense, unnatural weight of the block.

His form grows larger, his carapace plates clicking and his antennae flaying out and lengthening. Steam pours out of Nueka’s mouth as his mandibles bare his fangs, and he presses his face against the underside of the cube. The ground cracks under the stress as Nueka begins lifting the cube, a roar tearing through the church. The priest points his scepter, and a crater forms around Nueka’s feet as the weight redoubles. Nueka digs his lengthening claws into the cube, cracks forming up the length of it. The shape appears to shimmer as its geometry grows more complex, and the weight is temporarily lifted.

Nueka shoots out from underneath the cube at the speed of sound, impacting the priest and tumbling up the stairs while tearing at him. The priest emits a blinding flash and is able to escape Nueka’s claws. He creates a platform of light and attacks Nueka from afar, but the raging Neranoid’s blasts of fire start to bring the church down around them. Panicked, he ascends higher above the church, barely holding together his platform. Nueka follows him into the sky, propelling himself with jets of flame. The archpriest desperately fends off Nueka’s dashes, attempting to summon up more pure energy from the city below. His efforts are thwarted as Nueka gains hold of his cloak and pulls him near.

With a brutal roar, Nueka pulls the archpriest into a fiery punch, aiming his victim towards the ground. A beam of flame pierces through the archpriest into the city, wreaking destruction as numerous explosions go off. Still unsatisfied, Nueka drops with the corpse of the archpriest and impacts the church, blasting flaming debris across the city section. By this time, the rest of the group have noticed Nueka’s absence, and the subsequent explosions draw them near. Nueka struggles to get up, his war fervor still in effect, but stumbles from exhaustion. Wunaeth dashes through the rubble while Onuth protects the group from falling debris. Upon seeing Wunaeth, Nueka roars, but slams into the ground soon after, beyond exhaustion. The exasperated Wind Neranoid hoists the shrinking Fire Neranoid with wind, quickly carrying him away.

The Water army is quickly mobilizing on the scene, and Mirra directs them to the hole in the wall from the Lightning attack. The group is horrified at the fires raging in the city, but have no time to help the citizens. The Water army is more of a raging horde at the attack, and closely pursues the fleeing group east.

Scene 11

The group manages to outpace the Water army and avoid capture for now. They spend precious little time resting, but talk on the run. Mirra is aghast, and demands Nueka to pay for his crimes. Nueka hisses out that he was attacked first, and that the church brought this upon themselves. Wunaeth brings attention to the fact that, in the end, they have roused the Water army. If they dive into Lightning lands now, they can force a battle. This sates the bickering two for the moment, and they all continue on. The group sweeps south, and the Water army follows. As they pass the plains in the center of the continent, they begin to see more factories. They enter the hills of the northeast, and Lightning Neranoids are more populous than ever. Tall, thin pylons dot the landscape, electricity menacingly arcing from their nodes.

Music inspiration:

Artist: Muse

Album: The Resistance

Song: Unnatural Selection

The Lightning Neranoids raise alarms and the recovering army spills from the facilities dotting the land. The Water army crashes into Lightning territory and splits off into many groups that invade the factories. Nueka’s group continues on, dodging through Lightning troops as Water troops distract them. They near a citadel looming over the landscape, and are about to enter it. Just then, a resounding boom fills the air, and the Lightning commander walks out from the massive building. He wields two swords, and signals to Neranoids inside the citadel before the door slams shut.

Lightning troops suddenly fill the area around the five, and the Lightning commander points at Nueka. The soldiers clash with the five instantly. The Lightning commander singles out Nueka. With a flash of lightning, the Fire Neranoid is knocked airborne and sent flying backwards, Lightning commander in tow. Onuth slams the ground to create a cloud of dust, then pulls Lintyr between him and Wunaeth and Mirra. He tells her to stay between them, and only provide support. She nods, and sits in the crevice Onuth creates for her. Mirra swirls water around the group in a protective shield. Wunaeth spins among the troops, empowering his hits with fine-tuned gusts of wind. Onuth joins the fray, crashing through troops and knocking boulders up from the earth before shattering them into shrapnel. Mirra provides protection and cover for Lintyr while fending off Lightning soldiers that attempt to traverse her floating moat.

