Unbounded Perceptions Revised Demo Story:

*Who are you? Somewhere in your dreams lies a special connection, a connection to your subconscious memories. With it, we can relive your past.*

*This game has one true purpose… and that is to figure out what was my best form. Back when I was Zone? Or now that I am Cyphina?*

*Where are we going. Don’t want to waste my fucking time. I’m looking forward. To dance with you.*

*Memories are like particles floating in water, and are constantly raining from the sky*

*Every memory is its own story. Every story has its own world… Every story is a lenticular picture…*

*You have the greatest power. The only way to understand other worlds is by living them. UndeadM can relive the past. But only your sky is clear…*

*The promise…*

*I want to show you that true darkness doesn’t lie within the events that unfold, but the frowns hiding a lack of emotion.*

# Prologue – Fork in Reality:

***Main Plot:*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *Cyphina has an odd dream that foreshadows the coming events that will change his life… One thing is for sure, the feelings of whatever happens next is only a small part of a larger picture.*

***Points****:*

* Blood forms a meaningless link… But a link is a link, nonetheless.
* Passing down until the day… we are just human beings.
* Throw reason away, the end will come one day.
* If you win, I will die for you, and you will live stamping on my corpse
* I’ll go the end of life of me, even if it more painful of death, because I think there must be only one landscape.
* A boy who has gotten over all fire, now vengeance for the all whoever sneered.

--

I had this weird dream where I quickly realized that I had dosed off. However, the dream took place in a brighter time, and I refused to open my eyes.

A dream that everybody was missing part of their memories. But these memories were still there, in the starry sky. Outside this world, the sea of stars draws a disappearing message. Am I the only one seeing this?

I walked through the same town I lived in like any other day, but this time, like any other dream, the world was a bit blurrier as if the sunlight which was somehow always hiding in the distant view was watching me. Alongside the sandy lagoon where the warm breeze clears the mind into finding a colorful path is a street filled with stores whose awnings shielded the pedestrians from the sun which caused the hot gravel to shimmer.

I always remembered the streets being busy, but somehow everybody around me, surrounded by a monochrome aura glowing vibrantly, were people that I’ve met before. I wondered why they were all visiting, but our eyes met and our body’s left without so much as a hello.

Then I heard the noise of barking continuously growing from the distance. I remembered my two dogs, and somehow, underneath the crowd of people and vehicles, I saw two familiar faces walk by me. I crouched down to let them sniff my hand, and as my hand reached their faces, they spontaneously hopped backwards. Then they began to bark at me, as I stared back at those dark eyes for a moment before moving onwards.

If it were reality, my mouth would’ve remained shut, however, I was seeing the world under an unfiltered version of myself. I, some subconscious god of this dream, watched as my persona was overwhelmed with a feeling of embarrassment. I wanted to talk to somebody I remembered, just to hide my loneliness, so when I saw her, surrounded by the warm yellow aura, waiting along the counter, the rest of the world disappeared. I walked, or so my legs didn’t feel like they were moving but the scene moved as if I were just as camera. So, happy was my inner self to see people, that didn’t even remember me.

As I walked towards that counter, I saw, my parents, walk out of the glass doors of the grocery store pass me by like the speck of dust I was in this universe. They were happy, an expression I couldn’t remember seeing on their faces. I felt kind of sad remembering that expression, so I looked down at my hands, and saw the gears piercing my skin spinning dolls of people merged with machines.

I watched as the gears grinded upon my flesh, causing the dolls do their dance without spilling a single drop of blood and realized the three dancing dolls resembled a clock. The clock had kept spinning and spinning, and the light disappeared from them as I realized the sun had set. The night fell upon me like a impulse, reminding me of the idea of murder.

And then everybody appeared again, but they looked years older. And the autumn leaves were spread throughout the ground. All of them seemed to exude colors of happiness, wealth, class. And yet their colors were different, glowing like machines, humming deeply. However, she remained in that seat, although her physical appearance changed, she still glowed the same color of the sun.

There was the noise of the sharp grinding of asphalt as the bus then appeared next to me, and I saw the visions align. On that bus was a woman, one side of my eyes was still rapidly moving, and I saw the inside of the bus in purple. She held her hand out to me, but I couldn’t see her face due to the intense hue of the scenery. On the other side was an orange haired woman who sat in the seat next to me.

Before my left eye opened, I could hear the noise of gears spinning from the woman radiating purple. “A6?” I ask as she turns towards me, so her blurry face is close to mine. I swear, I’m awake.

# Chapter I: A gnawing sense of emptiness

## Sec 1: Awakening

***Main Plot:*** *Divine Chaos watches as a traffic disturbance inside a tunnel causes several people to go insane and start attempting dangerous and selfish methods to leave faster. As punishment, she fills the tunnel with Aurelius, causing people with Zefracores to turn into monsters. Cyphina is one o the people who didn’t turn into a monster, and so he watches people around him get slaughtered, but before he’s about to die he finds out he may have a little something in him. DivineChaos watches repentantly as Cyphina crawls out of the brawl as the scarred victor, and limp back home with the new monster inside of him.*

***Section Plot:*** *Cyphina meets a mysterious woman on the bus, and promptly after he finds himself in the middle of a gas attack turning people into monsters. Strangely enough, he’s one of the few people who remain a human, at least until he’s almost killed, then his monster form awakens.*

***Points****:*

* *Introduce the story, and introduce the player to the concept of Unbounded Perceptions*
* *There’re monsters within all of us*
* *To exist is the same as waiting for death. Even if life is an illusion, the only way out is by living.*
* *Life is so fragile*
* *I know it sound stupid, but there’s another world you’d never know…*
* *Our short time together, made every moment that much more unforgettable…*
* *Wiggin…*

--

Cyphina opens his eyes from the brief daydream and stares at the hologram outside the bus stop in the freezing cold sky that’s clear like ice. The lenticular sign shows an advertisement for a movie, where the regular looking boy transforms into a moth when stared at from a skewed angle.

As he lined up to board the bus, his body was constantly trembling due to the several sleepless nights taking their toll. He walked over to the nearest empty seat, and died right there, after a long exhausting day caused by his lack of dedication. It was an all too familiar feeling, failure. It only stings because he knows she’s only watching him…

Even amidst the cacophony of voices, Cyphina’s eyes were struggling to stay open. The sounds of the subway slowly faded away, as he fell into a pseudo dream. His mind was always active, even though his body felt as if it was going to wither up at any moment. His body created an illusion, from the senses gathered around him, reminding him of times past.

As he feels the warmth from the circulating blood around him, there is no more regret in his choices. Cyphina is simply existing inside a machine that’s radiates warmth from the lives giving it purpose. And like the machine, he’s become a vessel driven by souls, particularly those that have lost their way as he had. His involuntary memories fuel him like coal in a train’s firebox.

Cyphina’s senses slowly shut down as the chaos of today’s scenery becomes predictable. The world becomes less about experiencing, and more about his mind recreating the moment. Every day Cyphina boards the train, he feels the same things. The scent of cologne masks the musty smell of wet shoes. He hears the loudest stories which hears are laced with a sense of vainglory.

Every conversation has a purpose deeper than the story of words. It was the way of expressing oneself to strangers; giving the world a first impression of yourself. The truth beneath the impression, whether prevalent or nowhere to be found, was always a façade. Cyphina could never hate another person for their sounds, because he had once been ashamed to show his true face. The thoughts cause him to tighten his grip on the sole memory’s fragment.

The train made a stop and more people flooded in. Cyphina’s eyes were glued shut, until a lady, with wearing an unzipped orange sweater and jeans, sat down on the seat next to him. She bumped into him and whispered an apology.

“It’s ok,” replied Cyphina in a lifeless voice.

Her eyes wandered around the room until they fixed themselves on Cyphina’s face. He waited for her eyes to continue to wander, but the warm gaze was glued to his face as if it’s embracing.

Finally, he opened his eyes slightly. “What is it?” he asked her. Her beauty caused him to worry about his appearance briefly.

“Hello good sir.”

“I don’t know if I would consider myself a good person but hi,” said Cyphina. His voice was lighthearted unlike his appearance.

“What do you mean?” replied the woman curiously.

Cyphina was mostly the silent type but he had an ability to talk to people if urged. Since she talked to him first, he decided to do his best to entertain her.

“What do you mean what do I mean,” replied Cyphina playfully. “You can’t tell if a person is good or bad by barely meeting them.”

“Then what do I have to do?”

“Uhh… I don’t know,” said Cyphina as he paused to think.

“Well I suppose you can find out what somebody is really like when they are in serious trouble.”

“That’s interesting.”

“You think so?”

“Yes,” replied the woman.

There was a brief silence as Cyphina stared outside the window and barely saw her reflection still looking at him.

“There’s something I must tell you,” said the woman as Cyphina turned around back towards her.

Her voice was brimming with a darkened elegance, or so thought Cyphina as she replied with a single word. “Blood,” said the woman as she pointed to his hands.

The girl moved her hand gracefully over Cyphina’s ears and unhooked his earbuds. Her hand was very soft and smelled like a very pleasant fruit candy.

“You want to see them?” asked Cyphina calmly as he looked at her, perplexed. He unhooked them from his phone as she firmly took them from his hands and popped open the heads.

“You’re bleeding,” said the woman loudly as her eyes were fixed on her craft.

“I am?” asked Cyphina as he looked over his body. For a brief moment, he could only feel the eyes of several people nearby, but no blood dripping anywhere.

“Yes.” When he looked back at her, the earbuds were hanging from her closed fist extended out to Cyphina. As he uncovered the palms of his hands underneath hers to grab them, he saw the picture of a distorted monster drawn with what seemed to be fresh blood. The hand she held out to him was placed firmly over the blood as it seeped into her skin, and when she retracted her hand, the only thing left was the earbuds.

“Whoa, I didn’t even notice. Thanks.” replied Cyphina as he folded the earbuds back into his pockets.

*Oh geez, I wonder what she thinks of me after responding like that* thought Cyphina. *But where did the blood go… was I imagining that?*

Cyphina looked down at the floor as she continued to stare at him.

“You’re bleeding time,” said the woman as she wiped the blood off on her sweater.

Cyphina grinned at her as he felt shock pass through his body. *Is that what she meant* he thought. But how does she know what I want?

“You’re right,” replied Cyphina nervously. What’s your name?”

“I’m Elle, short for Eleanor, and you?”

“Cyphina.”

“Cyphina…” asked Eleanor. As Cyphina barely averted her gaze as he waited for her to finish her sentence.

“Do you like to draw?”

Cyphina paused for a moment as he eyed over her. Something about her felt familiar, but he couldn’t pin it on anything he could remember.

“Uhh… yes. Although I barely have any time to do so.”

“What do you draw?”

“I can show you,” replied Cyphina as he took his notebook from inside his backpack. In between sections of notes were drawings of a woman.

“Yea I know, I got weaboo techniques,” said Cyphina as she looked over the drawings with such a disturbing level of content.

“Who is that?”

“This is…” mumbled Cyphina repeatedly until he could think of a good answer.

“This is somebody, who will one day make her return…”

“How do you know she’ll come back?”

“I don’t… but she’ll one day live again… that is, when I make my game Cyphina Quest v5, which will hopefully be played around the world. That way her ideas will be a part of everybody,” said Cyphina as the woman stared at him with a puzzled expression.

“I mean, that’s pretty much living isn’t it? That is, leaving marks on others.”

“I’d say so,” replied the woman as she stood up just as the train began to slow down.

“If we meet again, I’ll be sure to remember you Cyphina,” said Ari. Her imposing posture didn’t even vibrate from the rapid deceleration.

Cyphina thought he saw her smile as she walked away gracefully leaving him with a strangely pleasant feeling.

*She’s a nice person but who knows if our paths will ever cross again*, thought Cyphina as he quickly brushed aside his inner excitement.

Cyphina then thought in more detail about the brief meeting and realized something was wrong. The circumstances, the personality, the persona. Nothing aligned.

*Nowadays caring for others had become out of fashion. Nobody believes in a sense of compassion. She looked unscathed by the world, and yet her actions showed a deep appreciation for living. Perhaps it was all an illusion…*

It’s just my skewed sense of perceptions thought Cyphina as he rested his head against his hand. His purple eyes quivered as he slumped back to his resting position.

*Nothing is absolute, and when sociological patterns are broken, it’s truly a moment to behold.*

--

The train continued to speed through the highway which was full of darkness except for the glow emanating from a single bus cutting a path through emptiness towards the final golden bus stop propped underneath the dim of a withering streetlamp.

By now, the train was a foil of its former crowded glory. The few people dispersed around the bus and Cyphina were all laying down over several seats like lifeless zombies.

Cyphina was thinking about some memories of his past and how worthless he felt. Despite numerous memories of praise, Cyphina wondered how far his mind could take him.

*Despite what they say, people want you to be a working drone.*

An image flashed in his mind of when he watched an old chubby woman advertising open positions for the company she worked at.

Cyphina glanced around people’s eyes lit up as the woman boasted about needing open minded, creative, and multitalented individuals. She then began to list all the benefits and the potential large paychecks that could be ascertained.

There were several people who were enticed by the opportunity to work and she would look at the person’s resume for a brief second.

She glanced at Cyphina’s resume before telling him the company needed more people like him. Cyphina watched her eyes never cross over the extensive list of creative projects he proudly wrote in the center.

*It doesn’t matter how smart you are, anybody can do the same things over and over.*

Cyphina remembered a moment he was sitting on the sofas outside his classroom, waiting for the teacher to show up. Cyphina saw some kids in his class bragging about getting a scholarship for a phone application they, when he could remember earlier, they were complaining about how boring the class was since they could just find all the answers to the topics online.

*And still, you may never know how what you do works.*

*I spent so long trying to figure out why things are the way they are.*

Cyphina saw equations forming around the pursuit curves of a butterfly landing on a leaf moving in the breeze.

*Everything I’ve done to turn these pieces of artwork into something means nothing, because there will be somebody who can do some part of the process better than me.*

Cyphina remembered watching people praising games made by solo artists who make beautiful games, and then sees himself fixing the several bugs of his own plain creation.

*And where will I go... I wonder if I belong in this world. Sometimes I wonder if it would be better if I were dead.*

Cyphina sees an image of his family attending his funeral. He imagines his parent’s resentful expressions.

*Maybe someone would find the remnants of my game: the pages, the drawings, and the program, and tell the world how it feels to be alone, and so far from the warmth that is my dreams.*

Cyphina’s thoughts flowed steadily like the cold horizon layered in the distant sky, until the train car violently started rumbling, as if it hit a bump. There was a loud noise of machinery dying as if someone had jammed a pipe in bed of ticking gears, until there was a loud snap, and then the noise resembling a tripped generator resonated with the vibrations of the bus.

The bus then halted underneath a tunnel that resembled a Venus flytrap. What seemed like thousands of cars were little flies stuck in the amber lit mouth.

Everybody in the bus was silent, and for once, Cyphina could hear the words of the song, “Dear My Little Monster,” playing. At that moment, he paused in awe, as he heard the duet’s melody blend together from both sides of his head.

What the hell, thought Cyphina as he opened his eyes slowly. Outside the dewless windows, the whole tunnel was covered in a sparkling crystal blue fog reminding him of the aura’s he saw in his dream. He stared in disbelief as it began seeping in through cracks in the windows.

A dreadful feeling of inescapable cold enters his veins, erasing the warmth of the song’s vibrations. Cyphina’s eyes wander around the area, but his eyes could only move in very subtle increments, as if he’s suffering from sleep paralysis.

The freezing amplifies as he notices everybody but him seemed relatively composed. Some of the tired souls begin to express their curiosities amongst each other, while others begin to gag and cough ever so slightly. Fog eventually enveloped the whole interior, and Cyphina’s mind was panicking to conclude whether he was in a dream.

Despite his body dying for oxygen, Cyphina felt so tense that he held his breath while keeping the same facial expression. Every time he saw somebody taking a breath in the middle of their words, he felt his body become slowly more and more tense, until eventually he ran out of air.

He took a big whiff of the fog infused air, and to his surprise, there was nothing wrong with it. The refreshing feeling it brought to him instantly soothed his nerves, despite his mind now panicking at the possibility that the air was infused to have drug-like affect.

Cyphina then took a moment to appreciate the beauty of the glimmering matter resembling a blue galaxy drifting centimeters away from his eyes. The reflection of the dust in his eyes resembled a faraway purple galaxy that was faintly visible in the corner of the dark sky.

Then came the literal collapse of humanity. Cyphina’s attitude quickly changed as the people around him who had begun to liven up the room, began to fall to the floor one-by-one as if they’d lost complete control of their bodies. Then began the hyperventilation, which caused their bodies to move in inhuman ways Cyphina had only seen during convulsions.

Cyphina wanted to go over to help, but his hand as on his heart as if he was half expecting himself to drop at any moment. Fear paralyzed his body as he closed his eyes expecting at any moment for the dream to end.

But then the voice brought him back to reality. It was an emotionless voice in his head; the voice of that lady, but more bloodcurdling.

“Don’t bleed time.”

Cyphina eyes burst open like the singing curtains, and his senses sharpened as he came to terms with the reality of the situation.

Cyphina saw the people around him transforming into monsters. Every person was undergoing some different bodily transformation, mutating their prominent human features into swollen, disease filled mutations.

Cyphina frantically ran his way towards the nearby exit of the train car and attempted to press down on the handle with all his body strength. The overwhelming pain from the line of blisters formed around the deep depression left by the handle on his hand caused him to grunt until he finally let go of the handle and look at his bloody hand.

He then stubbornly tried again, putting all his hopes that the instruction message taped on the door wasn’t a hoax. After a few unsuccessful attempts at breaking the door, he took a peak and saw the people on the floor barely resembled their old selves. Cyphina ran through the lane, kicking a few chunks of monster flesh around, then stepped over a transforming body which was partially on the bus seat to activate the emergency exit. As Cyphina fumbled with the unlocking motions, he felt a sharp claw grip his jacket.

Cyphina turned around and saw a human transforming into a giant monster gripping onto his sleeve. The man’s face was unscathed but the expression on his face appeared devoid of life and taped on a worm shaped plant head. His lower body and his arms were gone, and in their place were several vines growing out of his body which had flowers blooming along them.

Cyphina, was easily able to break the grip using perfectly executed technique and leaped over a few seats towards the exit, but the monster had stealthily positioned one of its tentacles to crawl around Cyphina’s stomach.

As Cyphina pried on the sharp vines fastened around his waist like a belt, he could feel the sharp vines dig into his bloody hands as he continued to desperately pry.

Cyphina then let go and elbowed the monster causing the stem for a head to wobble. The monster then fastened its grip tighter, causing the spikes on the vines to dig into Cyphina’s stomach.

As Cyphina felt a growing sense of hopelessness, the fatigue started to catch up to his body. His body became loose, and accepting of his situation, while his mind was in a state of hysteria.

