

Arc Ideas:

Bob is angry and devastated because of the destruction of his village, yet he does not believe that he has the power to oppose Malimost, and is very scared to do so. Buchanan is committed to opposing Malimost, specifically with the goal of making the world a better place for other people, and is not scared to make personal sacrifices. Buchanan believes in the prophecy foretelling that Bob will save people from Malimost; he has been told this prophecy and many hopeful heroic stories since being a youth. Bob is highly skeptical of the prophecy, and skeptical in general too. He goes along with the quest because of multiple pressures, and selfishness. He feels that he has no alternative, but does not care about defeating Malimost, only about securing his own safety, although he does care about Bucky, and is greatly saddened by the fate of his village. Over the course of their journeys Bob will come to respect Buchanan and develop hope and a sense of purpose in confronting Malimost that makes personal sacrifices endurable.

TL;DR

- Bob arc: reluctant, scared, selfish, skeptic → gains trust, becomes selfless, optimistic, willing to sacrifice, brave
- Buchanan: has most of the good traits already, has some flaws too, e.g. too ready to charge into battle. his death is catalyst for Bob

Start Story

Bob could hardly believe what had happened to his life. Just a single week earlier his only concern in life was the well being of his herd of llama's, and when he would get back to the village to see his family, and his friend Sarah. Now, a single week later, everyone he had ever known, with the sole exception of Buchanan, was dead. Burned to a crisp by Malimost's dark fire levancy. Or more likely some of his bound servants, Bob doubted that Malimost would deem his small village important enough to personally destroy for whatever unexplained offense had led to its destruction.

He still felt numb every time he thought about the destruction of his village. *How could this happen?* This village was all that he knew! Bob was completely shook and at a loss for how to move on with his life. On the one hand he clearly could not go back to his peaceful existence as a llama herder; a blissfully uneventful existence that was not boring for lack of events but rather pleasant. No Bob could never return to this idyllic way of living. The obvious reason for this was that he and Buchanan had been forced to abandon their llamas in their flight from the minions of Malimost that they found ravaging the village. Furthermore, it simply wasn't safe. However Bob desperately wanted to return to this existence. He did not feel, as Buchanan foolishly seemed to that the

destruction of his village meant that they had to fight against Malimost. What a ludicrous idea! Bob internally chided his overly hopeful friend. Bob had about as much chance of decreasing how terrible Malimost's rule was as he had of winning the annual village swimming contest, and Bob couldn't swim.

Eventually, Bob supposed, I will have to seek out some other location, and somehow acquire more animals to shepherd or something. Maybe I could be a farmer? However, at the moment Bob was very far from anywhere where he could do this. And Bob wasn't going to abandon Buchanan, he'd convince him to come to. Buchanan was sane, he'd listen to reason, Bob hoped.

This plan relied on Bob and Buchanan not dying in the immediate future however, and death recently had become a prospect which was dreadfully high probability. Memories of Bob's fight against the unicorn haunted him. And yet there was also a surprising spark of excitement during the battle: when Bob had realized that he could really naturally channel the Levant. The feel of his magical cane turned staff in his hand had been reassuring, a firm pillar amidst the chaos of battle. He would like to experience it again, although of course not in a dangerous situation.

Buchanan walked over. "Hey Bob! You just get up?" Buchanan amicably said, standing over Bob as Bob, groaning, finally got up at the sound of Buchanan's foot steps.

"It's impossible to tell when it's day and when it's night in these blasted caverns" Bob complained, "and I'm exhausted from my battles".

"Well you are the chosen one! Better get used to battles and exhaustion and the like." Buchanan said, in an air much too casual for Bob's liking.

Oh, not this prophecy nonsense again Bob internally groaned. Buchanan was obsessed with this prophecy that he had apparently heard many times when he was young: that a green eyed llama herder, the first levancer among his people, would suffer a great tragedy and go on to exact retribution on Malimost. Or something. In truth the prophecy was incredibly vague, and muddled through constant retelling via the oral tradition. Somehow, Buchanan believed that Bob's victory over the unicorn in addition to the other events that have transpired proved that Bob was somehow special and destined to save people from Malimost's oppressive rule.