Nueka is caught off guard by the Lightning commander’s dexterity, and sustains a few deep cuts while attempting to block his blades. After a near miss at his head, Nueka blasts the area around him with flame to get some space. He readies as the commander rockets back at him. His claws flare with flame as he tries to grab the blades, but they slip away as quickly as they slice. Nueka’s frustration grows. When a blade is swung towards his neck once again, he bares his mandibles and opens his mouth, biting the blade deeply. He crunches down on it, shattering the blade, but tearing off his mandibles with the action. The commander stumbles, off balance at the unpredictable defense. Nueka roars in pain as blood pours around his mouth. He attempts to deliver a hit to the commander, but stars in his vision make him just too slow. The commander jumps away, readjusting his stance to fight with one sword.

The air in the battlefield suddenly shifts. A crackling sound emits from the citadel, then spreads to the pylons dotting the landscape. The commander looks towards the citadel, planting his sword in the ground and focusing intently. A thrumming fills Nueka’s body, and he suddenly cannot move. He tries to move his hand into a fist, but feels shocks all over his body when he manages even the tiniest movement. Onuth, Lintyr, Mirra, and Wunaeth are similarly stuck. In fact, the entire battlefield has frozen. An occasional zap of static pierces the eerie silence as someone manages to move briefly.

The Lightning commander sparks menacingly as he lifts his sword from the ground slowly. Apparently able to resist the paralysis, he moves carefully towards Nueka, a sadistic glee in his eyes. Nueka is able to briefly move his arm, electricity filling his nerves, before he’s stabbed through the stomach. His eyes move down to see the handle sticking out before the commander rips it out again. Nueka’s paralyzed body falls forward, and he crumples to the ground slowly. The commander then makes his way to the rest of the group, taking his time to cut mortal wounds into them. He takes no notice of Lintyr. The air trembles once more, and slowly the effect begins to fade. Neranoids are able to move more and more, but the fight does not begin again in earnest yet.

Nueka digs his claws into the ground, his carapace clicking and scraping as it moves. Bloody steam billows from his mouth as he fights through the searing pain of his stomach. He’s able to push one of his carapace plates over the wound, stopping the bleeding. As his war fervor begins, his sense of pain diminishes. His antennae vibrate and lengthen while his claws grow longer, his carapace cracking under the forces. He suddenly launches forward, an inferno propelling him forward into the Lightning commander. The commander blocks with his sword, but is forced to drop it as Nueka roars, filling the surroundings with unbridled heat. His own carapace grows red hot. The commander narrowly dodges a few swipes before taking a hit to the stomach. He falls to the ground, clutching at the bloody wound, before Nueka grabs his throat and picks him up. The hulking Neranoid staggers towards a cliff, holding the commander at arm’s length.

The commander crackles with electricity, but Nueka’s near-molten carapace prevents much electric flow. Through bloodsoaked teeth, Nueka steadily growls out a demand for the commander to tell him where his village went. The commander chokes out that he couldn’t know. That they were spread out among the facilities, all through the north. Nueka grips tighter, repeating his demand. He now stands at the edge of the cliff, holding the commander over the side. The commander chokes, unable to speak. With resounding cracks and snaps, Nueka crushes the Lightning Neranoid’s head, dropping his corpse down the cliffside. The Water army has rallied and pushed the Lightning army back. The latter’s loss of their commander has caused panic among the ranks, and many Lightning Neranoids manning the factories begin to flee.

Eventually, the Lightning army routs and moves north. The Water army reorganizes. Quickly, Nueka and the others are captured and brought to the infirmary. The group are cared for, their wounds tended to begrudgingly by Water tribe healers. Lintyr is kept caged as a prisoner, her insistence that she’s part of Nueka’s group ignored.