Suddenly Cyphina heard a thump, and felt the vines loosen up for a moment. He turned around and saw the bus driver who had been hidden from behind his large seat.

The driver, the only other person unaffected by the dust, started beating up the plant with the fire extinguisher hung above a childish picture drawn by the bus driver’s daughter.

Cyphina leaped towards the emergency exit with his blood-soaked hands, resembling a zombie springing for its prey.

Suddenly, the door violently swung open and Cyphina fell with the crimson cloaked hands keeping his face a few centimeters off the crusty cement. Red handprints appeared on the cement where he pressed himself off the ground, like a stamp marking a letter.

Cyphina took a quick peak into the tunnel as he prepared to turn around and help the bus driver but the horrific image lingered in his mind for what felt like aeons.

The tunnel was bright from the light of a thousand of cars set ablaze; creating an arena like effect for the creatures of all different types who were not only killing each other but were spending time eating the remains of their slaughter.

Cyphina stared back at the bus and felt a sense of hope as he saw his bus driver of 3 years managing to go toe to toe with the plant like monster.

The monster swung its multitude of sharp vines in all sorts of angles and directions, but the old man swung at each vine that came with him, and for some reason Cyphina envisioned a younger version of the man swinging at a volley of baseballs thrown at him.

*What do I do?* thought Cyphina as he tried to look for an opening to come back in the bus. It was too dangerous to step in between their fight, but…

*I’m so empty inside…*

Cyphina let out a menacing smile as he ran through the lashing vines and charged straight at the monster.

The monster fell to the ground and Cyphina dug his fist into the spiky but tender plant tissue near where the heart would be and grabbed out several liquid organs.

Cyphina was half expecting the monster to have died, but it seems as if nothing Cyphina pulled out was vital. Cyphina noticed the plant instantly regrowing around the fist shaped hole, before it surprised him with its uncanny strength when it shoved him hard into the cushioned seats.

The bleeding purple eyes stared at the monster as Cyphina half expected the monster to chase and finish him off since he could feel a sharp shoulder pain, but the monster showed signs of slowing down as it turned its head towards the bus driver.

Before the plant could formulate a plan of action, the bus driver pointed the nozzle of the extinguisher towards the plant and launched a concentrated cone of chemicals.

But then came another monster a woman who had turned into some sort of hybrid beekeeping machine who had been transforming on one of the seats near the exit. With a branch that protruded off her beekeeping mask like a trunk, she grabbed onto the leg of the bus driver.

“RUN!” yelled the driver, an old man of at least 50 years of age as bees came out of the mask and began to swarm him.

All Cyphina could think of doing was running. He continued to

“Why are you leaving? Don’t you want to smoke with me?”

Cyphina turned around and saw a familiar face. It was Jin Kodashi, a man who Cyphina saw on the bus everyday. Before he entered the bus, he’d always throw his cigarettes on the side of the road. He told Cyphina that to save money, he used to light his cigar in the furnace of the glass factory he worked at.

The face was hardening due to the flames that soaked his whole volcanic body which oozed lava through numerous scars throughout the crusty, rock-like skin. Cyphina instantly flinched away as the brief touch of the hands made out of burning stone left first degree burns on his arms.

*This is it* thought Cyphina as his exits were blocked. Cyphina had numerous high-pressure situations being a fighter and gamer, so he was able to think quickly, but every single escape seemed to be blocked. Looking around, Cyphina saw more monsters, some of which were fighting each other, causing the train car to rumble violently.

“Jin, why are you doing this?” asked Cyphina, his voice trembling with fear. He eyed the door latch on the ceiling right behind Jin.

“I’m sorry Cyphina, but I need your flesh to start a fire.”

Cyphina was shocked by the fact that the monster spoke to him, but he quickly snapped out of it as Jin’s surprisingly agile burning magma body leaped at him. Cyphina ran back towards the front of the bus only to be stopped by the beekeeper lady, who was now surrounded by a cloud of bees.

The buzzing was deafening in his ears, and the pain of the stingers consuming his body felt like somebody was pinching him all over. Cyphina kept grabbing all the insects he could from his body and crushed them in his hands. Their blood covered his hands, mixing with the blood from the mark.

Cyphina body slowly began to shut down. His mind began to become overrun with pain signals, and the only plan left was to escape the front door, where the plant monster was guarding. The plant had killed another monster and was bleeding green juice all over the floor. Cyphina, bloodied and still covered in bees, unhooked himself from the beekeeper’s seatbelt grip, and dashed past the plant monster.

He wondered for a brief moment, as his body stopped in its track, why he stopped. He just stood on the same spot, his hands frozen, his body continuously being stung, breathing deeply. He then looked down, and saw a sharp vine piercing his stomach. But some reason he couldn’t feel it.

Is this death… or life frozen?

--

The sclera turned black, leaving only a blood red dot as his pupils. Plumes of shadows flowed from his eyes as his teeth, revealed by the large grin on his face, turned sharper than the ends of parallel lines. His nails grew into claws, and the blood leaking from his body turned into ink. Bloody entrails that resembled an intestine connected to his tongue hung from his mouth which served as a platform for a set of thin razor-sharp teeth.

Everything was gone. All the pain, and emotions left his body, replaced by a spirit. Inside his consciousness, the reigns of control peacefully transitioned. Cyphina, battered and broken, scooted aside, and the monster bowed as it silently took the wheel.

“What’s your name?” asked Cyphina, in a dying voice as he spat out blood.

The monster was silent. It seemed unable to speak, but since they shared a body, it was able to send Cyphina’s mind ideas. “Undead Morpheus… thank you.”

The monsters were fighting amongst each other to see who would consume Cyphina’s dead body, until Cyphina grabbed the vine piercing his stomach which was leaking black ink, and slowly pulled it out from behind his back. The vine then began to resist, trying to push itself back in, but the strength, or more so the lack of pain caused UndeadM to pull the thorny vine out of his body with ease.

UndeadM then turned towards the beekeeper as a lupine wolf attacked the plant monster. With the flick of his wrists, UndeadM was able to control the shadows like a musical conductor. A torrent of darkness rose from the ground consuming every bee latched onto his body, shredding apart their bodies and wings.

UndeadM’s monstrous form was revealed from underneath the blanket of bees, causing fear to emanate all around the room. He slowly walked over to the beekeeper who kept creating new bees, and with his frightening smile and bloody entrails hanging from his tongue.

As the bees charged towards him, UndeadM disappeared from this world. His body turned into a ghost, and the bees passed through him as if nothing was there. The monsters could still see the faint outline of his bodies as he continued to march towards the beekeeper. The monster seemed rather simple-minded, as it continued to try and grab UndeadM while he was a ghost. UndeadM then reappeared as the beekeeper swung a fist towards him, and UndeadM blocked it with a bloody knife, causing the keeper’s fist to plunge into the silver dagger.

As soon as the beekeeper grimaced from pain, UndeadM sent another 3 waves of shadows right on top of the keeper. He then turned around towards the bees, which fell to the floor lifeless, one by one. The shadows dissipated from the keeper, and the only thing left was the corpse of the human woman.

**Cyphina vs Jin Kodashi**

UndeadM turned around towards the ravenous plant with a blank smile revealing his razor-sharp teeth.

--

Cyphina slowly limped out victorious, as the soul consuming flames of hell seemed to feed on the blue dust behind him and devoured whatever traces of conflict was leftover.

The blood of various monsters coated his whole body, but the bloodiest remains were from the mixture of acidic ink and blood dripping from the entrails which hung out of his mouth and left a small pool whoever he walked..

Inside his mind, the monster stood from the controller’s chair, and held out his hand towards Cyphina. Cyphina, stared at him, with a mixture of terror and confusion he’d only felt in nightmares as the embers on the ground began to burn his shoes. The pain rapidly arrived as Cyphina sat in the chair, and the monstrous qualities of his body started to reverse.

Cyphina now fully in control, looked at his body, which was covered by leeches woven from the shadows surrounding them. There was a sharp pain as they suckled the blood around his scars, but they quickly disappeared, leaving his body like how the night began, although his clothes were tattered, charred and stained with intentional ink blood.

### A Link Between Dreams

***Main Plot:*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *We introduce the player to Cyphina’s living conditions and parts of his character. We then express how Cyphina feels as if his life is being watched ever since he becomes a monster. He starts having weird dreams which make no sense… at least not until chapter 2.*

***Points****:*

*--*

The night in the middle of the open highway where there’s nothing to shield a sleepless Cyphina from the autumn breeze was shiver-inducing. Yet the only shivers sent down his spine were from the pollution of mentally disturbing images flashing in his eyes as he limps in the darkness towards his house, a few miles away.

Cyphina looks back at the tunnel. Hours have probably passed without a single car having made it out, but from the outside the tunnel looks completely normal except for the mixture of smoke and blue dust. Suddenly Cyphina notices the bright headlights a few cars from the far side of the highway. Despite them being rather far away, Cyphina crouches down low at the sight of the beams which graze him for thousandths of a second.

*The only thing worse than killing monsters, is being exiled, if not outright tortured when everybody else finds out you’re one…*

Cyphina was able to traverse the highway without much trouble, but as soon as he reached the suburban areas, the lights from the streets and all the stores, the night dwellers wandering the streets, and the proximity of the cars delivered a new problem.

*I can’t get arrested now, or they might think I’m some kind of psycho murderer. And then once the whole tunnel incident is discovered, they’ll find a way to pin me to the mass destruction.*

Cyphina stood in the shadows of a few isolated trees near the highway exit as he thought of a safe route to his house. Suddenly he heard a deep, unequivocal voice in his head.

“Let me help you.”

Cyphina was silent for a moment, as he hoped that by ignoring the voice this monster would disappear from his body.

“I can hear your innermost thoughts. I would leave you alone, if I could.”

*What do you mean if you could?* thought Cyphina.

“The body you possess is now my host as well.”

“No…” said Cyphina with a voice of absolute despair. “That means you’re here until I die?”

“Yes.”

Cyphina felt a huge weight bearing down on his shoulders which caused his shoulders to collapse lifelessly to his knees.

He had a strong desire to yell, but his mind was sharp enough from years of enduring crippling depression to prevent himself from getting too emotional.

“Well my life was shit before anyways,” muttered Cyphina as he was able to slow down his breathing.

“When I really think about… my life would be over if I just accepted the cycle as it is now. My life would be over if you didn’t help me in the tunnel… but why would you not consume me like all the other monsters?”

“Because I have no interest in doing so.”

“But what about the other monsters?”

“I don’t know,” replied UndeadM.

Cyphina closed his eyes until he saw the image of the monster appear beside him.

“It’s hard to trust somebody if you don’t know their motivations,” said Cyphina as he felt an overwhelming exhaustion akin to nightmares.

“I have no motivations currently.”

“Then can you tell me what is going on?”

“The only memories I have are of now.”

“Then tell me what just happened!”

“The whole scene was filled with a magical aura known as Aurelius. Then we were attacked by monsters.”

“What is Aurelius?”

“The fog,” said UndeadM as Cyphina remembered the sparkling mist that flooded the tunnel before everything had turned into a monster.

“Without it magic cannot be conjured by ordinary means.”

“This means nothing to me right now,” replied Cyphina as he let out a deep sigh. “Can you please lend me your help again.”

“Yes. Let me in control.”

“How?”

“Reflect me off the black ink.”

“Black ink…? You mean my blood, right?”

“Your blood has turned into the ink of shadows.”

*Yea I’ve noticed…* thought Cyphina as he stared at his hand and saw the shadows of the scenery attracting towards his own.

Cyphina took his hand which had been healed by the shadow sprites and scraped it across a slightly wet branch.

He grimaced as a gash was created on his palms, but there was surprisingly little pain and no ink spilled out.

*If I’m going to do this I really need to want to cut my hand open* thought Cyphina as he rummaged his hands around the slightly wet grass and found a piece of a branch with several sharp splinters.

Cyphina shook his head disapprovingly before he smashed his hand into the piece of branch causing ink to drip from the small holes where shafts of wood clung onto his hand.

It was a sharp but short pain compared to his first attempt. Although he would consider it to be more unpleasant, the pain was too short lived for him to dwell upon the experience.

Cyphina pulled out the splints in his hand and smeared the ink blood on the tree nearby. He stared into the blood and saw UndeadM’s reflection form on the ink.

There was a small plume of smoke generated similar to that black plumes flowing from his eyes. However, the transformation wasn’t gruesome like those he had seen in before. Cyphina watched from the sidelines of his internal control as UndeadM briefly stared at his body before scraping his blood red nails on the tree. The razor thin nails resembled a sharper version of the fake nails Cyphina had seen at the store, and they left holes in the bark which were deeper than those left by hammering nails.

UndeadM proceeded to clap his hands together and prepare a spell known as Seinen Departure. This spell was used to bring UndeadM to a realm in between the **netherworld** (world of the undead) and this world.

UndeadM looked as if he were slowly fading away into the oblivion of the shadows, until nothing remained of him.

Cyphina felt a little worried that something had gone wrong until UndeadM started to walk towards the house. Even without any trace of his body, Cyphina could see the world move around him as UndeadM limped past a half-asleep man waiting at the bus stop.

Cyphina felt a strong feeling of content as he watched from the comfort of the luxurious control office in his mind. UndeadM tirelessly, yet lethargically marched onwards to the location Cyphina was thinking about.

--

Cyphina lives in a neighborhood where a parallel stream cuts through each house on the side of the main road which was a bridge made from dark wood.

The bridge had connections over the water leading to across the rivers, acting as a driveway for each house. An elegant door mat lay in wait underneath the faint glow of orange lamps hanging from lanterns pinned to the edge of the roof reflecting off the water reminding Cyphina of miniature suns.

Despite still being invisible, Cyphina peaked the corner of his glowing red eyes outside each window, carefully checking for signs of his parents being awake. He covered his face with his hoodie, as if not believing in the encroaching shadows that unwillingly hid his appearance. Luckily for him, the lights were all off, allowing him to creep downstairs safely.

Cyphina entered his room and looked at his monstrous form in the mirror.

“It’s still me,” muttered Cyphina as he could clearly see himself within the image. The nose was broken, and the mouth looked like a zombie with a case of severely bleeding gums celebrating a fresh kill, but the teeth were perfectly aligned and inhumanely sharp.

But still the figure outlined with an aura of blood still vaguely resembled himself since it still had his hair, albeit it lay extremely flat on his heat as if the pressure of its existence was keeping it downin such a way to so that the only parts of his eyes seen was a faint gleam and the plumes.

His frame was the same, hunched as usual. Behind the smothered blood, and plumes of darkness rising from his iris, the monster’s facial shape matched his.

Cyphina looked at his reflection blankly until he realized his shirt and pants were still covered in all sorts of monster blood.

After a long hot shower in which Cyphina contemplated his situation further, he set his alarm early so he could do all the work he should’ve been doing if it had been a normal day. He fell backwards into his bed, and effortlessly passed out.

--

When his eyes opened, the image was slightly blurry as if being watched through an old VHS, however his mind was not awake to mark the sights as unusual.

Cyphina found himself sitting in a plastic chair that seemed much too small for himself.

He stared at the mesmerizing flashing screen where his favorite game ArcLight was loaded, frozen in place, until a player ran by him and gunned him down.

Something felt odd about the dream. The dream seemed too clear and his mind felt conscious, but Cyphina couldn’t control his movements, as if he were experiencing sleep paralysis.

Cyphina felt like a spark was lit the moment he was killed. Suddenly he felt his hands driving towards the keyboard and mouse as he entered a state of mind reminding him of the flames he used to feel back when he was younger. Anytime somebody would kill in game, he would viciously hunt the person down until they left.

It felt extremely strenuous, using every single logic computational unit in his brain towards the single focus; achieving a perfect game.

*Is this what it’s like being a monster?* wondered Cyphina as he watched and felt the experiences of the body moving without his consent.

Before the puppet could finish his dominating streak the door slammed wide open, causing the puppet to take a microsecond to glance over his shoulder, even though Cyphina’s instant reaction was to look.

Cyphina saw within the puppet’s eyes, a girl with peachy pink colored hair and turquoise green eyes wearing a snake hairclip.

“Z-one, I have great news,” said the girl with a contagiously large grin on her face. Cyphina wanted to feel an unfamiliar gushy feeling as he couldn’t help but smile at seeing the girl’s bright face, but for some reason his emotions were surprised. He could only feel the feelings exuded by the puppet body, which let out a slight grin.

*Zone? Am I experiencing the feelings of somebody else? I can’t seem to feel how my own body would react to this situation, but only the body of this… person.*

She came over to Zone and squeezed his shoulders tightly. “Stop playing Arclight all day, we’re getting out of here.”

Zone stared at the lady for a moment before his eyes fell back onto his game.

“Hey, I’m talking to you mister! Finally, it’s time to leave and you’re not excited anymore?”

Somehow the words resonated in Zone’s head as Zone as he exited the game, removed his headset and spun around in the cheap plastic chair. “Leaving?” responded the deep emotionless voice.

“Yes, leaving,” teased the girl excitedly. “I know you hate it here, having a curfew, being considered mentally insane… The point is – today is a special day.”

“It is?” said the body in a voice so baffled that Cyphina tried to move his paralyzed muscles to facepalm himself.

“It’s my birthday you dimwit,” replied the woman angrily. She closed her eyes for a moment, took a deep breath, then formed a contagious smile. Cyphina felt a sense of fear brewing within the man.

“I’m sorry,” replied Zone as he grabbed his own forehead. “I feel like I forgot everything.”

“Oh no,” she replied with a concerned expression. “Again?”

“Again? What do you mean again?”

“Zone, you’re scaring me here. Are you ok?”

“Of course,” replied Zone as he stood from the chair. Zone tried hard to remember any resemblance of his past but could only remember relationships. He remembered a few happy moments with this woman.

One thing that he couldn’t remember but could feel was his desire for “leaving.”

“I’m ready to leave.”

“Hey not so fast buckaroo. As you know I’m finally 18…”

Zone mind froze as she said those words. This girl seems way to cordial with me… but she’s only 18?

“…So I’m old enough to adopt you.”

Zone gazed at her closed eyes and extremely happy mouth spewing words.

“And you know I’ve been saving up everything I could get my hands on, so we can afford our own place… for at least a year.

I know it sounds weird but… that’s the only way I can legally take you from this place… So… happy birthday present!... although you should be the one to get me something.”

Zone suddenly remembered a dark feeling reminding him why he wanted to leave. He remembered the being curfew holding him back.

The idea clouded his mind rendering his confusion irrelevant. “Happy birthday,” replied Zone emotionlessly as he embraced her along with the sun.

The rest of the dream Cyphina watched as there were a couple of scenes where Zone was carrying a few things onto a truck. The large rustic building labeled Ellestar towered behind them, providing shade. A few more scenes passed with the woman driving him, before Zone ended up in a small apartment building where they unpacked the three boxes representing all they had.