This of course was utter nonsense. His newfound levantic powers were of course very surprising. However it was very unlikely that Bob would become a strong levancer, and completely laughable to speak of him opposing Malimost, who was a more powerful levancer than even the legendary Rand! No one better than Malimost had challenged him in a thousand years, not that Malimost gave levancers much chance: Malimost made sure that levancers were bound to him as early as possible, or killed if they would not consent to be bound with his oathstone. There were always rogue levancers who were able to hide, but these were insignificant flies compared to Malimost.

No, Bob was not destined for great power. Usually when Levancy first started

showing up in the children in a new region the levanters were incredibly weak. No one really knew how new aspects of the Levant were created. The Levant was clearly tied in an intricate way to the geography of a region: the strength of each type of Levancy that levanters could channel depended greatly on where they were. Only the most powerful levancers could even channel levancy of a different type than the source that occupied their region. When a source of Levant came to a new region some children – it wasn't clear how they were determined, although some hypothesized that the children had to have been somehow "exposed" directly to the new source of Levancy – would develop Levantic abilities.

Maybe in some time long gone Bob's powers might have been a blessing that gave him great joy. Now however they were a mark over his head. It would be exceedingly difficult to find a way to live the quiet life that he desired, as if any of Malimost's minions found out about him he would be hunted down.

Now that Bob had defeated the unicorn the caverners had promised that they would help him and Buchanan. It was time to go see what plan they had in mind.

"Let's go talk to Azeala and Mercury now that we've killed their dang unicorns." Bob said, pointedly ignoring Buchannan's comment about his supposed destiny.

"You're not even going to wait for breakfast?" Buchannan laughed.

"No, I want to get this over with as soon as possible", Bob said seriously "we can eat once we're on the road to safety, and once they've explained why we had to risk our necks to kill those unicorns."

"Bob, you know that those unicorns were probably somewhat responsible for the desolation of our village..." Buchanan, said, sounding surprised at Bob's anger.

"I don't freaking care!" Bob screamed. "The majority of the world is an accomplice of Malimost! Any other minion could have destroyed the village for a reason as arbitrary as whatever the unicorns had. The destroyed village is a sunk cost. There's no fixing it. Nothing we can do will bring them back. It'll just make us join them in the ranks of the dead. And don't you start about that corroded prophecy and hope for a better life for the rest of the inhabitants of this earth and about how I'm being selfish. I'm simply sensible and you know it!"

Buchannan looked somewhat put out by this. But it of course wasn't in his nature to verbally argue with Bob about this. Nor was it his nature to be swayed from his foolish beliefs in prophecies. Most of the time Bob thought that these traits were fairly admirable in Buchannan. But an optimist only survived when times were good. In bad times optimism was often fatal.

Bob quickly rolled up his gear into his pack and he and Buchanan walked down the cavern paths in silence: Bob in angry silence, Buchanan in contemplative silence.

They reached the glowing central cavern and Bob was again shocked by its magnificence. In contrast to the rest of the caverns this cavern was intensely brightly lit, by torches covering the walls and large fire pits with roaring bonfires. The seeming waste of this light would have bothered him if he didn't know that this wood did not release flames that burned hot, the flames emitted electromagnetic radiation in a remarkably specific subset of the visible spectrum: namely the emitted almost solely visible light. Furthermore the wood had remarkably high energy density. The combined effect was that this wood could glow a vibrant bright white for a very long time. The flames served a dual purpose: to provide light, and to provide a reminder that the people in this cavern resisted Malimost, and had powerful Levanters, for example a master of plant levancy who was willing to set up this light supply for them.

Stalagmites glistened above, the light reflecting off of their many surfaces. On close inspection this room was similarly wet to the other caverns, but this place felt much less dreary because of the light.

Buchanan spotted Mercury and Azeala waiting at the booth where they had advertised that they would be waiting. They looked incredibly anxious, and clearly had not yet spotted Bob and Buchanan.

Right as he was about to start walking towards them however, he had a very rational thought. "Wait Bucky" he whispered, "can we talk about this first?"