Intermission 2

Mirra is the first to wake, and the commander speaks with her privately. He admits he will most likely be unwelcome back at the Water tribe. The chief demanded no pursuit of the Fire Neranoid terrorist, but the civilians and soldiers were inconsolable. The commander knowingly ignored the chief’s orders and ordered the army to pursue. Mirra immediately tells him not to kill Nueka, but he interrupts her. He says they haven’t. However, once the Lightning threat is quelled, he will be executed. Mirra is silent.

Once they are recovered enough to walk, the group is unceremoniously kicked out of the camp. The commander meets with Mirra one last time. He apologizes again, but cites the army’s loss in morale at harboring terrorists. Wunaeth is obviously annoyed by the commander’s close relations with Mirra, and bids the army a hasty goodbye. Nueka has stayed unusually silent throughout his recovery. Onuth eyes him, but says nothing.

Scene 12

The group moves northeast. Facilities grow more common, but nearly all of them are inert and abandoned. Explosions are frequent, and shards of stone with fading blue runes dot the ruins of buildings. A hastily built city is falling apart as multiple factions of Lightning Neranoids war for control of the region. The group advances to the mountain pass at the center of the crumbling city and stops at the edge of a massive excavation project. A stepped hole in the ground descends hundreds of feet, and abandoned tools of ancient origin line the spiral steppe. The mountains on either side seem to tower even higher with the artificial canyon between them, and a monumental building sits at the far end.

Collapses are frequent, and the earth itself seems to shake. The group round the excavation site, heading towards the main building, but a resounding crack and ensuing rumble fill the air. A massive collapse pulls the group down into the caverns below. A stomp rings out and the dust clouding the air slams to the ground. Onuth scans the area as yellow eyes turn in the group’s direction. Maddened Lightning Neranoids leap upon the group, wielding strange, runed artifacts that seem to be consuming their arms. Onuth stays behind, focused, and relays that a massive form is writhing below. Nueka yells to clear a way to it, and Onuth begins tearing through the earth.

A pulse echoes from below, and Lintyr suddenly collapses. She grasps at her head. Babble of a queen and death escape her mouth as she spasms. Onuth dashes to her and picks her up. Covered by Wunaeth and Mirra, Nueka builds up a fireball that he launches forwards down the tunnel, incinerating the remaining Lightning Neranoids. The group dashes down the tunnel, but another collapse pulls them deeper into the mines. A trembling roar resounds through the earth. Just as they gain their footing, the tunnels collapse again. Massive holes rip through the earth to reveal an intricate structure, now irreparably decimated.

Scene 13

The group find themselves in a massive chamber composed of black rock. Pillars of stone rise like buildings, and massive holes in the ground are lined with torches and strange insectoid creatures throwing themselves in one after another. At the far end, a behemoth shrouded in shadow writhes, shaking the very earth. Arcs of electricity briefly light up its form, revealing it to be some sort of queen.

The group is suddenly attacked psychically, a shrill voice piercing their minds. It screams of reclaiming the world, denouncing the mutants invading its land. Lintyr spasms at the renewed, focused attack. She breaks from Onuth’s grasp and dashes towards a killing hole. Onuth suddenly stiffens, and forces himself forward in pursuit. He passes Nueka and knocks him down, dragging him forward and launching him at the queen. The shock allows Nueka to regain his thoughts for a moment. He sees the massive form of the queen approaching, and ignites the air around him. He attaches to the queen and begins smashing at its carapace with flaming claws. The behemoth screams and writhes at the attack, and Wunaeth and Mirra are freed from the psychic attack for the moment. Onuth holds Lintyr as she recovers, her mind once more her own.