After a long day of moving, Zone felt his energy drained and fell asleep on the sofa. Before he fell asleep, he realized he was still dreaming.

--

Cyphina woke up to the sunlight coming through the blinds. The only memory left from his dream was a familiar feeling he couldn’t remember.

And ever since this day, Cyphina’s dreams have been slowly beginning to blend with reality. In one eye, he can see the world around me clearly, and in my other eye, he sees the blurry images of the dream, overlapping that of his existence like a ghost.

But this day also reminded him of a feeling of warmth he had long forgotten. When he woke up, for a moment Cyphina forgot about the fear and embraced the company of UndeadM.

### Hunter gets Hunted

**Main Plot:** *A scientist working for RevelationX turned rogue tries to figure out more about DivineChaos and watches her on the bus. He notices Cyphina sitting next to her and finds out he’s the only survivor of the bus. He’s the only one who knows Cyphina is the only survivor, since there’s no surveillance left after the destruction, and so he starts to investigate Cyphina closely while pretending to be a police officer and saying that Divine Chaos (aka Arielle) is the one who framed him.*

**Section Plot:** *Cyphina must acclimate his monster side since even though he is a deadly predator, it seems as if the police force suspects him of causing the gas attack which killed everybody. Cyphina has no choice but to disrupt the investigation, while trying to find the true murderer himself. However,*

**Points:**

Cyphina woke up with a feeling of awe. He sat on his bed, the covers still wrapped around his legs, until the voice of his parents pierced through the remnants of fantasy.

Cyphina was by no means adequate at the language they spoke, but he could understand tad bits of the yelling. Complaining about him as usual, but he supposed it was better than arguing with each other.

*You’re still here…* thought Cyphina as the fear of the situation began to sink into his flesh. The sudden shift in environment caused his emotions to flow uncontrollably.

“You’re… you’re still here…”

UndeadM was silent while Cyphina’s body began to shake from fear. His face was frozen with the disfigured smile resembling a broken mirror’s reflection hiding behind the bloody intestine with hung like a tapeworm from inside his mouth. He began to think of all the events that happened yesterday, and how close he was to death. He remembered killing everybody around him, and worst of all, he felt an impending sense of death…

He envisioned the face, the most terrorizing being he’d ever seen, and though strangely enough he didn’t associate it with fear. The only feeling he felt when seeing the mirage of the monster sitting with its head leaning on its arm on the work desk, was a dread from the responsibilities of yesterday.

“It will be ok,” said the mirage, in his emotionless voice which exhibited the opposite effect as the meaning behind the words spoken.“

“Are you crazy?!” replied Cyphina angrily. “My life should have been over. Somehow we’ve prolonged it today!”

“That’s not true.”

“They’re going to find out eventually… just leave me UndeadM. My life is over when they take me, you might as well find some other host... with a future.”

“Stop being so obstinate.”

“What do you know… I can hear it in your voice. You’re lack of emotions. You can’t feel… can you?”

“No.”

“Then why… why do you care?”

“I don’t. I’m just spitting opinions, that’s all.”

“Well thanks, I guess. I’m still fucked though…”

--

The next morning, a detective came to Cyphina’s house for questioning. What surprised him wasn’t the fact that they came so quickly, it was the fact that they knew he was one of the few who was still on it before the event. Apparently that girl Arielle told them everything.

And so Cyphina begins to search for traces of her. If it were true that the police were onto him, it’d be impossible to erase all their memories. But perhaps if he found Ari, he could make her lie, or worst case twist her memories.

There was just one illogical feeling to the whole event, which was Ari’s reaction. Cyphina barely knew her, but he felt connected to her personality. Perhaps she knew something more about this, but how would she expect Cyphina to live through the events to frame him. All he knew, was that he needed to find her.

Everybody is talking an alternate train now, including somebody Cyphina recognizes who was riding the train and left on the stop before the event occurred.

“A woman with peach colored hair that has kind of an odd shape like she has like cat ears on top of her head.”

“Of course I saw her. She was a beauty, wasn’t she?”

*I saw a glimpse of beauty when I saw that festering red eye, I suppose…*

“Sure,” said Zone in an agreeable manner. “Which way did she go?”

“I usually can’t remember things like that, but she walked in the other direction that everybody else normally goes since our apartments are here.”

“That’s odd, so she went to the woods?”

“It’s more like a small grove that connects the apartments with the graveyard, but yea, over there. I was surprised because most people stay out of that area, after the murders.”

“Murders?”

“Yea, people say it was the crazy old man who takes care of the graveyard, but I don’t know. I just keep out of there.”

“Thanks a lot, but I have one more quick question if you have time.”

“Yea, I’m done for the day, it’s just time for me to go home and watch some TV.”

“Wow you don’t have any schoolwork,” mumbled Cyphina. “I mean… that’s always fun.” spurted Cyphina.

“Is there something in the graveyard somebody would visit, like does it lead anywhere?”

“There’s a gate that separates the graveyard and a couple of upper class houses… but that’s only on one side. I’m sure there’s a lot to see over there, but… you know.”

“Yea. Thanks again mr…

“Ryan. You guys have some kind of connection?”

“Not really… uhh… she told me a good joke and I forgot it.”

“It’s gonna have to be really good to make me want to go to that graveyard at this time.”  
  
“Ok thanks a lot for your help and have a good day” said Cyphina as he quickly strolled off. Cyphina chuckled quietly as he left.

“There was no joke fool… Gosh why am I laughing at that I’m in the middle of a crisis here.”

--

That night, Cyphina travels through the graveyard in search of clues. He’s sure that this girl has something to do with the events. She didn’t seem like the kind of person to rat someone out.

Using UndeadM’s blood eyes, he’s able to see through the dark perfectly. They search around a bit looking for anything out of the blue or any people who might’ve seen her. Expecting to find nothing, Cyphina is surprised when his glowing red eyes locks on a schizophrenic old man who has random outbursts while he works on raking leaves in the graveyard.

up the graveyard talk about how he knows that the murders that occurred in the town nearby were conspiracy.

“I swear I’ve seen them. One moment it looked like your typical serial killer, but then I saw the shadows of it eating the remains of the person they killed. I know you’re out there. If you come any closer to me, I will kill you…”

Cyphina heard the man cock some sort of firearm and he gulped a bit as he transformed back to his human form in the cover of the shadows.

*This is probably the crazy man Ryan told me about*, thought Cyphina as he lets out a deep breath and takes a few loud strides towards the man.

*“*So you finally got the balls to confront me huh… Trying to take what the war has left of my soul?*”*

“Hi,” says Cyphina in his normal, friendly sounding voice.

Having a brown belt makes Cyphina unfazed by any crazy psycho, not to mention he’s killed 3 ridiculous monsters.

“What are you doing here son!” says the man in a dangerous sounding voice as he shines his light on Cyphina causing Cyphina to wince.

“I’m taking a walk I guess.”

“This ain’t no place for fun and games. Get out now or I’ll force you out!”

“I just wanted to talk.”

“Aren’t ye scared of me like everyone else?”

“Why would I be scared?” replied Cyphina calmly.

“Because,” said the man menacingly. “I’m crazy… I’ve killed 12 people in the war.”

*I think I’ve killed four people so far… if you can even consider those monsters as people* thought Cyphina.

“There’s no such thing as crazy,” replied Cyphina dismissively. “It’s all perception based… Personally I think I might be crazier than you.”

*Since I have a voice in my head…*

“Does carrying a fully loaded automatic everywhere with me make me crazier?” asked the man as Cyphina saw his hands reach towards his pocket.

“Uhh…”

*I don’t die until my body completely crumbles, so he’s going to need me to stand still for him to pump at least two full clips to kill me* whispered UndeadM telepathically.

Cyphina sighed with relief as a smile formed on his face. “Being paranoid is pretty normal, although I’m sure it’s discomforting for a lot of people, and it’s crazy not to give some consideration to other’s feelings.”

“Who would’ve known, that a kid your age would be the most rational person I’d meet.” The man took his hands away from his holster and started using them to gesture.

“Let me you a secret… I don’t keep my gun to scare kids. There’s a monster out there,” said the man as he pointed to the large field of tombs behind Cyphina. “It’s killed anyone that catches it eating the dead bodies.”

*Could it be… there’s more out there?*

He tells Cyphina he saw somebody doing something around the giant statue of a war hero, and Cyphina searches around expecting to find something interesting, but finds nothing out of the ordinary… except for Arielle’s gravestone surrounded by an unusual number of flowers. Cyphina put his face over them, and they smelt exactly like her.

“How is that good news? That mean’s our lead’s gone right?” asked Undead Morpheus.

“Yes, but that means that our policeman isn’t who he says he is. There’s no way she got that fake name in to the records… unless their names coincide but what’s the probability of first and last names colliding. The question now is, why this person. Who was the real Arielle, and what is her relationship with fake Arielle.”

“And how does the detective know her fake name. He must’ve been somewhere on the bus.”

“Yea, that is if he’s a detective. Why did he come after me? He couldn’t have known I’m a monster since he must’ve gotten off earlier, else he would’ve died or turned into a monster.”

“Yes. If you see him again, I’ll mark him.”

“Mark?”

“Yes, if I can maintain eye contact with a person, it opens the doors for me to perform infiltration upon his subconscious, without having to be close. I can only mark a single person at a time, and we can only infiltrate his mind during his sleep, but it will allow us to relive and possibly alter the memories stored inside him.”

“Screw that, we’re not getting involved UndeadM. Let’s just hope whoever that fake detective is will leave us alone while we study for finals.”

“What about the monster?”

“I’m actually curious myself, but we shouldn’t. I’ve never been good at priorities, but… this isn’t just some kind of fantasy we’re in.”

*It would’ve been, if not for that detective*, thought Cyphina. *We’re being watched… but by who?*

### You’re not alone!

Cyphina wonders if there exist other monsters out there, and if they are as reasonable as UndeadM, or as killer as the ones on the bus.

He thinks about this and his next move the whole night, before realizing he only has a little bit of time to do his homework.

Zone grabs the blank piece of loose leaf on the table and crumples it viciously.

“How the hell did she know…”

UndeadM was normally silent to the point Cyphina forgot he existed, but every once in a while, he'd chime in when Cyphina had questions about his abilities.

Based on his actions, UndeadM was also curious about his host’s personalities. Cyphina was a little upset that he had somebody next to him so he couldn’t read his adult VN collection, but then again, UndeadM has no emotions…

*What am I thinking…? I can’t be distracted by some lewd pics; I need to do this homework now. But it feels so depressing… I’ve already fucked up most of my time, and the world waits for nobody.*

“Who are you thinking of?”

“Moments before I met you there was this one woman on the bus, I took home. Somehow she knew that I was bleeding time.”

Cyphina took a deep breath and started unraveling the paper before precisely writing down numbers with his mechanical pencil.

He spent a good 10 minutes analytically probing the problem until his mind was once flooded with the image of the one woman and her demonic eye. After he closed his heavy eyes and regained his composure, he wrote a bit more until he the moment he saw the sky start to brighten, causing him to realize how heavy his eyes were.

Cyphina clenched his eyes together and shook his head but as he opened them, he started to hear the faint sound of a conversation inside his head.

*“I’m too tired Zone… I’m sorry.”*

“Are you alright?”

The images suddenly disappeared as UndeadM’s ominous voice faded. Cyphina took a deep breath as the paper, still yet to be filled lay in front of him.

“What do you know about being alright.”

“When ideas don’t invoke reactions in your body, the only way you can tell what’s wrong and right is by observing patterns.”

“So… you’re counting on me to show you then,” replied Cyphina as he nodded his head at the paper. “I’ll take it.”

“Take what?” asked UndeadM as he noticed Cyphina’s determined smile.

“This will be my new conviction since for some reason my body could care less about itself.”

--

As Cyphina puts down his pencil he looks over his paper in which every question is fully mapped out.

*If someone were to look at this they’d think I worked so hard… but the hardest part was…*

Cyphina let out a loud yawn as he looked at the clock and saw he had a few minutes left before he had to run to the bus stop.

*The same familiar feeling everyday… Tired as all can be. I wish I could put things aside and focus on what needs to be done, but life has too many great stories to unravel…*

### Winter Witch

***Section Plot:*** *Lets define our MC, future mechanic, and our villain DC. Get some emotional investment in these people.*

*Being a guide allows us to predict certain endings. Endings I keep dreaming about…*

*There is no end… it can only be discovered*

*The only way to find who someone truly is to observe them when everything around them is dying. So that’s what Cyphina thought… until chapter 2.*

*Cerulean Gemini eye of DivineChaos…*

*Being happy alone is a super power*

Cyphina’s eyes were melting and closing them was the only relief he could feel from the light stimulating and stinging the boiling vitreous which evaporating towards his brain.

After Cyphina packed his books and wrapped himself in a few layers of clothes he unraveled the blinds and stared blankly at the snow blanketing the scene as if someone had spilled a mixture of glitter and milk over the picture frame encapsulated in his eyes.

“Fuck,” moaned Cyphina as he fell back into his bed with his backpack still strapped to his back.

*This must be the face of somebody who’s ready to die* thought Cyphina as his door swung wide open a moment later*.*

“Are you awake Cyphina? School is open 3 hours later today.”

“What?!” yelled Cyphina, his pitch was unusually deep and ignited with anger. “I can’t go to school like that Mom.”

“Don’t forget to help your dad shovel the snow, and please take Ruby and Sapphire on a walk okay?”

“But I’m tired…”

“We’ll all go to school in three hours okay?” replied his visibly unfazed mother. “Or you can take the bus. Bye son.”

*I wonder how much their students hate them…*

*--*

Cyphina was able to lay down for a few minutes before he started to dream about Zone sitting at his computer. However as feels Zone’s relaxed body and unrivaled content for his existence as he focuses on game flashing within his headset, Zone is able to overhear the TV behind him, which Sylphia is watching as she coils herself around the couch.

“Did you just say flash freeze Rob?”” said a woman’s voice in an exaggerated yet somewhat reserved voice of disbelief.

“I sure did Shelly,” said Rob agreeably. “Tonight, the temperature is going to sink in the negatives in a matter of negatives, but thanks to the predictive power of the Prata Radars, we won’t be suffering like they did six years ago.”

“What an absolute tragedy that was. I can remember bodies lined up dead on the streets, even inside their cars which stopped working the temperatures rapidly dropped.”

“That’s right Shelly, so make sure if you see anybody outside, you help them find a safe place to hide. Now back to Gavin with some news on the latest fashion trends.”

“Ya hear that Zone?” said the young girl loudly as she started at him with her face upside down from resting along the sofa’s handles.

“Don’t go outside… Just kidding you never go outside.”

“Yep.” replied Zone.

“Can you get some water I’m so tired from working all day.”

“Okay,” said Zone as he took off the headset which had been accumulating sweat despite the icicles formulating on the window nearby.

“Why’d you leave your game? asked Sylphia as he rolled over onto her stomach as Zone stood over the pouring sink.

“I’m not letting anybody kill me for free.”

--

Cyphina woke up breathing heavily as the blurry red numbers on the nearby clock peered back into his dark purple eyes, which were swollen but the illusions of his dreams blending in the background of the scenery had disappeared.

*At least I can see* thought Cyphina as he pushed his aching body out of the bed and finished wrapping himself in an overbearingly warm jacket. It was his father’s jacket which he wore when his father had survived cold winters in the northern lands, but it was also his only option to keep himself warm besides stacking several sweaters which he found to be quite uncomfortable.

When Cyphina arrived at the kitchen he was greeted by his two dogs Ruby, a female beagle who was a skillfully trained hunter and hated unfamiliarity, and Sapphire who was a male golden doodle who licks everything and always tries to jump on Ruby.

Sapphire’s tail was a miniature fan whenever he saw Cyphina, and Ruby seemed happy to confirm that Cyphina was still alive.

Cyphina’s mom was preparing her lecture near the kitchen table where Cyphina sat down, all armored up, with his two dogs gathered around him as he ate some crispy rice cereal.

*I can’t die now… not with these two who still need me,* thought Cyphina as heheld both of his hands filled with cereal which both dogs started licking clean. As soon as Sapphire finished, he tried to lick the other hand but Ruby bit the air near him and he instantly retracted back.

*But sometimes its so hard to remember why I want to keep going, when it seems like the future is going nowhere. I’m just a spec of dust, it doesn’t matter what qualities I have that people associate with a meaningless feeling as success. All I can feel is being alone.*

Despite such thoughts Cyphina had a smile on his face as the two dogs stayed by his side until he finished his breakfast.

“Go help dad before he finishes. You always go out when he’s done.”

“I’m going I’m going…”

--

“So here is the class grade breakdown,” said the teacher as Cyphina struggled to keep his eyes open in class.

*What is this grade school?* thought Cyphina as the students around him seemed overly eager at some statistics.

It was a few years ago in which the government had implemented a new system in which students who performed better could get additional benefits. People became so desperate to get good grades there was a lingering feeling of disingenuity in the air.

*Just give me my shit so I can be depressed.*

In total we have two people in the class who got As, 5 got…”

Cyphina looked at the score on his test for a moment before flipping it over and glancing over the questions he got wrong.

While he’s reading over the answers, he hears the banter of a student publicly celebrating his B. The student then turns to his friend and announces his excitement over his friend’s score.

“I mean the test wasn’t too hard, I knew it would be on this chapter mainly.”

*Wow I’m a dumbass for misreading this* thinks Cyphina as he quickly quells his anger. *I don’t care what happens to me, I’m just going to keep doing my best I suppose.*

He refuses to look at the result because he doesn’t want any feelings of satisfaction to erase his content in basking in the depressing exhaustion.

*Even if we do well,* thinks Cyphina as his mind has calculated his score to be acceptable based on the number of red marks he’s seen.

*It’s just the beginning of the meaningless end I suppose… And that hard work nights ago doesn’t matter if I’m bleeding time like that woman said. Bleeding time…*

Cyphina smiled a bit and then tucked the exam away and takes out his notes where he starts to draw with his eyes closed to make it seem like he’s still awake.

--

Cyphina was leaning on his hands; his eyes flickering like a dying lightbulb. Students bombarded the teacher with redundant questions, but once the teacher mentions something interesting or something new, Cyphina’s bloodshot eyes widen.

For the past 30 minutes the teacher had been going over the test where the only mistakes Cyphina had made were from him misreading a few words due to being sleep deprived, so Cyphina’s mind had drifted off to the next world where he saw images of Zone on his virtual reality computer.

But suddenly Cyphina heard a crackle like circuits breaking. The lights begin to flick and flicker before the final sound of a rusty flipped switch followed by the lights dying - a moth in the candle sun.

Cyphina unsure eyes wandered around the room as people started to anxiously converse.