"What? Is something wrong Bob?" Buchanan said, showing his characteristic look of concern.

"It's just, well, we didn't really understand how dangerous it was going to be to face that unicorn. Honestly we could have died."

"Well, yeah" Buchanan admitted reluctantly. "But doesn't it feel good to defeat them? We made the world a safer place..." Buchanan trailed off when he saw Bob's expression of disgust. "ok, but that was a one time thing, and I'm sure this unicorn horn is of vital importance to them", he said gesturing to his pack which contained their hard won unicorn horn. "They'll help us now". "We can go somewhere safe, and you will have time to learn about your new Levantic abilities. Then when you're ready the prophecy implies that you will be presented some opportunity to overthrow Malimost and make the world a better place!" Buchanan said enthusiastically.

"Important opportunities never present themselves, they only come after intense personal effort", Bob derisively said, although the affect was diminished by it being said in a whisper.

"Listen Buchanan though, this prophecy business is exactly what I'm worried about. They, like you, seem to believe I probably have an important part in their so-called battle against Malimost. Even if they aren't deluded by this prophecy they know that I'm a Levancer. I don't think they are going to let me go off into some quiet place. I think they're going to push me to go on a quest to defeat Malimost."

Buchanan sighed. “I doubt it. But if it’s true I’ll stand by you: you shouldn’t be forced to go on a quest before you’re ready.”

“No one is ever ready for something that they cannot do yet” Bob thought. But he decided not to point this out verbally. “Thanks Bucky! I knew I could count on you.” he said instead.

Bob and Buchanan walked across the large cavern to the booth where Mercury and Azeala were waiting. Their faces lit up in what Bob thought looked suspiciously like surprise at seeing him and Buchanan alive.

“Did you get me the unicorn horn I needed” Mercury asked, sounding pleased.

“Yes I’ve got it right here!” Buchanan said happily, moving to pull it out.

“Not right here. . .” Azeala said. “Let’s have this conversation somewhere a bit more private. I think that a lot of things about this shouldn’t become common knowledge. These people are good people but the only true way to contain a secret is to never spread it in the first place.”

Rather than placate Bob as Azeala might have guessed this would, the attempts at greater secrecy worried Bob. It reeked of further plotting to Bob, and he did not like the sound of that. Furthermore the idea that secrets were not safe even in this stronghold was greatly disturbing, not in the least because Bob had kind of naively taken for granted that he was not being spied on. Bob wasn’t very used to this whole being rogue thing.

Bob reluctantly followed after Azeala, Mercury and Buchanan into a tunnel offshooting from the main cavern. After walking for a very short while they came to a small enclosed room. They walked in and Mercury bolted closed the door. “We are totally secure now” said Azeala. “This room has been Levantically soundproofed, no-one, even with levancy could possibly hear our discussion now”.

Bob snorted derisively. He sincerely doubted that the security placed on this room was truly unbreakable to a levantic measure.

“Don’t believe me, do you?” Azeala smirked at his chagrined expression when he realized that she had heard him. The existence of one-way functions with backdoors is not so implausible, it is in fact the basis for this really cool algorithm in theoretical computer science called RSA.

“Yeah”, Mercury chimed in, “or for an even simpler example just think about the problem of factoring a semiprime in the cases where you have no information and the case where you are given a prime divisor of the semiprime!”

“Um ok” Bob said. “It just seems hard to do that with like sound waves.” Like sure you could encrypt a digital signal, but we have an analog time series here.

“just because you cannot understand it right now doesn’t mean that it’s false.” Azeala reprimanded. “If you were thinkign less skeptically you would realize that you actually understand very littel abtou Levancy so it is entirely plausible that you would not hte mechanism by which it works”

“Although truth be told neither of us have any idea how it works either” Mercury admitted after a pause.

“ok, to business. You can get out the unicorn horn now Buchanan” Azeala said in a business manner.

Buchanan pulled out the unicorn horn and handed it to Azeala.

“It’s really true.” Azeala whispered in wonder, clearly speaking only to herself. “The prophecy, everything that we believed in”.