Nueka is knocked from the beast by a shock of lightning. Wunaeth slows his landing and he scoffs a thanks. Onuth has set Lintyr down and rushes towards the base of the behemoth. Just as the psychic attack begins anew, Onuth lifts a pillar of stone to bash the queen’s head upwards. Nueka, Wunaeth, and Mirra rush to the base as well, combining their elements to try and crack through the carapace of the beast. Quickly, they realize no progress can be made. Onuth pulls back to Lintyr, who is defending from attacks of the small drones. Wunaeth grips Nueka’s collar and drags him away from the beast with Mirra, back towards Onuth as well

Scene 14

Music inspiration:

Artist: Stoned Jesus

Song: I’m the Mountain

Onuth covers the group in a dome of stone, telling them to wait. The beast rears its head around, the psychic attack restarting. The rest of the group huddles in the protective shield, focusing mostly on keeping Nueka held down so he doesn’t try to burst back out. Onuth attempts to converse with the beast, acknowledging its ancient origins and asking it what it knows. All he receives is inconsolable screaming, describing the group as mutated trespassers. Onuth takes a wide stance, and yells out a battlecry. He reaches out to all the stone around the area, connecting to as much as possible, and draggs it all in. Layer after layer of stone armor builds on Onuth’s body. The mountain is torn asunder, and collapses downwards. Onuth pulls it all in, stacking more and more onto himself until he has the humanoid visage of a golem. Even the dust is sucked in, compacted onto his massive form. The protective dome is ripped off, and the clear sky sears the newly formed crater.

Onuth’s golem stumbles forward under its own weight, and Onuth lets out a resounding roar from his cracking limbs. Lintyr raises her head at the call, and reaches out to Onuth’s body, sending electrical signals to his muscles directly. Lintyr sits in a trance, her fingers dancing as small shocks arc around them and the golem’s core. With a godly rumble, it stands up once more, and begins barrelling towards the beast. The impact shakes the foundation of the earth, and cracks in the queen’s carapace radiate from its center. Nueka, Wunaeth, and Mirra dash towards the cracked area. The golem is slow moving, but ridiculously strong, and its tight grapple keeps the beast from moving. Wunaeth breathes heat into Nueka’s flames and accelerates Mirra’s icicles as they pierce the beast’s innards.

The golem begins to crack and fall apart, Onuth having fallen unconscious from the strain. Lintyr tries as best she can to control the golem, but it tips unsteadily. She calls out for the others to move. The fighting trio see the golem tipping, and Nueka calls for Wunaeth and Mirra to group up. The trio propel themselves upwards with flame and wind, Nueka pointing towards the crumbling core of the golem where Onuth lays. With a combined roar, they blast through the center of the falling golem. Onuth is held between them as Wunaeth slightly softens their impact with a gust, but they still crash down hard near Lintyr. The young Lightning Neranoid falls over, exhausted from her own ordeal.

A sickening smash echoes through the newly formed valley as the massive pile of stone that made up the golem collapses on top of the queen. The beast’s screams slowly fade into silence. The sun begins to set as the five Neranoids lay unconscious, the Lightning Neranoids flee, and the Water army surrounds the area.

Scene 15

Nueka gets up slowly as the Water commander approaches the group. He draws his blade. Nueka breathes heavily. The Fire Neranoid gestures widely, stopping the commander’s advance and making him ready. Nueka asks if the commander thinks he can kill him now, after he and the others just killed a god. The Water commander is silent and steady. He holds his blade ready. Mirra and Wunaeth struggle to their feet, and stand next to Nueka. Wunaeth asks if blood will remedy the situation at the Water tribe. Mirra stands up straight and says with unique authority that Nueka will pay for his crimes by working for the tribe, and assures the commander she and the others can keep him in check.

Nueka’s eyes shift from one of his protectors to the other, and he falls to his knees. It’s dubious as to whether it’s exhaustion or genuine sorrow. The Water commander stands for a long time, his battle stance slowly softening. He stares at Mirra, and she stares back. Finally, he sheathes his sword in a turn and walks away, signaling for the Water army to regroup.