*I’m not that bad at focusing* thought Cyphina as he laughed to himself when he saw the teacher talking to a group of students who were. Somehow, they were able to have the nerve to start up a conversation about the situation and then ask about their grades.

Cyphina was contemplating reasons to get up and leave until the door opens wide and slams on the rubber defeat.

The person, a woman overly adorned with makeup giving her an unnatural look barges in with her serious doll-like expression and gives a long-drawn explanation of the sudden drop in temperature.

“If you cannot make it home in a reasonable amount of time,” says the woman with a commanding voice that demanded respect yet had nothing to prove. “You should make your way to the university mall where there’s a backup generator and heating.”

Cyphina looked around with and confirmed that most people around seemed to take her lightheartedly.

“Even if the power goes out gathering there will be much warmer than being isolated where the power could go out at any time due to the sheer cold. Any questions?!”

She then slammed the door behind her triggering everybody to stand up. The teacher made a desperate attempt to assign the rest of the classwork as homework, but the rustling of jackets and conversations drowned out his request.

People pressed their way to get out of the classroom as fast as possible leaving Cyphina to be the last one out next to the teacher. Cyphina’s teacher congratulated him on doing a good job as Cyphina held the door for him.

“Thanks,” replied Cyphina earnestly.

*No thanks to you… but it’s not your fault the students seem to enjoy ruining the class…*

--

Cyphina walked down the flights of stairs to the lobby as he proceeded to think about where to go. He didn’t want to be around everybody else, so he contemplated going to his parents’ office. But as his mind began to wander, it came across a single thought.

*Did I know this was going to happen? This can’t be related to the things I heard in my dreams. But…*

Cyphina looked down at his hands which hand ink blood flowing through its veins.

*What is reality anymore now that I’m a monster. If the world ends up like what I heard on the TV program… this must only be the beginning.*

Through the glass doors Cyphina sees that the small powdery snow that gifted him a little solace had frozen over completely, causing it to harden into shards of ice. The sky was blank and the snow that had barely lathered the tree covered it in a thick layer of frozen gear.

*Well I’m a monster now* thought Cyphina as he opened his human mouth and imagined the long razor-sharp teeth covered in blood. *I doubt I could die from freezing… especially when my blood has a freezing point of something low.*

Cyphina shook his head in disbelief before standing back up to follow the crowd of people outside. That’s when suddenly when he noticed people were pushing their way back inside and wheezing for air.

“It’s too fucking cold,” said a guy who was dressed in a single sweater prompting other people to try and go out.”

“Maybe it’s because you’re wearing basically nothing your dumbass,” said a woman who was angrily pushing her way towards the door.

People nearby the door ran back towards the front desk like a hand retracting after touching a hot stove. The angry woman marched proudly through the small path made by hesitant people once eager to leave.

Cyphina watched with an evil smile as the woman went outside and took a few angry steps before running back in. Her skin had already contracted a mild form of frostbite.

*Alright enough fucking around,* thought Cyphina who ignored the ensuing panic.

*if I go outside here, they’ll know I’m a monster for sure so… Either I go out the back or I use Seinen Departure. Well I guess I have no choice if I get spotted it’ll seem a bit too suspicious for an ordinary human and then they’ll probe my body to find out what’s different about me and then find my ink blood which could be connected to the crime scene.*

Cyphina squirmed his way to the back entrance which was devoid of people and shook his head in disapproval before swinging the doors wide open.

The air was so cold Cyphina could barely breath without feeling like ice was about to grow from his insides despite covering his face and wearing an extremely thick jacket.

The jacket was able to suppress a lot of the numb feeling that overwhelmed his face, but Cyphina noticed that although he felt a strong pain the ink blood still flowed vigorously through his body.

*This means I can’t be affected by gangrene… although this fucking sucks.*

Cyphina stares at a building that is so large that the roof is still barely visible from at the bottom of the hill where he currently resides.In the distance he sees the red light of an emergency vehicle moving in the distance.

*I think I could make it across campus to the science building before freezing.*

“Alright UndeadM, let’s do our thing,” said Cyphina as he scratched the scar on his arm. “I sure hope my parents and my dog are okay.”

Cyphina was able to cause the gash to bleed and ooze ink blood which he stared at and saw the reflection of the monster looking back at him. In a moment he transformed into the hunched monster, who then proceeded to cloak itself in the shadows only leaving behind an effervescent cloud of smoke.

--

It wasn’t as thick as before, but the hue of the crystals around Cyphina reminded him of the Aurelius.

Undead Morpheus had its heart - hanging from the intestines hanging off his mouth - like an extremely long salamander’s tongue which caused ink blood that was absorbed into darkness to drip wherever he walked.

However, the monster decided to randomly let out a volley of blood onto the empty snowfield they walked across.

“What are you doing?” asked Cyphina as UndeadM proceeded to slowly march across the snow. Despite being stealthy, UndeadM could only walk at one zombie-like pace.

“I thought I saw an enemy in the snow,” relayed UndeadM.

“So… you’re going to throw up on it?” questioned Cyphina in a slow confused manner.

“The ink blood can send whatever it touches to the null dimension.”

“That sounds painful,” mumbled Cyphina.

“It depends on how well the object it touches resists blood magic.”

“I hope we can put it to good use.”

“I think so,” replied UndeadM. His voice was slow and eerily deep, but there was a sense of assurance in his words.

“There is something out here,” said UndeadM as he twisted his head around completely causing his bones to crack.

“But it is hiding.”

*Shit not another monster…* thought Cyphina who felt his unconscious soul shivering despite his suppressed feelings.

*Well I suppose hunting it may be more entertaining than class.*

“I can feel the sprites on our body tingling,” said Cyphina as he watched the scenery fold from the comfort of his subconscious. “Is that what your sensing?”

“Yes, the surrounding darkness talks to us.”

“What are they saying now?”

“They say that the crystal blue eyes have been sent from heaven to kill what lasts pasts its expiration date.”

“What kind of monster fits that description?”

“I don’t know, but it is very close.”

“Shouldn’t we get ready?”

“It won’t be able to run with all the acidic blood pools around.”

“I see… That’s smart,” said Cyphina with a smile. “What about our invisibility?”

“The monsters will notice the snow accumulation.”

“Or the blood trails,” replied Cyphina. “I guess we have no choice but to fight.”

“It begins now,” said UndeadM as out from the piles of snow on the ground came a few humanoid figures wearing occult robes. As they marched towards Cyphina the snow fell off their bodies revealing their heads had been replaced by reindeer skulls which were bleeding from the antlers.

“Trying to copy our look huh?” said Cyphina as UndeadM sent a wave of shadow spikes towards the monster in front of him without any hesitation.

The monster made no attempt to dodge but instead put its palms in the way of the oncoming energy. A magic circle appeared on the plane of its palms and absorbed the attack.

“Are we going to be okay?” asked Cyphina as UndeadM started conjuring another spell.

“We’ll try the pocket weapons next.”

UndeadM clapped his hands together and summoned a portal overflowing with a dark red and purple energy spirals.

He reached his hand into the portal and pulled out a parasol made from a black metal which felt extremely sturdy under UndeadM’s iron crushing grip. Whatever material was hidden underneath the covers made the tool feel extremely top-heavy like a sledgehammer.

“Okay,” said Cyphina uncertainly. The seemed overwhelmingly heroic as UndeadM Smacked the closed parasol against his hands as if he were going to do some paddling.

Cyphina was quick to see past the moment’s short lived glory.

“But how do we get close if you can only walk a snail’s pace?”

“It’s up to you,” said UndeadM as the monster reverted back to his human form.

“But I can’t…”

Cyphina was surprised when he found himself able to hold the parasol. It felt like a fifty-pound weight was attached to the far end, but the ink pumping through his veins severely increased his tolerance to his muscles hardening up.

Before he could process the lack of pain despite his muscles feeling stronger than steel he saw a barrage of ice projectile spells headed his way.

*They’re so fast* thought Cyphina as he leaped himself out of the spot. He felt extremely limber with the black blood flowing through his veins and found himself leaping several feet of the ground like a frog.

Cyphina braced himself by landing on his hands and feet, then dashed from his landing spot and moved in an arc towards the nearest monster.

“Revert,” said UndeadM as Cyphina neared the creature. Cyphina nodded as the creatures continued to try and bombard him but he managed to approach one since they were all split and leapt straight at the monster like a leopard before turning into UndeadM.

UndeadM slammed the parasol at the monster which caught it with its bony hands, completely crushing them as more projectiles whizzed past him. The monster let out a demonic growl as it tried to retaliate by ramming its spiked antlers.

UndeadM had already planned to reposition after the hit so he was able to circumvent the monster which was rampaging its head around and then he limped away from the monster.

“There’s another barrage of icicles, let me dodge,” said Cyphina as UndeadM’s slow pace barely outran the projectils.

“It’s alright, they’re almost out of mana.”

“Mana?”

“I can explain later,” said UndeadM as the nearby monster stopped swinging its head aimlessly and started to charge headfirst at him.

UndeadM started to limp away instead of attempting to time a perfect swing, but the monster was much faster than him.

The charging humanoid skull looked a bit worrisome but Cyphina had already noticed UndeadM’s plan. In a few seconds the monster had run into one of the pools of ink that UndeadM had laid prior, causing its feet to melt. The monster then became unable to walk, causing it to continue wading in the blood until its whole body corroded.

“Let’s finish this the same way.”

“Alright, it’s my turn then…”

--

The blinding snow made the field seem longer than normal, but after a few waves of monsters the road on the other side was visible.

Cyphina covered his face from the sharp beads of snow by tucking his head inside the oversized jacket collar, and kept his hands tucked deeply into the pockets. He knew despite all he could do his body was slowly freezing to death, only accelerated by the lack of sleep. However, his mutated body had enough resistance to allow his willpower to keep him pressing forward.

As Cyphina reached the sidewalks, he noticed a man encased in ice near the lake.

“Is he dead?” asked Zone as UndeadM crept towards him.

“His soul is in transition. I can resuscitate him, but there’s no way to reach.”

“Can’t we use your intestine as a rope or something?”

“Maybe,” said UndeadM as he started pulling out the heart coming out of his mouth revealing a long ink blood filled intestine which made Cyphina gag not from the feeling, but from the sight.

“But it’s not like he can grab it.”

--

*If only I didn’t procrastinate*, thought Cyphina as he fell to the floor exhausted. Visions of his other dreams surrounded him as he saw ice began to rapidly consume his body like a winter flame.

Before Cyphina closes his eyes, he sees a familiar light draw closer. The snow is harsh, but he can barely see the faint image reach down for him.

“I will end this world soon,” said Eleanor. “Don’t throw your life away for those who will eventually disappear even if memories of people are still left behind.”

“Elle?” mumbled Cyphina as he grabbed the hand and for the first time saw behind her bangs was the familiar red glow of an eye that looked as if darkness was spewing around it.

“If that’s even your name…”

*It’s so fucking warm*

She grabbed his hand but made no attempt to pull him up. Instead she gazed at him, and as Cyphina stared at the keyhole glowing in her eyes he felt his mind being twisted apart.

“If you keep following me you may die, but if you don’t, you will remain dead.”

Her smile was genuine, but all Cyphina could sense from her words were wicked intentions.

“Then really you have no choice.”

Cyphina saw blood from underneath her feet start to spread out across the world until it completely covered the scenery. After wrapping the world, darkening the sky and dripping onto the surface, a drop fell onto Cyphina’s frozen face causing him to blink.

And when his eyes opened, he found himself on his knees in the back door of the school. The red emergency vehicle light moved across the backdrop of the winter wonderland and disappeared as Cyphina gasped for air.

“Are you alright?” asked UndeadM as the sun pierced through the clear sky.

Cyphina was silent for a moment as he took a few deep breaths. “Yea,” he replied as he opened the door. The temperature was rapidly rising.

“We’ll be fine. A flash freeze only lasts a moment.”

--

That night Cyphina fell asleep and started dreaming of the other existence. Zone had fallen asleep earlier in the day due to his reverse sleep schedule, but here he was once again moving his body around in the virtual space.

The moment the late-night news came on Zone took off his headset and heard the same two anchors talking.

“Just like six years ago huh Shelly?”

“That’s right Rob. Another false alarm.”

“If you guys don’t remember the temperature only dropped for a few minutes, which is why most people didn’t even feel its effects. That’s why we call this day Fake Freeze Day.”

“Thanks for reminding me Rob. Even though I was looking forward to not coming in tomorrow I am very thankful nobody was hurt.”

“I’m not Shelly I wanted to stay home and play parcheesi but… you don’t have to look at me like that. What I meant to say was not dying is good too.

## Sec 2: A girl… A monster??? No it’s just a man-eating snake

*Zone meets a young woman monster and memory maps her to make sure she’s a worthwhile ally. After figuring out figuring out the numerous sacrifices made to keep her alive, he decides to bear all those people’s dead wills on his shoulders.*

At the dinner table Cyphina’s parents were recounting how the power had turned off for a few minutes in the peak of the freeze, but all Cyphina could think about was the words of Eleanor.

*Follow you? Do I keep searching in the graveyard? Am I close?*

“Ugh,” mumbled Cyphina as he grabbed as many green beans as he could with his chop sticks and chomped down on them.

*I wonder how a monster hides in a fairly populated town*, thinks Cyphina as he goes through the graveyard on another stroll. Cyphina looks out for the crazy man, but he finds no trace of him.

UndeadM reminds Cyphina of the beholder’s illusion, and they decide to search around for things that seem off.

“It seems there is a monster,” says UndeadM who is in control as his body stops, and blood from his mouth continues to drip.

“How do you know?”

“The shadows taste awfully bitter.”

The two of them climb over the gate which separates the upper class neighborhood on the other side. There they see the crazy man holding a girl back. At first Cyphina thinks he’s attacking her, but as he runs over, he realizes he’s just restraining her.

“Let me go!” she yells as she continues to try and squirm her body from his grasp.

“Why are you trying to go their kid, it’s dangerous here. There’s crazy people living down this street!” scolds the crazy man.

“You’re one to talk Mr. Crazy,” replies the girl in a high pitched voice. She seems like she’s 12 tops.

Cyphina transforms back to his normal form and walks over to them. The crazy man explains to Cyphina the situation, and Cyphina tells the man that he’ll take the girl across this street.

“You don’t have to come crazy man, me and mr. tough guy here will be just fine from any strangers. You said you had a black belt?”

“Brown,” replied Cyphina nonchalantly as he smiled innocently and scratched the back of his head. “But I would’ve had a black belt had my teacher not gone missing…”

The man who happened to be a war veteran had the look of severe PTSD in his face.

“You don’t believe me do you… well. I’m not surprised. Nobody really believes me… but… and I may be at fault for that… but if you think I’m going to let some innocent people die here after all the fighting I’ve done in my life, well I’d call you crazy.”

“Sure, come with us.”

--

“Cyphina, the girls a monster. I can feel it within her, and yet I’m confused to why she hasn’t killed you or your friend.”

Cyphina stopped in his tracks, face beaded with sweat as the other two continued to walk down the street.

*Why didn’t you tell me earlier…*

“I wanted to make sure she didn’t detect any emotions from you.”

*So this is the grave eater huh? Seems kind of innocent looking* thought Cyphina as he eyed her over. He couldn’t see well without UndeadM’s help, but her hair was a unique peach blonde and she wore a shiny hairclip that had a snake head on it.

*Can we put the man to sleep, kill her, and recode him after?*

“Kill her? Don’t you want to relive her memories in case there’s anything useful?”

*Oh yea.*

“Hey guys I live in this house right here,” said the girl nonchalantly. “Thanks for walking me back, I’ll see ya later!”

The girl began to run off, but Cyphina quickly grabbed her shoulder to stop her as the man drew out his gun on Cyphina.

“Freeze monster…” muttered the man as everybody froze in place. Cyphina turned around slightly expecting the gun to be pointed towards her but saw the barrel locked on his body with his peripheral vision.

“I suspected you were a monster from the start… isn’t that right…”

The man had his gun pointed towards Cyphina but before he could finish his threads the little girl casted some kind of explosion spell causing a small blast in the area which pushed everyone back at high speeds. While in midair, Cyphina turned into UndeadM, allowing him to quickly recover from the almost fatal impact on a tree branch nearby.

“Oh serp,” muttered the girl as UndeadM ripped off a large thorn protruding through him stomach as he methodically marched towards her. UndeadM noticed the man was knocked unconscious, so it was his perfect opportunity, to get her gaze in lock without revealing his true identity.

“So you’re a monster too huh?” asked the girl as UndeadM summoned torrents of shadows from underneath her. The girl was able to dodge the spell with her unnaturally fast footwork.

“The nasty looking ones always taste better,” said the girl maniacally as the yellow veins in her face and eyes began to glow.

UndeadM and the girl continued to spam spells at each other for a few seconds until the girl disappeared into one her explosions of stardust. The red glow of UndeadM’s eyes danced in the night as he searched every corner of the area around himself to find her, only to have her mysteriously appear in the air nearby him where she launched herself at him like a torpedo.

From the initial looks of the attack, UndeadM was not sure if her attack would hurt him very much but he still side stepped the tackle using his superior reaction time. However, UndeadM noticed a chunk of his flesh missing as the girl passed around the side of his body.

The girl landed a few feet away from him and UndeadM saw her balled up near the chunk of flesh she had ripped off him with her extremely sharp nails.

She spent a brief moment chewing on the food as UndeadM slowly made his way towards her again.

“Can’t we rush her down while she’s eating?” asked Cyphina telepathically.

*Its best we be methodical or we’ll fall into an explosion.*

The girl suddenly spit out the flesh as if she had taken a bite of something extremely bitter, and then the doors to the nearby house opened wide. UndeadM and the girl both turned towards the entrance and gazed at the man who was wearing his pajamas. The man had an evil grin on his face, and suddenly he too transformed into a monster.

“This isn’t looking good,” said the girl in a nervous voice. “I better bounce!”

“New monsters huh?” asked the man as face turned into a bag full of butterflies. “Normally we require applications, but if you like to trespass, we could always… use extra rations.”

Cyphina thinks about killing all of them, but soon the whole neighborhood of monsters disguised as humans are coming to fight as a team.

“We have to leave too,” says Undead Morpheus, his voice sounding emotionless as ever. “I can sense a swarm.”

Cyphina made for a dash for it in same direction as the girl, leading him deeper into the woods surrounding the rustic neighborhood.

--

### The Forest of Alsatia

The set of green eyes glowed in the forest like a set of dancing flames. At first her footsteps were slow and patient, but she felt it, an ominous presence. She began to hurry her pace until she began speed walking. She kept increasing her speed until she suddenly stopped in her tracks, breathing heavily.

“Shed!” said the girl as she continued to gasp for air. “You’re still around to kill me aren’t you?” she yelled hesitantly as she turned around and saw Cyphina stalking her from the invisible shadows.