“Enough!” Bob shouted. “You can find another poor fellow to trick into fulfilling your dang prophecy. I won’t be fooled though. The whole endeavor is hopeless”.

Heedless of Bob, Azeala chanted

“The chosen one shall come forth from the llama lands, and have eyes as green as the grass that the llama is grazed on a humble llama shepherd by birth, and yet destined to shake the earth the one will be known by their green eyes and the fact that if they beat a unicorn in battle and take its horn then the horn will turn black the one will face great tribulations e.g. getting their village burned down, and will take a path either to eradicate evil or become it”

Bob was shook by the power of her voice, but shook it off, there was no such thing as prophecy. Azeala had just practiced theatrical skills. It was easy to impress a poor llama herder. Before Bob could object further Mercury pulled another horn, this one a pure white. Not the beautiful pearly white of a typical unicorn horn, but rather a blinding white light that almost hurt to look at, in the same way that the unicorn horn that Bob had collected from the unicorn had turned darker than the darkest night.

"This is the fabled horn created by the legendary levanter Rand shortly before his death. If you’ll remember Rand was actually the oracle that initially issued the very prophecy that you are destined to fulfil. Rand had no idea why he was making this horn at the time that he made it, but made it because of an impression that it would be important in the future.

And lucky that he did, he died shortly after making it. It has long been conjectured that this horn had some relation to the prophecy, it is too much of a coincidence that a black horn appears in the prophecy, an obvious dual to the white horn supposedly created by Rand. I say supposedly because the horn was lost after Rand died, many people assumed that it burned with the rest of Rand’s famed tower of Levancy and the artifacts that Malimost burned there. If not, it seemed almost certain that the horn had come into possession of Malimost, he collected nearly all the magical artifacts.

However, we found this horn lying on the ground somewhere recently. And then we ran into you. We had to know if the prophecy was true. We know it was super dangerous to send you, a barely awakened levancer, to face a unicorn. But we had to. Had to know. And now? It appears that we were correct.

Most people seem to believe that when the chosen one wields both horns and shouts coppolla then something magical will happen, which will be critical towards bringing about the downfall of Malimost.

So how about you try it?

Bob was totally blown away. “No way” he tried to object, but it sounded half-hearted even to himself.

“You’ve got nothing to lose if this is all a prophecy dreamed up by a 17 year old at 2:13 AM with a messed up sleep schedule.” Azeala noted rationally.

“OK, I’ll do it” Bob whispered.

Azeala and Mercury reverently bestowed the horns to Bob, the deep black horn to the left hand and the pure white horn to the right hand.

Bob held them apprehensively. Then, after looking to Buchanan who vigorously affirmed that he thought this was a great idea with a nod of his head, Bob touched the horns together and whispered “Coppolla”.

At first it seemed like nothing was going to happen. However, after a few seconds, fireflies swarmed out of unseen pores in the caverns. The fireflies congregated into a massive blob in front of Bob.

“Fireflies are particularly connected to the Levant” Azeala noted quietly. “This is super cool”.

“Hello friend!” The sound emanated from the mass of fireflies. “I have no idea what a situation you are in, but I know that it will surely be very dire, hence I was instructed to make these precautions. It seems that if I must record this something bad is going to happen to me. However the time frame for this is not clear, so I fear not for myself. I believe that I will likely die a peaceful death one day, when I am ready. More, I fear for you and your fellow citizens in whatever trying time that you live. Because of how hard your time will likely be, I have made this provision to help you.”

“I have keyed this recording to your hand: in order to be seeing this recording you must fit the description giving in the prophecy. The white unicorn horn is keyed to your humble upbringing as a lammas herder, while the black unicorn horn is keyed to your great potential levantic power. United together the white horn that I created, and the black horn that you must have created by defeating a unicorn with your levantic powers, will, by the levancy that I have worked on my white horn, create this recording for you.”

“You might wonder how I am protecting this information from getting into the wrong hands, for a powerful malicious levancer could equally well defeat a unicorn.”

“The protection is in the white unicorn horn. I won’t get into any details, but it would basically incinerate you if you were seeking the secret that I have hidden out of desire for personal power or gain.”

“Bob, as the chosen one, you are marked. You are blessed with incredibly strong levantic abilities, but also cursed with the fact that a sufficiently powerful dark levancer with the right artifacts can easily detect you. You lived a peaceful existence before your fate became clear. However, now it is evident that there is only one way forward for you: you must rid the world of whatever great evil has come upon it.”

“My general advice for how to go about this would be to train with Levancy until you are sufficiently good to defeat whatever adversary it is that you face.”

“If you believe that will be sufficient, that is certainly the safest way”

“However, I feel taht it is likely that you are new and unexperienced compared to your foe. Thus, I will tell you something that I sincerely hope no one else knows. The seret I am about to tell you is very dangerous. You must make sure it does not get into the wrong hands. I have trust in you however.”

“Once, when I was a much younger levancer, less acquainted with the art of levancy, I discovered an extremely powerful artifact. It is called *Amplification*. Amplification has the ability to modify levantic strenght, in particular by multiplying it by a scalar in $(0,2)$ of the wielders choice in a bubble around the wielder. I heard lore of this artifact, went searching for it and eventually found it. The power of this artifact is unlike any other articaft that I know of. It has the ability to increase ones levantic power such as to be sufficient to crush any with even vaguely similar levels of levantic power beforehand. It could be used to mask levantic presence while sneaking. It could be used to mitigate the levantic powers of a powerful levanter. A levanter holding this artifact would have an unbeatable edge in any battle!”

“In my naivety I took it. I used it. It felt amazing. But I realized that I was growing adicted to it so I stopped”

“I tell you this story to make sure that you do not treat the swrot of amplification lightly as I did.”

“To secure the sword of amplification I used it to seal it with the levancy. Only if you get 3 enchantments to say, which I will denote as the keys, can you pull the sword of amplification frm the fabric of the levant. These keys will not be easy to obtain, but there can be no security with shortcuts: by achieving the keys you will have proved yourself.”

“The first key is gaurded by Lincoln the Leviathan, in the depths of the sea of storms. Once you aquire that key I will give you the information about how to get the rest of the keys.”

“Best of luck to you! And hurry! Presumably the fate of the world rests on your shoulders. If that’s not enough, also the weight of the future. At the very least your own fate is in jeapordy. Cyaaaaaaaaaaaa.”

After the cloud of fireflies echoed the last word of Rand’s message the cloud dispersed into individual fireflies that in turn receded into the pores of the cavern.

Azeala wasted no time, “Bob, do you understand how important this is now? Will you seek the sword of amplification? And will you use it to defeat Malimost?”

Bob thought about protesting on the grounds that they didn’t know that Rand had spoken truly in the message, or even that the message was from the legendary levancer Rand, or even that such a person ever existed. He decided not to however. He tried to make a habit of not lying to himself. Instead he stalled effectively.

“Yes I understand how important this is. Sorry this is such a huge shock. Please give me a moment to think about the implications of this statement” Bob said in a weak voice. Bob wasn’t opposed to lying to others, yet the weak voice was not completely a lie intended to garner pity and give him some time. The words of Rand were genuinely very disturbing. *I’m marked?* Bob thought. *Malimost will never leave me alone as long as he can detect my levancy? Should I go on this quest? Am I seriously considering this? It’s ridiculously dangerous. And yet at the same time, probably much safer than waiting for Malimost to come and destroy me. I guess I have to either learn how to use levancy well enough to protect myself, or figure out how to hide myself.* Bob suddenly remembered that Bob had said that the sword of Amplification not only possessed the ability to Amplify power, but also to dampen it, hiding the wielding levancer.

“I will pursue this quest.” Bob finally said, just as people were getting uncomfortable with his silence. “I will travel to the sea of storms, claim the first key from the Leviathan. Then I will keep travelling to find the rest of the keys, and acquire the sword of Amplification. And finally, once I have acquired this unmatched artifact, I will use it to free myself from the continual pursuit of Malimost.”

Azeala and Mercury were taken aback from his sudden seeming willingness to embark on a quest to defeat Malimost.