“I can see you shadowwalker! I’m part snake and my vision is better than it seems!” The girl’s voice was loud, she enunciated her words clearly, and expressively which is why Cyphina could sense her anxiety. “You better not hide!”

“I’m not a killer,” replied Cyphina as he revealed his human self from behind a tree. “But I won’t hesitate to defend myself.”

“Oh it’s just you…” said the girl as she let out a sigh of relief. “I’m no bad person…” replied the little girl innocently. “I’m just a hungry little monster is all.”

“Okay… then why did you attack our guide?”

“I thought he was going to kill me but it turns out he was going to kill you for no reason,” said the girl with a conviction that left no doubts. “You should be thanking me!”

“Thanks… I guess.”

“We have to get out of here quickly. Can you sense it?”

“Uhh…. no.”

“What kind of monster are you? You can’t even detect the huge magic barrier surrounding the area?”

“UndeadM…” whispered Cyphina. “A warning would’ve been nice.”

“When you’re in control, I have no control over your senses,” echoed UndeadM’s voice from the back of Cyphina’s mind.

“Wait a minute, so this barrier must’ve just appeared then…”

“Thank you captain obvious!” replied the girl as her young yet powerful voice echoed throughout the forest.

“Hey quiet down. Didn’t you say something was hunting us?”

“I can’t help myself when I get frustrated,” whispered the girl. “

“I see… Now then, why did you run deeper into the neighborhood…”

“I don’t know the area! Besides, where were we supposed to go if we’re about to be surrounded by evil demons.”“Oh I don’t know… how about the entrance we came in?”

“The entrance we came in doesn’t even exist! It was a one-way path I discovered…”

“What does that even mean?”

*A path is a connection between points in space that might not be exactly located side by side in the physical realm. Humans are confined to walk along a physical path, while creatures who can sense other paths, can traverse those with the proper requirements.*

“It’s our way of escaping that’s what it means. Don’t think I devised this meal plan without a backup!”

“What is it?”

“Before I tell you, you’re going to have to swear your loyalty to me!”

“Ok I swear my loyalty to you. Is that all?”

“And then we’ll sign off on a blood contract. Your hand please!”

Cyphina reached out his hand towards her and she opened her mouth revealing a pair of sharp fangs. She pricked his finger gently with the fang like a blood glucose monitor.

“What are you doing?” asked Cyphina as she kept holding onto her hand and digging her fang deeper into his finger.

“I’m sorry,” replied the girl as she let go of his hand and wiped her tooth with her finger. “What is this?! This doesn't taste like blood.”

“Yea I’ve been bleeding black ink ever since I’ve been turned into a monster,” replied Cyphina as he watched her wave her hands as if they were burning.

“Whoa, it evaporated into shadows,” said the girl as UndeadM’s voice resonated from inside Cyphina’s head. “Looks like I’m going to have to take your word for it haha…”

“Hey,” replied Cyphina as he flashed a monstrous stare. “I think you’re forgetting something.”

“Uhh… what are you talking about?” replied the girl nervously.

“Where’s your contract stating that we cooperate?” asked Cyphina as he pointed straight at her.

“Haha, that was just a little test to see your willingness to team up is all! I knew you were good the moment I ate part of you. The meanest people taste the best, but you were so bitter.”

“Yea, and now it’s time for your test,” said Cyphina as he watched the girl’s hair cover her eyes as she stared at the ground.

“What I meant to say, was we don’t have time for a test so just tell me your name.”

“My name?” mumbled Snake Girl as the glowing eyes left a trail of light as they pointed back at him. “I’m Snake Girl.”

“Snake Girl? Okay… well I’m Cyphina.”

“Sounds like a woman’s name.”

“What do you mean… Your name is two words, if anybody thought you weren’t joking they’d know you were a monster instantly.”

“Take that back! I read in the local newspaper there was a human with skin slightly darker than yours named Little Buffalo who fought for his tribe valiantly.”

“Whatever… let’s discuss while we run this way,” said Snake Girl as she dashed deeper into the forest.

“Why this way?” replied Cyphina as he struggled to keep up with her in his human form.

“We’re going to have to take out the remaining barrier stones nearby the abandoned school.”

“Remaining ones? Is somebody else is in on this too?”

“Well kind of. The barrier typically extends outside into parts of the graveyard but my friend deactivated a couple of stones buried in the tombs since we were planning on hitting this place up for some dinner. You have to do what you have to do to stay alive.”

“I see, so… you’re willing to eat me huh?”

“No! Why would I do that?” replied Snake Girl. Her voice was so childish he could hear the exasperation dripping from the sound.

“So why do you keep sticking your tongue out at me then like your imagining i’m some kind of popsicle.”

“Popsicle?!! I’ll let you know snakes use their tongues as detection mechanisms. But I really meant it, I don’t kill humans… at least the ones who don’t bother me. I won’t lie, you do look more appealing now that I know your part monster.”

She sounds so friendly with how her emotions are expressed. Is she really a monster or a kid?

“So… you’re not afraid huh,” replied Cyphina as he took a knife from his pocket and drove it right to his throat. UndeadM appeared right before her unfazed eyes.

“I hunt creepy looking monsters for breakfast all the time,” replied Snake Girl confidently as there was a sudden noise resembling air rapidly escaping from a balloon.

“WAAAH a Sporeling!” yelled Snake Girl as she kicked the small spore causing it to launch violently into a nearby tree.

*Shush* thought Cyphina as UndeadM covered her face with his hands with claws for fingernails.

Snake Girl pushed him off with ease since her youthful skin was protected by an invisible layer of moisturizing slime. “Don’t touch me monster!”

“Jeez, talk about monster prejudice,” replied Cyphina as his body turned back to normal.

“I hope they didn’t hear that,” mumbled Snake Girl as the both of them walked up to the wounded sporeling.

“He-llp…” mumbled the small creature.

“Are you ok?” asked Cyphina as he walked closer towards the Sporeling. The moment he stepped on a branch nearby the wounded creature it instantly propped itself up and launched some orange dust at him.

Cyphina felt a forceful tug on his shoulder, pulling him to the ground away from the dust.

“Aurum Spectroflame,” mumbled Snake Girl as she blew a large dose of golden flames on the spore. Cyphina could feel the heat of the flames even standing behind Snake Girl, and he quickly realized that this could burn down the whole forest if he didn’t stop it.

As Cyphina stood back up he noticed the flames instantly disappear after devouring the sporeling completely and leaving no traces of its existence.

“I probably should’ve told you, but this place is cursed,” said Snake Girl as Cyphina quickly turned back towards Snake Girl’s glowing eyes.

“Some time ago, somebody dumped a boatload of Aurelius in the area, causing the neighborhood to become a monster breeding ground. Eventually most of the Aurelius dissipated since the area is rather technologically advanced, so now everybody has to eat each other to stay alive.”

“I got it, so any animals that turned into monsters in this forest must be quite hungry for us. Does that mean we can eat them too?”

“I guess yea but… I must’ve completely burnt that monster to a crisp… Oh well, you’d have to eat a lot of spores to fill your Aurelius intake.”

“What kind of monster are you Snake Girl? You didn’t even transform before using that spell.”

“As you can see from my hair and eyes I am a descendent of the Celestial Dragon. It’s pretty awesome if I say so myself.”

“So this is your human forme or something?”

“Hey some people look more like monsters than others… ok? You can guarantee I’m a monster by feeling my perfect skin. It’s actually scaley but covered by a layer of moist slime, which is why it looks perfect.

“Yea I believed you when I saw you lighting up those monsters in battle with the golden flames.” Cyphina took a deep breath as he contemplated the situation. *She’s young, so I hope she’s exaggerating how dire the situation is…*

“So are the stones in the heart of this forest or something Snake Girl?”

“No they were at the abandoned school just right outside the end of the street we were on. Right now I’m just hoping to find somewhere out of this forest before the night ends.”

“Why’s that?”

“The monsters can only hunt at night.”

“Are they like dark-type creatures?”

“No they just have day jobs… Now you just reminded me that I’m going to have to call off tomorrow...”

“Wait a minute… how old are you Snake Girl.”

“12.”

“How do you even have a job then?”

“Because I’m the only person who wanted to walk 25 miles a day carrying 50 pounds of newspapers I guess. What about you? Are you going to miss anything?”

“No, I don’t have to go to school on the weekends.”

“Good, then you’re not going to mind being trapped here for a few days. I think we can at least survive the night since you like dark magic and I can light up the night with my stars and fire.”

“Star magic? What kind of magic is that?”

“How can you call yourself an expert in battle and you don’t even know the basic elements! Well I guess there aren’t very many astral magicians out there so… I’m not going to blame you for not knowing.”

“I haven’t been a monster for very long.”

“So you’re a newbie huh? I should’ve known with how aggressive you were in the situation. Any experienced monster knows when it’s time to run; it’s a dangerous world out there.”

“Whatever, let’s just try to find a safe place where we can rest till the night is over.”

“I think if we walk northeast, then we can find a place to camp out in between the abandoned schoolyards and the forest.”

“Well there’s not many other good places to go with this barrier surrounding us. The problem is, I can feel the growing presence of others as we go deeper.”

“Well at least I’m starving for monster…”

--

### Building our Trust Through Reliving

*In the Endless Nightmare, there are two types of bubbles. The significant bubbles, which if the player selects, will lead them to actual levels. Some will be secret levels, and some will be main levels which they need to click for the story to progress. Other bubbles will just trigger some special dialog, so players will be prompted to click all of them anyways. It also gives the Endless Nightmare a more lively feeling.*

*The dreams follow a certain chain of logic. Breaking the chain of logic can cause things to occur that were never a part of the memories.*

*Zone’s first memory he witnesses is Snake Girl’s mother, Pupii swimming to a deserted island. She meets a three headed dog which is nearly dead of starvation although it runs up to her and begins to lick her all over. She feels bad for the dog so she cuts off a part of herself and feeds it to him before the two of them explore the island.*

“I’m going to sleep but be wary; I’m an ultra light sleeper. Don’t you dare think about doing anything when I’m asleep!!!”

“If either of us wanted to kill each other we would’ve just backstabbed the other person when we were fighting,” replied Cyphina calmly. “Plus I still haven’t even reached the point of being starving for Aurelius…”

“Well… you still better be on your toes. Not just to keep watch, but if you TRY! and attack me!” said Snake Girl, her words lacked rhythm and sometimes were too low or too high pitched.

“And I’m just FAKING, being asleep, I’ll make ashes of your soul.”

“Al…right?” replied Cyphina as he tried his best to keep a neutral expression.

“I’ll wake you up in a few so you can keep watch.”

“Okay!” replied Snake Girl happily. “Nighty night.”

Snake Girl collapsed to the ground and instantly started to snore.

*You can tell when she’s sleeping right?*

“Yea,” replied UndeadM. “She has just passed out.”

*That fast huh? Alright, let’s see what Snake Girl has been through.*

“Do you not trust her already?”

*Somewhat. However, you can never tell what a person is willing to do if they’re starving. Regardless, I want to know other things about being a monster. You’ve forgotten a lot about it yourself UndeadM.*

“Alright, I’m preparing the spell.”

*I need a way to make sure we’re safe while we’re inside the subsconscious. Any ideas?”*

“I could summon some shadow sprites, but that would divide some of our power.”

*It’s too risky to skip. Let’s just do that.*

**When inside the Endless Nightmare for this segment, Cyphina loses 25 maximum mana.**

UndeadM closed his eyes and saw vision of the mark inside his head.

--

#### The Mother of All Snakes

When Cyphina finally reawakens, he finds himself floating in a sea of wavy colors reminding him of a watercolor painting made by colliding galaxies. In the sea lies a few shiny bubbles, each of which contains images of a small world.

*Where are we…*

“This is the Endless Nightmare.”

*It doesn’t look like much of a nightmare… How does this place even work?*

“It’s a realm created from the subconscious mind in order to materialize concepts such as memories and dreams. It can only manifest itself when a person’s mind opens during a dream, which is I must keep Snake Girl in a loop of nightmares, at least until she wakes up.”

*Alright, let’s start by finding some memory which looks somewhat recent…*

Cyphina floats around the sea of memories looking inside each of the bubbles until he finds one with a relaxing ocean setting. He sees Snake Girl walking out of the water holding something in both the long sleeves of her wizard robe.

“This one looks kind of recent since she’s about the same height,” mutters Cyphina. “Plus I wouldn’t mind dreaming about a relaxing vacation.”

*So what do I do now?*

“Just swim inside. But be aware, leaving one of the memories requires a few minutes to prepare the exit spell.”

*Alright I’ll be careful*, thought Cyphina as he dove straight into the memory bubble.

Cyphina was then teleported into a random spot on the island sand, from which he saw a very thin yet relatively massive cerberus run out from the forest of palm trees towards Snake Girl.

“Back off pal!” yelled Snake Girl as the attempted to run at her until she created a barrier of her goo that surrounded her on all sides.

The three headed dog which was covered in bruises started to whimper as Snake Girl’s stared at the monster with a flustered expression.

“You must be really hungry huh? Well you can’t eat this but…”

Snake Girl used her sharp claws and cut off a chunk of her own flesh.

“Take that and leave me alone!!!”

Snake Girl instantly started to run away as the dog quickly ran after the piece of flesh and the three heads started brutally fighting each other over the small piece.

Snake Girl notices the dogs battling in the corner of her eye and stops at the entrance of the forest of palms.

“You guys must be really hungry huh…”

Snake Girl casts a spell which teleports the thing she’s holding away then proceeds to climb the tree to grab some of the shelled fruits resembling extremely spiky jackfruit.

*I thought Snake Girl seemed like the really intent on surviving. I didn’t think she’d help someone else out, nevertheless a monster.*

Cyphina started walking towards Snake Girl who was yelling “Ow” repeatedly as she punched off some of the fruits from the tree.

One of the cerberus heads noticed Cyphina and soon the whole beast was charging at him. Cyphina was able to notice in more detail several wounds on the frail looking beast as he stared the monster headfirst.

“LOOK OUT!” yelled Snake Girl as Cyphina gazed at the blood tattoo on his palm and turned into UndeadM.

UndeadM moved his hands as if he were conducting the floor and a massive pillar of shadows erupted from the ground in front of the monster, causing it to stutter in place and whimper.

Cyphina then turned back into his human form as UndeadM spoke to him inside his mind.

“This monster is starving, but it’s not aggressively hunting.”

“Yea that’s odd,” replied Cyphina as the monster slowly walked back towards him and he transformed again instinctively. The monster then began to lick UndeadM several times.

“Hey monster!” yelled Snake Girl as Cyphina turned and saw her waving her hands in the air.

“Leave that guy alone! I have food over here!”

Snake Girl held out some of the fruit which she managed to slice open.

Cyphina transformed back to normal and started walking over to her. He trailed the Cerberus who had ran after her and began to lick her as the three heads shared some of the fruit amongst each other.

“Hey, thanks for the help,” said Cyphina as he noticed Snake Girl’s hands were bleeding due to some of the spikes lodged on them.

“I can help with that,” said Cyphina as she proceeded to cut open more fruits with her sharp nails.

“I’m ok,” replied Snake Girl as she looked down at her hands. “What’s your name by the way?”

“I’m Cyphina.”

“Helloo Cyphina. I’m Pupii,” replied the woman as she braced herself as the Cerberus came back to lick her.

“Pupii?” mumbled Cyphina.

*She must’ve changed her name when she went to the human world I suppose.*

“What are these fruits called? I can open them for you, I have a sword.”

Pupii rolled a small stack towards Cyphina who transformed into UndeadM.

“Whoa so you’re a monster too huh?” asked Pupii as UndeadM nodded. He summoned his special onyx umbrella and removed the hilt revealing a silver edged sword which shined even with the copious amount of blood gathered on it.

“Hey don’t eat all of them,” said Pupii as she easily won a tug of war battle with one of cerberus who was devouring the fruits at an unprecedented speed.

“I’m hungry too,” said Pupii as she relaxed her body while sniffing the exotic fruit.

“You should eat one too, these fruits are supposed to give you sweet dreams.”

Cyphina reverted back to his human form. “I’m okay,” replied Cyphina as his stomach began to grumble.

*That’s right, I haven’t ate since I went on this expedition through the forest…*

“Looks like somebody was lying,” jested Pupii.

“Alright gimme,” said Cyphina as Pupii threw one of the half opened fruits at him. Cyphina caught the spiky side of the fruit which felt like a porcupine flexing its quills. Cyphina then attempted to drop the fruit but the sharp spikes were latched onto his hand such that he had to vigorously shake the fruit off

When the fruit finally landed on the floor, Cyphina let out a sigh as he noticed the spikes had been laced with Cyphina’s black ink blood. He took a nearby stick and used it to handle the fruit as he struggled to peel edible region while the Cerberus watched him eagerly.

“So what brings you to the shores of Lucerne?” asked Pupii who was skillfully extracting the ripe purple parts of the plant with ease as she examined Cyphina.

“I came here to find my friend Snake Girl but…”

Cyphina looked into her eyes and felt a sense of shock underneath his emotionless exterior.

*Wait a minute… her eyes are purple unlike Snake Girl’s…*

Cyphina and Pupii’s purple eyes locked for a brief moment.

“I guess she might’ve gotten lost or something,” said Cyphina as he grabbed around his chin.

“Did you guys come to see the festival of the ascending petallights?”

“Uhh… Umm…” mumbled Cyphina as he poked several holes in the sand with his finger.

“We came to have our annual rock paper scissors battle. We’re tied with 3 wins each… but… Anyways, what about you?”

“I came to see the festival!” said Pupii eagerly as her eyes widened. “It’s all I ever wanted to do since I was a little girl…”

“You’re still pretty little.”

“Yea...” replied Pupii as she let out a sigh. All of the sudden something reappeared in her hands.

“Don’t come close!” warned Pupii as the Cerberus heads started to try and sniff the object wrapped in several pieces of cloth on her hand.

“Back off guys,” said Cyphina angrily as the Cerberus instantly went back to laying down.

“Hey,” said Cyphina as he let out a sigh of relief and relaxed his arms.

“I guess they must still be scared of my monster forme or something…”

“I have to go now,” said Pupii seriously as she stood up and started to walk towards the path inside the small grove of palm trees. Her voice had a blend of indecisiveness and worry.

*She’s the only connection to Snake Girl I’ve found so far, I need to follow her else if I am to progress in this memory.*

As Pupii skipped off into the distant rocks Cyphina started to panic.

“Uhh… umm…”

“Wait Pupii!” yelled Cyphina. He had a hard time projecting his voice, but Pupii stopped in her tracks.

“Hey can you at least lead me back to the city or something?” screamed Cyphina.

Pupii turned around and took another good look at him. Cyphina saw her face was filled with suspicion.

“Tell me first,” said Pupii slowly. “Who are you Cyphina? What kind of monster,” said Pupii as she paused for a moment.

“Are you?” said Pupii with a precarious tone.

Cyphina starte to uncontrollably sweat as he stared at a palm tree behind her. Her piercing eyes, which were slightly more violet than Cyphina’s, was blurry in the side of his view.

*Umm UndeadM what kind of monster are you?*

“Just say you’re some kind of dragon.”

*Is that what she is? Even so, what kind could I pass off as?*

“Abyss Walker.”

“I am an Abyss Walker,” responded Cyphina proudly.

‘What the hell is that?”

“Uhh… it’s a dragonkind.”

“You’re a dragonkind too? I’ve never heard of that kind so you must not follow the EMPIRE.”

Cyphina felt his heart drop when she enunciated the last word.

“That’s good… then you have no interest in me.”

“Why would I have interest in you besides the trust we’ve developed in our 10 minutes of meeting each other.”

“I can tell you my story but you need to answer my questions first.”

“Ok.”

“Follow,” said the little girl, her voice elegant like a demanding queen. Cyphina noticed the thing she was holding disappeared, leaving behind only a puff of smoke.

“Alright,” said Cyphina seriously as she stood at her spot waiting for him to catch up. As soon as he reached her, they began to walk side to side.

“What about the Cerberus?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps we should kill him for enough food for the trip back.”

“I don’t know how I’d feel about that…”

“This is the reality of the world, don’t you think so… Cyphina?”

“We don’t know yet,” replied Cyphina positively. “But since he trusts us, maybe he can help us on our trip.”

“Or he could easily eat us any moment we’re not looking, like when we’re weak.”

“You’re right,” replied Cyphina sternly. “You make the choice Pupii. But it’s all about what choice you’re willing to live with.”

“What would you pick?”

“Let’s just leave it with some food. That’s all we can do I guess.”

“That’s kind of you,” said Pupii appreciatively as Cyphina walked back towards the fruit trees.

*There is no kindness here… just an unwillingness to achieve the true meaning of the word monster.*

“There’s a third option,” muttered UndeadM.

*What is it?*

“You could forge a summoning contract with it.”

*That’s a great idea that I would’ve mentioned if I had only known that existed…*

“I just remembered that now,” replied UndeadM.

*I don’t know how to do such a thing… but maybe Pupii knows.*

“Wait a second Pupii. can’t we form a summoning contract with the monster?”

“We could if one of us specialized in blood element magic.”

*UndeadM does spit out his blood a lot so I think we could do it.*

“I’ll make the contract,” said Cyphina firmly. “But I forgot how to do it.”

“Cast the spell using these signs,” said Pupii as she showed him her hands. It changes based on what elemental contract you are trying to form, but I believe blood is the same as water but you should have bloody hands.”

“Alrighty,” replied Cyphina as he turned until UndeadM and threw up blood on his hands. UndeadM looked at Pupii, expressionless, as he waited for extra direcitons, and Pupii looked at his horrific figure approvingly.

“Now look him in the eyes and ask.”

UndeadM stared at the Cerberus which ran away at the sight of him.

“Pupii laughed as UndeadM stood with his eternal expression of disappointment facing the sunset in which the creature ran to.”

“Well things don’t always work out in our favor,” said Pupii in between her chuckles.

UndeadM then looked at her and snapped his bloody fingers with their razor sharp fingernails.

A giant magic circle appeared in front of her and a small explosion of obscuring fog occurred before the Cerberus appeared in the spot.

*How did you do it without even asking?* thought Cyphina as UndeadM reverted.

“It knows how powerful we are. The contract is symbiotic.”

*But then why did it run off?*

“I don’t know. But I felt it exude a feeling similar to when you feel happiness.”

*Thanks for helping out.*

Cyphina saw the image of UndeadM nodding in his head, as Pupii stared at the creature in awe.

“I can’t believe it…” muttered Pupii. “A creature that lives in hell is no easy beast to tame despite if you are a proficient blood user. You’re impressive Mr. Cyphina.”

Cyphina felt worse hearing her compliments. All he could think about was UndeadM.

--

“So tell me. What’s it like living in the abyss? Does the goddess of chaos live in the core? Why would you leave the hole, and why are you trying to destroy this world?”

*Umm… UndeadM*

“Just say you’ve been asleep.”

“I have no idea how they abyss has been the past few years because I’ve been asleep for around 50,000 years.”

“I learned back when I was at the academy,” said Pupii who had blabbering the last 10 minutes.

*She sure talks a lot. I guess when you’re an adventurer you have extended periods of time where you have nobody to talk to.*

“That the monsters from the abyss are some of the most dangerous in the world. But I never heard of the abyssal dragon… That means your home must be deep within the parts of the abyss nobody has survived, meaning I’m a lucky dragon to even have met you.”

“Hehe, yea.”

*Guess I must be lucky too huh UndeadM?*

“I don’t understand what she’s talking about,” said UndeadM. “My memory is still fragmented.”

*Well maybe you can remember something from her too.*

Suddenly Cyphina could hear crying from the sheets that Pupii was holding. The Cerberus started to bark wildly when it heard the noises.

“Shush,” said Pupii firmly as she unraveled the sheets and revealed a small baby. Cyphina looked at her childish face again, and then looked at the child in awe.

“It’ll be alright… I’ll always be looking out for you dear, because you are all I have.”

Cyphina kept the Cerberus calm by scratching its side as Pupii took some of the leftover fruit she had and fed the baby.

“This is all I have Cyphina,” said Pupii as Cyphina glanced at the baby’s eyes which were as green as Snake Girl’s.

“At first I thought they took everything away from me when they kidnapped me and forced me to have this child. But when I see her smile… it reminds me of the dragon’s back home flying with the stars… When there was a home at least.”

“Hey Pupii, how old are you?”

“Let’s see… I think it’s been around 4800 lunar cycles since I broke out of my egg…”

*I’m pretty sure the Ancient World’s time system is very similar to the ones on Earth. So she’s about… 4800/30 is about 150. 12 months in a year, so she’s about… the same age as Snake Girl…*

*It’s interesting that the memories are still there somewhere even when you forget them yourself. I’m not sure if I can learn anything about Snake Girl here… but…*

“We’re going to miss the festival if we don’t get a go on it. Who knows what lies ahead.”

“Alright Pupii. I guess the two of us will be traveling together.”

“What about Cerberus? See Pupii Jr. It’s a nice Cerberus. It may be large but you’ll be so strong since you are a descendent of the Star Devourers.”

“Star Devourers…?” mumbled Cyphina as he looked at the terrifying looking creature with a mixture of disgust and content as it panted like a regular dog.

“Go find yourself some food Cerberus, I’ll summon you if I need you or if we reach the city I guess…”

The three heads seemed to disagree on which direction to move so when it pounced away it leapt in the air and its body spasm midair causing it to land on its side. It then bounced back up as if nothing happened and ran off back towards the shoreline.

“I guess when you have a contract, a monster can understand you better.”

“Yes. We’ll travel through some of the flooded caves linking these islands together. Can you swim?”

“Yes, but I’m not very fast at it. However I think I can breath underwater indefinitely since my body doesn’t really rely on oxygen ever since I became a monster...”

“Just making sure since there may be some sections which we can get flooded in. I can also breath underwater… for a long time at least.”

“Are you ready to go?” asked Pupii in a high pitched voice.

“Yes,” replied Cyphina as he quickly realized she was talking to her baby.

The baby giggled as Pupii put her face close to it and started kicking around.

“She’s a feisty one. I bet when she grows up she’ll be really strong, and headstrong.”

“Hehe… yea…” said Cyphina as he imagined an image of Snake Girl.

--

##### Connected Islands

Pupii and Cyphina walked through the underbrush filled with all sorts of threatening plants. Besides the typical plants which tried to devour them, or poison them by showing them with pollen, there were others that bore spiky fruits that fell when things were underneath them.

Despite their fatal demeanor, Cyphina noticed that the plants looked very nice from a distant because they would tend to move in harmonious ways to maximize their space to grow, and their intake of sunlight. There were also some pretty plants that were passive, which Pupii had a knack for identifying them. She would take a huge whiff of them and let her daughter sense them as well.

After passing a few caves that formed along the mud floors of the inner island, Pupii and Cyphina finally reached a cave that was boarded up with wood.

“This should be the place we need to go,” said Pupii as she signaled Cyphina to stand back.

“Are you sure? It looks like somebody doesn’t want people to enter.”

“Yes well these lands are under the jurisdiction of whoever is the most powerful. And for now…”

Pupii inhaled a massive amount of air like a powerful vacuum cleaner and then blew a cone shaped spray of golden flames which easily melted the boards.

“It is us.”

“Or so we think until we get killed by what lies below.”

“Yup,” agreed Pupii as she waltz along the twisting path leading further and further down where the sunlight’s glistening arms couldn’t reach.

Cyphina continued to stumble along the rocks spread across the floor until he got tired of tripping every few seconds and turned into UndeadM.

The details of the cave and the creatures and insects lying asleep along the walls became extremely clear when the red eyes began to pierce the darkness. A brief moment later, Pupii snapped her fingers causing a small but bright golden flame to appear floating in her palm.

Pupii waved the light around curiously as she examined some of the creatures around them. Most of them were startled and skittered away as their surroundings brightened, and others got angry and attacked her. However Cyphina and Pupii had little trouble subduing the monsters.

Eventually after walking along the linear path for a few minutes lead to a sign where the words “NO ANCIENTS ALLOWED,” was carved into the wood.

“This poor handwriting can only mean one thing,” said Pupii solemnly as she looked at Cyphina who returned the expression.

“Knoblins.”

“Goblins?”

“No, Knoblins. They’ve been renowned in this region as of late due to their brutality towards Ancients.”

“Are you part Ancient?”

“Yes we’re both half Ancients you dum-dum. Look at our figures,” said Pupii as she spun herself around.

*So I guess Ancients are the human-esque beings of this world…*

“That means we’re at risk. But there’s no choice if I want to see the festival with Pupii Jr…”

“Is this festival that worth it?”

“Yes,” replied Pupii blatantly as she laid down her supplies to feed her child. A bug squandered its way near Pupii while she was holding her child and Pupii crushed it relentless with one stomp that caused the whole area to rumble.

A stalactite fell from the cave ceiling on Cyphina causing a large bump to sprout from his head like a plant stem.

“Alright lets get through this crummy place fast.”

“Just a note of warning,” said UndeadM as Pupii teleported her child away to a safer dimension and then spawned another flame.

*What is it?*

“If you die here you’re not waking up.”

*Shit… I want to leave but I’d feel bad about Pupii, whever she is living in the other world. Or could she be in our world now?*

Cyphina envisioned UndeadM shrugging and then followed the glow of Pupii’s flame around a curved tunnel.

As Cyphina was about to step around the peak of the curve, he heard Pupii precariously yell “BACK UP!

**Cyphina and Pupii vs KnoblinTech Arm –** Player must slow the arm down as much as possible while nuking it with long range attacks else they will be grabbed and instantly killed. Pupii cannot spam any other spells since her flame and astral element spells are close ranged.

Cyphina instantly hopped backwards a few meters and then saw Pupii run towards him as a giant metal arm chased her.

Cyphina started running ahead of her and soon realized she had stopped running away. He turned and saw Pupii release a flood of her sticky clear dragon goo all over, causing the arm to slow down.

“Don’t come close else it will squeeze you to death!” yelled Pupii as she started running Cyphina’s way again.

“Understood,” replied Cyphina as he transformed into UndeadM and started puking his acid blood in Pupii’s goo. The concoction was able to melt through the metal and it was viscous enough to slow its progression.

“Alright,” cheered Pupii. “We just have to keep doing this and it’ll run outta energy or turn into scrap metal.”

Cyphina and Pupii continued to spam their fluids all over the tunnel as they backed out towards the exit, but the metallic gripper’s gears kept on endlessly grinding as if it were immortal.

Every second the gripper would snap close and reopen, as if the diabolic sound was some kind of heartbeat of the machine.

Cyphina had to keep transforming from his monster form to puke more acid, and to his human form to be able to run, while Pupii had to open her backpack and drink bottles of Aurelius infused juice to help her produce more goo.

When they finally reached the entrance, Cyphina realized it had been blocked on the outside by a large boulder.

“We need to kill it now!” yelled Pupii frantically as she prepared a last resort fire spell in response to the encroaching shadow of the hand.

“No help me break this,” replied Cyphina as he turned into UndeadM.

UndeadM summoned his umbrella sledgehammer and started pounding away at the boulder which cracked more and more with every swing.

“Alright,” replied Pupii nervously as she ran over towards him and charged up some of her astral energy.

“I think we’re good, let me finish it,” yelled Pupii as UndeadM limped away from the boulder.

“Em-er-gen-cy Bl-ast Re-lea-se…” whispered Pupii as UndeadM witnessed miniature floating stars appear from her palms and subsequently float around her hands.

UndeadM turned his head 360 degrees and watched the light from the green core of the gripper grow massively like a police car homing in from the distance.

What surprised him was not how little the metal was stained from being drenched in Cyphina Pupii’s fluids, not how the sound of roaring train trembled the cave despite the gripper navigating through the cave without bumping into any walls, nor how the metallic claw was so large that it essentially walled off the darkened, downwards path.

As he stared emotionlessly at the tireless gripper, UndeadM noticed the discernable crimson color that managed to stand out amongst the orange goo and black ink.

*This thing has one purpose, and it’s done its job quite well it seems.*

Just as the gripper’s light grew to cover the blocked off entrance, Pupii’s stars caused a massive explosion which took out the boulder. A barrage of rocks fell from the ceiling, beginning the process of caving in the two of them.

UndeadM transformed back and Cyphina noticed Pupii lying on the ground, taking deep breaths as rocks fell around her.

Cyphina picked her up as a rock smashed into his leg causing blood to ooze from the back of his thigh, and ran outside of the cave as it collapsed behind him, landing on the gripper.

*Is it still alive?* wondered Cyphina, unfazed by the wounds as he saw the entrance buried in debris start to rumble.

The gripper then spewed from the debris like a snake from its burrow, and it continued to rise revealing long metallic wire body.

The gripper looked like an extremely large bobbit worm which towered over even the trees. It stood idle for a brief moment, casting a large shadow over Cyphina who knelt down to lay Pupii on the floor.

All of the sudden there was a voice coming from speakers located on the gripper.

“DON’T COME BACK IN!” yelled the voice on the speakers as the arm began to retract back into the cave.

Cyphina looked to Pupii to respond, but she was just gasping for air.

“I mean… this is our best chance to beat it when we’re out in the open.”

Pupii nodded as Cyphina stood back up.

“We’re coming back in,” said Cyphina in his fatigued voice.

*God damn I wish I could yell more.*

“So you should battle us now else we’ll keep shooting our goo on your machine.”

“YOU LITTLE BRATS. YOU’LL REGRET TELLING ME THAT YOU WON’T GIVE UP!”

The gripper then launched itself at Cyphina and Pupii as they both split up.

**Cyphina and Pupii vs Unleashed Gripper – Basic snake type enemy battle.**

--

A final raze to the core of the gripper caused energy to pulsate throughout all the wires in its body before a chain explosion leading from the core out to every region of the conveyor that controlled its motions.

“THIS ISN’T ALL WE HAVE!” yelled the voice in the speakers before the machine finished exploding.

“Yay,” we can continue,” said Pupii excitedly as she took a single step before falling to her knees.

“Let’s take a breather,” replied Cyphina as she nodded.

“I need to check on my child!” cried Pupii frantically as she pushed herself off the ground and teleported the child back to her arms.

“You’re okay,” said Pupii as she smiled and Cyphina saw what looked like all the pain relieved from her body for a brief moment.

--

“We can’t take a break or we’ll miss the opening ceremony!” moaned Pupii after making Cyphina and her child something to eat.

“First you should eat something yourself,” said Cyphina as he ate some of the bread slices she bit off for him.”

Pupii took one large bite of bread and then muttered in a muffled voice, “Let’s go.”

*She’s definitely still a child alright* thought Cyphina as he followed her back into the cave.

The two of them traversed the tunnels past where they had reached before, and reached a few stakes planted in the mush cave floor with Ancient heads gouged through them.

“Well if we die at least we can be décor,” said Pupii optimistically.

“I guess.”

“Ooh look, our next obstacle,” said Pupii as the two of them reached a section where the stone and mud ground turned into sand. Water, a few inches tall covered the surface of the floor.

“If I can remember correctly, there’s something special about this place,” said Pupii as she took a step into the sand and instantly plunged into a hole filled with a whirlpool.

Cyphina instantly looked for something to hoist her out with, but before he could take a few steps Pupii summoned an explosion that blasted her out of the water like a geyser.

Pupii was launched several feet in the air and landed next to Cyphina, alongside a huge wave of purple seaweed infused water.

“I don’t want to have wet clothes the rest of the trip!” whined Pupii as Cyphina looked at her with disappointment as water dripped off his clothes and plants hung off his head and shoulders.

“Same.”

“Woops I didn’t mean to get you wet,” said Pupii as she peeled off a few leaves from his shirt. “On the bright side I have an idea of how to get across.”

“Are we going to drop stones to see which plots of sand are sturdy”?

“No we’re going to torture this plant until it tells us where its friends are.”

“What, don’t tell me you can understand plant language.”

“No I didn’t mean it literally. This plant is called the Moqy, and it is well renowned for its use as a light source.”

Pupii held the plant up to her face and blew a small flame on it.

“When it burns the gas it releases causes other leaves to let out a nice ivory glow for a few minutes.”

Cyphina watched as Pupii held the burning leaf in the water. Her golden flames managed to continue burning brightly, melting away at the leaf which had sunk to sandy floor.

A brief moment later Cyphina could see a faint glow from the other plants submerged underneath another trap hole.

“Don’t step over there,” said Pupii as she grabbed another plant on Cyphina.

--

Cyphina, still covered with plants, and Pupii traversed the treacherous sandy floor slowly, but they were able to avoid getting any more soaked.

After making their way to the middle of the flooded field, Pupii took moment to stare back at the shining road they had paved.

“I wonder how long this goes on for…”

“Well it’s boring and kind of itchy,” replied Cyphina as he felt his skin being irritated by the plants Pupii had stuck onto him like bandages.

“But at least it’s nothing too dangerous.”

“I guess…” replied Pupii thoughtfully as she ripped another leaf off Cyphina.

“I’m still wondering where those goblins…”

“Knoblins.

“Yea Knoblins whatever. But they could have even more devastating technology.”

“Maybe. But you’d think they would have sent it out so they could preserve the arm.”

“Well the arm was blocking most of the cave path.”

“That’s TRUEUEEE!”

As Pupii leaned over to submerge the leaf, the ground below began to rumble.

Despite shaking uncontrollably, Cyphina managed to grab the clothing around her shoulder and pulled her back in before she could topple over.

“WwWwWhHaTtT’SsSs HaaPennInNg?”