“I knew you’d decide to do the right thing!” Bucky praised, “The world will forever remember you as the one who freed the world from Malimost’s tyranny. If you will accept me as your companion on the quest I will gladly accompany you!”

Real tears filled Bob’s eyes. By design of Bob’s cryptic commit message Bucky completely misunderstood him. Yes Bob would pursue the Sword of Amplification. But he would not use the artifact to confront Malimost. He would use it to mask his levantic scent, freeing him from the pursuit of Malimost. He, and Bucky too of course, could find some new pasture, a new flock of llamas to tend. Bob was not so presumptuous as to adopt the world as his flock to protect. Bucky would understand one day. The keys were likely not very heavily guarded. In essence he had to fight three more “bosses” similar in power to the unicorn that he had fought the previous day. With the aid of powerful rogue levancers, that Mercury and Azeala were certain to make help them now that his position as “the chosen one” was confirmed, these battles should be fairly straightforward. In the process of his travels he would also be able to learn levancy from some masters. This would probably prove useful in his future. Bob estimated that he had maybe a 90% shot at getting each key, and that the events “Bob gets key i”

for $i=1,2,3$ were likely independent. Thus he had approximately a 72% chance of success overall. This was compared to the alternative of facing Malimost, a more powerful levanter than any alive in 1000 years, more powerful than this Rand fellow who was giving him this quest. Bob estimated his chance of success against Malimost to be about 0.01%. Of course this had to be weighted by the fact that it was a more desirable outcome: Rand wouldn't have to hide all his life. However, his objective function was clearly maximied by the first strategy. Of course Bob's tear filled eyes would be misinterpreted as gratitude. Bob almost couldn't stand it.

"Of course I want you to come Bucky!" Bob gladly cried. "What of the people who resist Malimost? Am I correct in assuming that we now get an army of levanters to help us in this crucial quest?"

"Well" Azeala said looking ashamed, glancing at Mercury who also looked ashamed, "not exactly". "You see, not everyone here can be trusted. There are some who don't believe so strongly in the prophecy. There are many who would see you as a weak levancer, and believe that they deserve this powerful artifact more than you. For honorable reasons, or even selfish reasons. No, it's essential that you do not tell anyone that we don't trust."

"How do we know we can trust you?" Bob said angrily. He was very scared, and thus lashed out.

"Bob" Bucky said, mortified at Bob's disrespect, "without Azeala and Mercury, we would be dead. They saved us from the boars at our village. At great personal risk! If there is anyone we can trust it is Azeala and Mercury."

Why do you assume as an axiom that there exists someone we can trust? Bob's incessant internal cynic bitterly said. But Bob was mostly able to suppress this poisonous voice. He knew that Bucky was right, and he didn't doubt Azeala's word. Nonetheless this was highly troubling.

"OK, I understand, Bob" said reluctantly.

"Awesome. Me and Mercury will of course accompany you" Azeala said, without bothering to ask if Bob would appreciate their company. "We should leave soon for the storm land. There is actually a teleporter nearby here, and a linked teleporter in the storm land. How about we leave tomorrow? Me and Mercury can make final preparations for our journeys today."

"ok" Bob said simply.

They discussed some logistics, and then returned to the main cavern.

"We'll meet at the teleporter tomorrow morning, crack of dawn", Azeala declared.

"Think you can manage that Bob?", Bucky joked: Bob was not an expert at getting up early.

"You can just explore the caverns today" Azeala said.

Then she and Mercury left them. Bucky dragged Bob all around the caverns. Bob wasn't too excited about it, but they were really very remarkable, and beautiful. They talked and joked about trivial matters. Bob could almost forget about how much his life had been drastically altered in the past week.

And then they heard screams, from far away, in the direction of the main cavern.

- escape to the telporter with Azeala and Mercury (Mercury can die though)
- Azeala introduces Bob to a mentor in the storm land
- Bob does some prep before facing Leviathan
- Bob faces Leviathan, gets key
- the group goes to Plant land
- Bob faces a boss; bucky dies
- Bob is inspired by Bucky's death to be a better person