Sand shifted around them like an ocean current, revealing the holes as water began to spew out from underneath and start rising up.

“HooOOOLLDdD OOnnNNN OOOKKKAAAY?”

“WHAAAHAAT?”

Cyphina grabbed Pupii and transformed into UndeadM. UndeadM was extremely balanced due to his natural zombie-like hunch, and his body’s lack of balance mechanisms.

UndeadM held Pupii tight as he threw up his long intestine to the ceiling which wrapped around the stalactites. Unfortunately as he tried to hoist himself and her up, the insestine fell back on Pupii, leaving a large bloody mark on her head.

Pupii then spat some of her dragon goo on the intestine and UndeadM managed to get it to firmly stuck to the ceiling.

UndeadM and Pupii hung up hoisted in midair as the ground began to shake violently for what seemed like a few more minutes.

UndeadM was dangling and spinning around slightly as he held Pupii like a seatbelt around her waist.

“How much longer is this going to be. I need to check on my child; can you please handle 10 more pounds Cyphina?”

UndeadM was unable to move any part of his body so he just looked at the quivering ground underneath them.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” said Pupii as she opened her empty arms out like a cradle.

From over her shoulder UndeadM and Cyphina could oversee Pupii summoning her child. UndeadM spotted Pupii holding a small glowing object in her hands before a small poof of smoke appeared which raveled the child like a blanket.

Cyphina hadn’t seen many babies so the little child looked like every other to him, but once Pupii quelled the crying child with her soothing, childish voice, he was sure that underneath the tears, those emerald eyes were immistakably the ones he saw in his dreams of Zone.

“Enjoy your crying my dear. Soon there will be no time left to cry, so still cry when you can. Are you scared of this scary looking guy? He’s a monster. Some of the best monsters out there are very ugly.”

*Sylphia…*

--

The earthquake stopped shortly after Pupii teleported her child away, and UndeadM fell to the floor like a dead weight while Pupii landed comfortably on him.

“I’m glad that’s over,” said Pupii as she grabbed UndeadM’s claws and forcefully pulled him up.

“Hey the shaking caused all the trap holes to be visible! And it seems like we’re still far from the end.”

UndeadM reverted back to his human form, and gave Cyphina the gift of all the pain of having his bones bruised from the fall.

“Nooo,” said Cyphina unethusiastically.

“If we want to get on the magic carpet before the line gets too long we have to keep going!”

“I’m not giving up unless you give up first.”

“That’s the spirit. Now let’s run, but be careful. There may be a couple of holes that are getting covered up right now.”

“Aye aye capi-tan.”

Cyphina took a step forward and then Pupii put her hand in front of him.

“Wait a second… Do you hear that?”

Cyphina started to focus and he could hear the faint noise of encroaching machinery.

“Oh no… not again.”

“Wait maybe they have machines that can take us across!” said Pupii excitedly.

“I think it’s probably another autonomous robot that will try and kill us but we can dream I suppose.”

Cyphina and Pupii heard a familiar sounding voice on a loudspeaker as the machines came closer.

“FIND THEIR DEAD BODIES SO WE CAN USE THEIR HEADS AS WARNING SIGNS.”

“I THINK THEY MUST’VE DIED AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. NOBODY SURVIVES OUR TREMOR1996.”

“I think they think we’re dead. Lie on the ground now!”

Cyphina and Pupii first laid down parallel next to each other until she pushed him away.

“That’s not a very natural formation,” whispered Pupii. “You should pretend you’re dead at the edge of that pit over there. And cover yourself with more seaweed to make it look like you drowned.”

The Knoblins, had extremely wrinkly skin resembling somebody suffered from jaundice, and sharp, rotten teeth which were exposed due to their inability to close their mouths. Their eyes, although human shaped were bloodshot red.

They stood only a few feet tall, and seemed much shorter due to their postures which caused their heads to barely peek over the seats of the scooter sized gyrocopters they flew in.

“I SEE THEM OVER THERE. THEY ARE DEFINITELY DEAD. LOOK AT THEIR FACES DROWNING IN THE WATER.”

“WE SHOULD SHOOT ONE MORE ROCKET JUST IN CASE.”

“DON’T DO IT. IF WE BURN THEIR FACES ANCIENTS WILL NEVER KNOW IT IS ONE OF THEIR KIND.”

“UNDERSTO… CRAP I PRESSED THE BUTTON!”

Cyphina instantly rose to his feet once he heard the rocket flying towards them and pulled Pupii in the cover of a nearby trap hole.

“THEY’RE ALIVE?!?!”

**Cyphina and Pupii vs Gyrocopter x 4 (secondary objective, leave one enemy alive at over 30% health)**

--

There was one machine, badly scraped but barely left in a stable condition. The knoblin pilot whose savage face was even more deformed from injuries was quivering as UndeadM and Pupii approached them. Both of their expressions and their gleaming eyes signaled an insatiable hunger.

“I haven’t had a monster in a while,” said Pupii cruelly.

“I almost forgot how good they taste, especially a crispy one where the Aurelius is crystallized throughout their body.”

The pilot opened up the hatch of the gyrocopter and screamed like a pig before he started sprinting, which only lasted a few seconds until it drowned in one of the trap holes.

“What are you doing?” asked Pupii as UndeadM threw his bloody intestine in the hole in which the knoblin was swirling around like a flushed toilet.

UndeadM hoisted up the Knoblin, and pulled it back in front of Pupii as it gagged and coughed uncontrollably.

“We need to know how to fly this thing,” said Cyphina as UndeadM transformed, causing the intestine wrapping the Knoblin to disappear into cloud of shadows.

“Please, spare me,” said the Knoblin whose voice was unpeculiarly childish when not amplified through a megaphone. “I have two cousins who lost their homes due to Ancient development.”

Cyphina noticed its frown looked quite sad considering its rotten and spiky, chipped teeth were exposed.

“That’s the plan,” said Pupii as she looked at Cyphina who nodded in approval. “But we’re going to need you to fly this thing.”

“Fly? It only has space for three knoblin sized beings.”

“Or room for one lady and a relatively small man.”

“But where I sit?”

“You tell us how to fly the plane and we might let you sit outside… hoisted by a red rope... more specifically an intestinal tract.”

“Wow that sounds like a great offer,” said the Knoblin in a voice that Cyphina thought sounded slightly sarcastic.

“I teach you and you drop me off outside. If I return to Knobtown I will get eaten by my neighbors and relatives probably.”

“Whatever, just teach us how to fly it,” replied Pupii unsympathetically.

“Okay angry monster girl. This is the wheel. Wheel help you go left when wheel turn left.”

--

UndeadM flew the plane and towed the goblin with his intestine dripping an unusually large amount of blood which the Knoblin kept complaining about every few minutes.

“Are we there yet? My skin irritated by black blood”

“Can you shut the hell up?” yelled Pupii as she fed her child some more leftovers.

“It stinging though.”

“We’re almost there. UndeadM do you want to eat something? You should try some Knoblin. It doesn’t taste as bad when I burn it to an absolute crisp.”

UndeadM slow turned his head around completely and nodded sideways before turning around.

“Hey don’t crash us,” said Pupii as she ate the piece she had saved for him.

After reaching the end of the field of trap holes, the way forward led Cyphina and Pupii through several landmarks where goblins were placed as sentries. Since it was nearly impossible to fly around them, Cyphina and Pupii ended up having to fight several goblin warriors, goblin archers, goblin mechanics, goblins with sentry guns, goblins riding other cave creatures, goblins with demolitions, and many more goblins using all sorts of tools.

Cyphina and Pupii kept the Knoblin hostage tied up in the Gyrocopter every battle, where he would try to get on their nerves by rooting against them, and being annoying after victory.

After clearing the areas of enemies, they found more rooms filled with puzzles and traps, including a classic swinging axe trap which Cyphina had to slow navigate around with the gyrocopter.

Along the way they managed to gather some extra supplies, giving them hope of reaching the mainland despite their waxing fatigue. One of their findings was actual rope, which was an upgrade to the Knoblin’s, whose name was apparently StrongName, seat.

“Is that your daughter?” asked StrongName after Pupii summoned her child to feed her some of the supplies the found after one of the battles.

“Yes.”

“She look not all like you. You sure you didn’t steal?”

“I saw her come out of my body you annoying little Knoblin.”

“Maybe she like other parent. Why other parent making you go alo…”

Pupii grabbed the Knoblin by his throat and almost exerted enough pressure to completely crush it into a mass of blood.

“StrongName what makes you think I won’t eat you right now,” whispered Pupii menacingly.

All the Knoblin could do was let out a high pitched squeal as only a sliver of air could pass through his windpipes.

“Cut it out,” said Cyphina angrily as Pupii dropped the Knoblin on the floor.

“He he. I see like you others. Knoblin do similar to other little girl.”

Pupii then let out a huge wave of golden flames towards StrongName as Cyphina turned into his monster form and hopped in front.

Cyphina casted a gravekeeper’s cloak spell which protected him from instantly melting, giving Pupii time to put out her flames by encasing him in a very large goo bubble.

“Look, we don’t need you anymore,” said Cyphina with a calm but ominous demeanor. “Your life is hanging on by a sliver which is controlled by how much you try and piss off Pupii. What’s gotten into you?”

Cyphina was surprised by the Knoblin’s genuinely disappointed voice.

“We no make it out. I sure. I be eaten anyways when you die.”

“Well if we’re going to die, maybe you would like your last memories to be something positive. Where you said something nice instead of being a jerk.”

The Knoblin looked at the floor with a perplexed look on his face. “Be nice only get you hurt. I hurt all life for nice.”

“I hope your heart can feel good with that kind of logic,” said Cyphina coldly.

--

Eventually Cyphina and Pupii found themselves in a large cavern that stretched several stories tall. A variety of mechanical devices found in factories were spread throughout the large room, each of which were being run by large hordes of goblins working together.

Several holes were dug out at every level, several of which served as housing. A few of these holes were dead ends, some lead to the way out of the cave, and a few holes lead to the ancient gods of the underground caves that were rumored to be as powerful as the Ancient Lords.

“What are the Ancient Lords?” asked Cyphina as most goblins were too busy and scattered sparsely around the large room to take notice of the hijacked gyrocopter.

“They’re Ancients in the top 0.00001% of power. Only about 50,000 of them exist out of the around 50 billion Ancients in this world.

Suddenly the gyrocopter started to sputter noises of gears dying, as it fell to the ground violently, smashing into obstacles like a bowling ball in a sea of pins.

Cyphina managed to hoist StrongName into the vehicle before it went tumbling, however everybody was victim to a large amount of serious abrasions.

“You could’ve warned us that we were going to run out of gas…”

“The… machine no run on… gas,” replied StrongName as he gasped for air. Cyphina saw he was badly wounded on shoulder.

“It use… Earth… Cryst…”

“Earth crystals?” replied Pupii Cyphina noticed was standing unscathed next to the wreckage.

“How did you get out?”

“Teleported with my ability Gone with the Blast,” said Pupii. “I also saved your life by blasting you guys out of the car before it tumbled into the wall.”

“Ohh… so these burns are yours huh?”

“Yea, I’ll bandaid you up Cyphina.”

“Use them on StrongName, I can use UndeadM’s shadow puppet recovery method.”

“Humph. Why would I help him after all those negative things he said.”

“I don’t want live anyways.”

“Alright well I want to get back at you for pissing us off so I’ll help you live…” said Pupii proudly.

Pupii then grabbed underneath her mouth and looked confused. “I guess that’d be the most annoying thing to do…”

--

##### The Goblin Slayer

*Cyphina and Pupii realize the Goblins are the victims of human development so they have developed a sophisticated system to keep themselves isolated. However, when a group of angsty young Ancients invade their lands and start harming them, they are forced to retaliate. When they chase the young Ancients out, they find false news stories being published exaggerating their brutality, so they step up their security and use scare tactics to play on the news stories. However this leads to a knight searching for fame known as the Goblin Slayer to come about and wreak havoc in the goblin lands by using his strategic and merciless techniques.*

“If you don’t kill the Goblin Slayer, we will sacrifice your child to the Ancient Gods, you understand?”

“But chief… that would be against our Knoblin principles of sacrificing children to the Ancient Gods.”

“Shit… Alright if you don’t kill the Goblin Slayer we’re going to raise her as a Knoblin engineer and probably have her work 12 hour shifts… with only new moons and Knoblin holidays off..”

“

##### Festival of the Ascending Petallights

*After Cyphina breaks the logic of the memory by preventing Pupii from being recaptured, Pupii tells Cyphina that she’d never have lived if he had intervened and tells her to take her child so that she can live a normal life without being hunted. Cyphina takes it from her before she vanishes, but shortly after the memory starts to break down so he quickly evacuates.*

*Nowadays people aren’t so easily satisfied. We feel a false sense of satisfaction when we’re acknowledged, but in the end, why do we care about other people who only feel happy for us when we achieve something. I’ve always wished to see something spectacular, to feel a sense of happiness or awe, but to know that I had a moment with my daughter as a mother, makes this the best day I think I’ll ever have.*

*I feel the same way Pupii. I’ve always felt emptiness from those around me because there’s a suffering inside myself that’s hard to express. Feeling the pain of emptiness everyday while others congratulate me on things I could care less about only deepens the pain. But I think today may be the best day in my life as well. To spend the day with somebody who I care about… It’s the first time I think I’ve felt this way in my life.*

*Thank you for caring about me.*

*No, thank you for being the only friend I have who I feel connected to. I feel emptiness when I talk to most people, but when I talk to you… I feel like I understand a little bit more about the world.*

*Don’t you feel that when talking to a teacher?*

*I mean I also learn from going to school, but this is what I care about. I want to use what I’ve learned, to find moments like these…*

“I don’t know how much longer I’ll live for, but even if I’m around for a while, I need you to do a favor for me.”

“What is it Pupii?”

“I want Pupii Jr. to have a normal life. Could you take her and protect her? I trust that you will never use her, or sell her for your own good after all that we’ve been to.”

“I’ll try my best I guess.”

--

UndeadM casted a spell which slowly transported Cyphina’s soul from the unconscious world inside the bubble. Soon he found himself once again in the field of memories.

*We’ve been asleep for so long…*

#### Dangling Freedom

*After reliving the memory of when Snake Girl was just a baby, he feels extremely satisfied, until UndeadM reminds him of his true purpose. He then tries to find a more recent memory, but it seems most of her life was spent in a lab in the Ancient World. He finds a memory where she looks about the same height and then watches her showcase some of her power as scientists perform experiments to figure out the true extents of her power. Cyphina witnesses them trying to develop her into a kind/humane monster by giving her false experiences of having a family. However, the experiment backfires when she realizes the memories were all fake, and her desire to have a family became extremely great, causing her to kill everything so she could escape. Then the scientists implant her the bad memories of having a family, but then she becomes psychologically insane because the family in her memories betrays her. She rampages through the whole facility killing everything, until a familiar powerful presence stops her… Divine Chaos… As soon as Divine Chaos subdues her effortlessly using her Eye of Sadist to summon a god of blood known as King Crimson, Snake Girl calms down.*

“What does it feel like,” said Snake Girl as she tried to hold back her tears.

“It doesn’t feel like anything,” reassured father. “It’ll feel like a little nap, and then whatever’s next will take hold of you.”

“Wait I want to say goodbye to ever…”

“Hurry up, you have 15 seconds Sylphia.”

Snake girl found it hard to stand up on her knees so her father helped her up. *I really want to say goodbye to him, but he’s on the other side of the room*  thought Sylphia. She slowly trekked her way across the room, telling the numerous people around her who seemed content chatting and ignoring her goodbye.

“Times up. I love you Sylphia.”

“Me too…” she replied as she felt the needle through her shoulder. Her body fell to the floor lifeless as the visions around her became increasingly blurry. “Goodbye…”

### Escape of Amityvale

*Now that Cyphina understands a little more about Snake Girl’s background story, Cyphina is able to understand Snake Girl in a way he realizes he cannot understand other people unless he Memory Maps them. Cyphina attempts to become her friend, while they escape the forest and enter an old town that has been deserted by all but plants which grow from the old clay structures. Somewhere in this town is a magical energy source powering the barrier…*

*Eventually Snake Girl and Cyphina get caught in their attempts to destroy the barrier. Snake Girl then attacks Cyphina and leaves him to be bait as she escapes. Cyphina feels a bit angry, but he feels glad he was able to keep his promise to Pupii. Eventually Snake Girl comes back for him before he’s eaten because she sees a tree that lets out sparkling petals which float in the air, somehow reminding herself of him.*

Every second matters…

“If you want to hide yourself from monsters, a key trick is to mask the scent of the Aurelius inside your body. That’s another purpose of my slimy exterior.”

“Well I was able to track you down…”

“Yea well I never said it worked against everybody,” replied Snake Girl as the two of them found a small grove within the shrubbery.

“Are those monsters?” asked Cyphina as the two of them stared at a few people throwing things in a fire pit.

“I think our best method of escape is to find the Shield Bearers and eliminate them so we can sneak outside.”

“Hmm… won’t they be guarded well?”

“Yea well you got a better plan?”

“

--

#### My Little Monster

“You’re pretty good for a 12 year old,” says Cyphina as the two bloody individuals walk home together.

“Yea and you’re good for an old man.”

“I’m 20.”

“That’s old in snake years,” replies Snake girl as she takes a piece of a monster and consumes it in front of him.

“Aren’t you going to eat?”

“No thanks, I don’t like that stuff?” replies Cyphina as he tries his best to hide the repulsive feeling.

“Wait, if you weren’t here to hunt then… Don’t tell me... You’re an Ancient?”

“No, I’m just a regular human who likes to metamorph into a monster sometimes. Then you aren’t the grave eater are you?”

“The grave eater? You mean Zoharkpentes? Hah, I’m not him, I’m Snake Girl, the future ruler of the monsters.”

“Ruler… then why did those monsters attack you?”

“I said future ruler. All the monsters will bow down to me when I destroy all my opposition!”

“Good luck with that…”

Cyphina explains to her the whole situation of how he turned into a monster and is trying to figure out what exactly is happening around him. Snake girl explains to him that monsters have to feed on each other to survive.

“With the lack of Aurelius, the only way to survive is to eat each other. That’s strange how you don’t feel weaker.”

“Yea,” replies Cyphina disappointedly. *There’s too much to worry about*…

“You should be thankful you’re a monster. If you weren’t you’d be dead by now.”

“It’s not that I’m not appreciative of this other side of myself… I just already had too much to do, and I suck at focusing at what I want to do already.”

“Well Cyphina, good luck on your problems, because if you can’t do it, nobody else will.”

“There’s a lot of people out there.”

“And one Cyphina.”

--

Cyphina then walks her home, to her makeshift cave surrounded by an illusionary barrier on the outskirts of the neighborhood.

“This is where you live?”

“It’s pretty nice huh? I made it myself,” replied Snake girl as she lit some candles by blowing fire onto the wicks.

“Wait a minute… that snake in your hair… it’s a real tree snake?”

“Yea that’s my friend Snakey.”

“How did he not fall off during battle.”

“He’s wrapped around like a circlet but he holds on for his dear life.”

“Why didn’t he run away.”

“Because I told him I’d kill him if he tried. Either way death is the only way out.”

Snakey stuck its tongue out as the two of them talked about him.

“Yea I suppose,” replied Cyphina as Snake Girl sat down on her rock sofa. “If I could only get this TV I saved up for working…”

“You know that thing needs cables right… And a cable provider…”

“What? I watched a show from outside the shop window and all there was, was this box.”

“That flaming sucks,” pouted Snake Girl. “Man it’s cold today. It’s hard being cold blooded.”

Cyphina and Snake Girl sit down to discuss more about the situation at hand. Snake girl tells Cyphina the reasoning behind his monstrous awakening. Apparently inside the body of some humans are Zefracores, small magical eggs that host sleeping monsters. Most monsters die out without the Aurelius, but some of them found a way to hibernate from within human hosts. The eggs are then replicated down through bloodlines, and some of them even mutate.

The gas on the bus was definitely mixed with the Aurelius which caused the eggs to awaken the monsters which transformed human beings.

Snake Girl then tells Cyphina she’s actually a monster from the Ancient World, not one reawakened from humans. The woman who brought her over, is known as DivineChaos, and is a very powerful magician.

“By the way, how come some monsters kill humans?”

“I don’t’ know, but most humans are evil. I’ll be sure to change them when I rule this world! Currently my mission is to spy on them, so I’ve been working as a newspaper delivery person, but once I get enough money, I’ll buy out the company and start my own paper where people will have to listen to my ideas!”

“I think you should probably consider going to school.”

“School? Do you think I’m an idiot? I know everything already!”

It’s getting late so Cyphina has to go back home, but they promise to meet up again soon.

--

## Sec 3: Everything lives in its own world…

*After escaping the evil neighborhood, Cyphina attempts to exonerate himself by performing a memory mapping on the investigator following the bus incident.*

*Cyphina figures out a relationship between the present day and the timeline in his dream. It seems as if events caused by him in his timeline causes corresponding events to occur in the future, rather than propagating a series of events in the lost time. And things that spring off the corresponding events, are just continuations of the past which Cyphina sleeps through…*

*You can either learn to be a better person from your setbacks, or else you can run away until you grow up to be the same kind of monster.*

*We can fill the emptiness by helping others, or by living an illusionary life in which there’s no room to think of others.*

*Just like in Disgaea, everything, even every item, has its own world you can see if you look hard enough…*

*I thought that with this new power I gained, I would be able to control the world around me. I’ve always worked so hard to do so. But I only realized that the world around me is larger than I thought… There are other monsters…*

### A Realization

“You need to stop trying to do the right thing Cyphina.”

“What do you mean?”

“All this time you’ve been trying to track down DivineChaos and figure out why she did what she did, but your goal is to free yourself.”

“Yea well, I can’t free myself unless I have enough evidence can I?”

“You can if you don’t have a conscience. I’ll help you out Cyphina. See my eyes.” asked Snake Girl as she opened her turquoise eyes widely.

“What about them,” replied Cyphina as he looked into them.

All the sudden he found himself tied up to a pole floating in the middle of a large body of water which reflected clouds Cyphina couldn’t even see in the sky.

“If you look into my eyes, you can easily forget what’s right, and what’s wrong,” said a voice from the heavens. “And you can feel death without dying,” said the voice as Cyphina saw a snake slowly slithering up the pole.

The snake continued to crawl until it wrapped itself tightly around Cyphina’s neck. As it tightened a choke on him, the eyes, resembling a set of glass beads, continued to peer into his soul.

Cyphina then transformed himself into UndeadM and quickly unraveled his illusion by giving himself a nightmare and instantly waking up.

“This isn’t how you build trust Snake Girl,” said Cyphina as he felt a portion of his energy being drained just from waking up.

“It was a joke,” replied Snake Girl innocently. “But you know what I mean right?”

“You’re illusion could put him in a coma, but it’s still a temporary solution and it may increase suspicion on myself or you.”

“Hmm… you’re right. What if I eat him, then there will be no evidence and he’ll be gone!”

“But we don’t know who else knows of his investigation. I think the only choice we have is to use my ability.”

“Shared psychosis?”

“Yes…”

--

“I’ve realized it’s best if you rely on me less Cyphina.”

“Why?”

“I remember, I am what they call unbounded. There’s a special magic in this world, something resembling fate which causes life to flow in a logical manner. If you give me reigns to our body, the magic will disappear.”

“So you’re saying… all these things I’d consider unordinary… continue to happen because of you?”

“There’s a high probably that if you accepted me and we coexisted peacefully from the start, nothing would’ve happened.”

“What about being a team?”

“I don’t think much will change Cyphina, except I’ll stop taking control of you while your asleep.”

“But that’s really helpful…”

“If you’re willing to risk everything around you, I will not stop.”

“What made you realize this?”

“You saw him die from the Isatia. That is my memory, and it is my fault for being selfish.”

“It’s definitely not your fault. It must’ve sucked being lonely.”

“Yes, but I still wish I could feel that feeling.”

“Why?”

“Because then I could also feel how precious it is to be here, together.”

“Isn’t longing an emotion?”

“…Yes.”

“Maybe the memories are slowly giving you feelings UndeadM.” Cyphina had a wide grin on his face. “Now I’ll definitely continue to endure these nightmares.”

UndeadM nodded before disappearing from Cyphina’s conscious.

--

Cyphina put the flower on Snake Girl’s ear.

“Keep it, this flower brings good look.”

“Does it also attract honeybees?”

“Probably…”

“Nice…” replied Snake Girl as she yawned. She looked at Cyphina as he stared into the embracing darkness.

“I have to sleep or I’m going to die in class tomorrow. You did a good job.”

“We did.”

“Yea, we did. And I think we learned a lot.”

“About killing people.”

“And each other.”

“Yea that too. Well goodnite.”

“Nite,” replied Cyphina as he walked back to his car with a warm feeling in his heart. As he passed the illusionary barrier he turned around and couldn’t see the light of her stone hut anymore.

### Snake Girl needs a Home

“You said you wanted to find a place to build your home…”

“Yea and I found one.”

“But it’s right next to the cave you were living in…”

“Yea I like it here. I know everybody here, I know where to go hunting, and it’s also the perfect weather for my cold blooded self.”

“Alright then... what do we need to do first.”

“You gather all the stones you can. I’ll make a really sticky mixture consisting of my special saliva, tar, mud, and a little bit of sap to keep them stuck together.”

“Ok, I’m going to leave my jacket inside the cave.”

“I’ll take it,” replied Snake Girl. “I’m going to ditch these clothes too.”

Cyphina gave her his jacket as she went back inside her cave.

*I bet if anyone were watching they’d think I’m some kind of weirdo hanging out with a 12 year old in her swimsuit…*

“Alright back,” replied Snake Girl as Cyphina felt a little nervous as he turned to look at her.

*This is unwarranted, it doesn’t matter what anybody else thinks. We’re just here to help out a pal… wait what the hell*?

https://www.deviantart.com/kingdemonic666/art/Baron-Dimanche-New-Potrait-453453164

Snake girl was wearing the attire of a horrifying plague doctor. Her bird mask atop her long black robes had glowing red sockets and sharp teeth adorned her beak.

“Is that really going to keep you clean?”

“I don’t care; I ate some monster wearing this thing a few nights ago. I was thinking of making some curtains of out of this… but I think it might be cursed.”

“How did fighting him go?”

“I dunno… He was trying to be cool or something, hiding in his basement performing experiments to insane people, but I smelled him from outside his house during one of my newspaper rounds. Then one night I broke in and contemplated just eating him while he was busy laughing evilly as he injected some screaming woman.. I hadn’t fought anything for a few days and felt like I wanted to stay rusty so I just told him I was going to kill him and then I overpowered him with some astral magic.”

--

That night when Cyphina dreamed of being Zone, he saw Sylphia with the same exact flower in her hair. At first he didn’t believe it, but he couldn’t think straight since the person he dreamed of had his mind on something else.

When Cyphina woke up he wondered how it was possible, if Snake Girl was Sylphia, that she had kept the flower the whole time. What seemed even more unusual was that the flower hadn’t wilted yet.

*Perhaps time doesn’t propagate the way it seems like it does… at least in my dreams.*

# Chapter 2: I want to change the world (Beginning of Game Demo)

*No longer will you have to feel such unjustness*

*I realized that memories… never existed in the first place. It’s all just processing information, information encoded into the world. And yet we find meaning in it all, by perceiving. I open my eyes, and this idea of memories, are bubbles floating around me in the atmosphere. Is there an explanation for all of this? None that I can understand, nor the god that brought me to this world. All it can do is create an abstraction so that I can interact with this data.*

*Cyphina… the world has gone to shit. Look at how people pass by each other without so much as a glance.*

*Titty streams sell sex, well I can sell Autism – Kitty Hawk*

*Cyphina: I feel the same way. Hey… I’m trying to make a game to help other people and express my feelings, ones similar to yours, on the matter. Would you help me out?*

*Uhh… sorry I’m busy.*

*The Akashic Magician has burned thy records*

*Maybe he seems crazy to us, but he’s one of the only few people who are actually up and about, trying to make change. What good are our ideas if our will behind them is worthless.*

*Why do we want to change the world? To change the world would involve losing all that makes us unique. Is it worth that much to reach goals that are ultimately meaningless? Is it worth giving up someone’s meaning?*

--

Snake Girl Narration:

In this day and age, where it’s hard enough sweeping our day’s broken promise, a new momentum brings a chapter of a backwards story. Hold your hand out to catch the breeze, and maybe, if you remember hard enough, the beginning will reveal itself.

By now I’m sure you understand, that there’s no survival, if you cannot think for yourself. Perhaps there’s a meaning behind what I’ll say, but what matters more is that you feel these words. Don’t worry if there’s a shared perception of these ideas, but rather, feel your own feelings. Or don’t. Sometimes it’s not about what we feel, but rather, it’s the meaning we find behind life.

--

Sometimes it’s hard to remember to be judges of our own character. Such is the case with the boy named Cyphina. He used to feel always lonely. Now he has two real best friends: a 12-year-old monster girl who’s killed and eaten several people, and his furry little dog Smooglie. His other friend is a nightmarish abomination living in his mind.

He’s always clinging to the past. Fall asleep and dream of another world, much eviler. Despite that, there he feels belonging.

When sleeping, Cyphina dreams of living another life as Zone, a high school student whose head is stuck in a virtual world. has been traveling through the fog, searching for his friend.  And when he wakes up, Cyphina finds himself trudging through the snow with the same girl he’s looking for, trying to figure out the reasoning for his death. Or so the dreams of the future tell him he’s dead.

At first, he didn’t believe in destiny, until the things he witnessed in his dream started becoming true. In his dreams, there was a girl whom his apathetic other side, Zone, had an inseparable bond with. She looked exactly like the young girl, Snake Girl whom he walked alongside now.

Somewhere in the gap between his death and five years in the future where the dream took place, Sylphia had lost her memories, else Zone would’ve been able to ask her if she remembered Cyphina. But the signs were clear enough.

During Cyphina’s alternate form, Undead Morpheus’s, dream recollection process, in which one can tunnel through a being’s conscience, Cyphina found himself stuck in a room with Snake Girl where the monster that sleeps inside her went rampant.

However, he shortly realized that the dreams of the future was not fixed in fate. Moments in the past affect the future. However, events in the past differently still have no effect until they happen. Telling himself that he’ll keep a diary of the events that occur won’t magically reveal the blank in the timeline.

There was a flower he gave Snake Girl, and when he fell asleep again, he found it around Sylphia’s arm. However, to change something as eventful as his own death, Cyphina realizes he first needs a cause.

So far, the only clue he has is a possible murderer. The possibility of Divine Chaos being the murderer grows every day. She’s tried once already, which is the incident which awakened the beast inside him, but failed. And now there’s constant monster attacks on the news, yet the government has no intentions of notifying the public on the truth of the matters.

But of course, some things don’t add up. Cyphina’s talked to her once, and she seemed like a graceful being. Snake Girl also felt an admiration for her, although she didn’t know Divine Chaos well or feel any sort of connection towards her during her short time as her apprentice.

The fact that the murderer is a godly being that could obliterate this world with the snap of a finger doesn’t help Cyphina’s suspicion either. Either something’s holding her back from killing him, which seems unlikely because Cyphina feels her overbearing presence just from her being around, else she has more in store for him, which seems most likely.

--

## Sec 1: If it were only just a dream

***Main Plot (Overlying Story):*** *Cyphina falls asleep and for the first time, witnesses a change in dreams. Zone’s life gets completely turned around when he’s forced to do something besides play ArcLight due to Sylphia disappearing. Over the course of Zone’s journey, he finds out Cyphina is due for death in approximately two years, but he can’t figure out why. Cyphina is bound to Zone’s fate after Zone passes out and Cyphina realizes that if Zone dies, he will as well.*

***Section Plot:***

***Points:***

How do we live as someone else? Maybe the other person leaves a shell of themselves behind and we crawl ourselves into the empty vessel that is merely a statue. Or perhaps we point all trace of what defines this other person, to us. Leave no trace of them behind, and you are the embodiment of their existence.

Cyphina used to be one person, and now he’s still a single being. However, his identity is split in half, in between two worlds, the “dream” and “reality.” When he falls asleep, Cyphina dreams of living as Zone, in a world set 5 years in the future. At first this dream seems like just another interesting experience, but as it continues to reoccur every time Cyphina sleeps, he uncovers more secrets about this world. One of the major secrets uncovered, is that 5 years ago, the person who he is when he’s awake, died. Such a twist in a dream would make anybody feel uneasy when fast asleep, however, it seems that more and more things Zone witnesses in the dream relate to things in reality, or things that happened in the past. Using these things Cyphina realizes he can change the outcome of his future. Similarly, Cyphina can uncover information in the present reality to try and uncover more details about the path leading to his death, so Zone can investigate them further.

However, as the mystery of the past and future uncovers the lines between both worlds are becoming blurry, and the true Cyphina is slowly being uncovered. Cyphina shareshis body with a voice in his head named Undead Morpheus, a monster who enters people’s subconscious through their dreams. Zone is a being whose head was invaded by the voice of Cyphina. Because every decision made in each world is life-changing, and both existences feel like “realities,” Cyphina has to figure out who he is and where he belongs. For when the fated day comes again, if Cyphina finds a way to somehow change his fate, he also has to finalize what world truly becomes reality. For if he manages to escape death, does Zone and all the moments he has with his friends in the future even exist, and if he dies again, can he accept leaving behind all those who stood beside him in the “reality” he’d been living normally for 20 years.

--

*Zone’s a sociopath, all he cares about is himself. However, the only thing that he desires is being the greatest ArcLight player in the world, and his friends whom he wants alongside him in his place in the record books.*

Zone wakes up with a hesitation amplified by the cold air, but as he forces the covers over him which presses him down like a thousand-story pagoda, he thinks about the single leak in his subconscious.

*Why are you still angry* thinks Zone as he falls back down into the warm purple covers. From across the room, the only source of light comes from four blurry red numbers. Closing his eyes fades everything but the red. He begins to see images form from the glare of the leds stuck in his mind.

Somewhere in the light is a beautiful smile. It was next to me on the bench outside the Rendezvous, a VR games tore where we played her favorite game, and my least favorite game although I only play two games, virtual fighter.

“There’s a bigger world than the one we see everyday Zone. I want to live where there’s meaning.”

“Didn’t we already move from somewhere pointless?” replied Zone.

“Yea, but I’m talking about living life Zone.”

“Which we are.”

“Going to college, doing interesting work, having a family. Helping other people in this world who don’t have parents.”

“They don’t need help. We turned out just fine.”

“Ahem. Who’s to thank for that?”

“You Sylphia.”

“No need for thanks,” she replied happily. “But I’m serious Zone.

As he stares into them for longer periods of time, the red starts to bleed towards the floor, until Zone hears a dripping sound in his head.

His eyes open ever more slightly.

But… I need her tomorrow night. Better go find her…

Zone flung the covers which flew across his bed and into the ground. The blankets were soon replaced by a layer of ice-cold air which wrapped itself to his body as he made his way out of his empty bedroom.

*And make sure she’s’ ok…* he mumbled with a sigh of relief as he pulled up his monkey pajamas.

As he brushes his teeth, Zone walks around the empty apartment confirming her absence, and then loads up a game on his virtual reality headset.

*Maybe i’ll just get my daily 100 kill missions out of the way before we go.* There was an evil smile glued on his face as he turned on the computer. His mind and heart relaxed deeply, as his muscles seemed to be on autopilot. His hands navigated the cursor seen in alternate reality smoothly but rapidly through the login UI.

Zone’s hands move as if they are caressing the metallic coat of an assault rifle. His whole body becomes more relaxed as his hands reach in to his pockets and he slides his fingers across the blade of an invisible knife towards a small souvenir rhino hanging from a wire at the end of the knife’s handle.

When Cyphina reaches out in to the air, moving his hands around sporadically as the glow from a list of players lights up his visor.

*Still rank 15 with 312412 kills, 102321 deaths. Nobody’s caught up yet*, thinks Zone happily as he waves his hand in the air like a conductor. The screen from inside the virtual world contained in his visor moves revealing a more detailed layout of the statistics over the 24031 games he’s played. Suddenly his hand freezes midair as he sees the corporate logo surrounded by a striped serpent glowing turquoise pop up on the edge of his vision.

The cold that swept his heart triggered a feeling like impending doom.

*She… knows..,* thinks Zone as his hands tremble ever so slightly. He knows there’s no way he can focus so he takes his headset off.

Zone’s long bangs fall over his eyes, which were blinking rapidly, continually reverberating in a state of panic and focus. He then methodically walks over to the nearest jacket and slips it on before leaving the apartment. As he closes the door behind him, a message pops up on the screen. The words, barely discernable, are “Stay Inside.”

Zone rummages his fingers through the pocket and feels the metal of the keys as he runs down the stairs. As his hands reach for the icy doorknob he halts as the snow continues to pile up outside.

Wait… so I’m not awake?

Zone’s eyes widen as he stares into the glowing city filled with a turquoise colored fog which seemed to shimmer from the street lights reflecting off the crystal clear falling snow.

“It’s Aurelius,” muttered Zone as he wrapped his hood tightly around his head, and walked onto the glowing obsidian colored metal staircase covered with a thin layer of snow.

**He started to remember the Riverside Gas Attacks that Cyphina was a part of and how people exposed to extreme amounts of the Aurelius could turn into monsters.**

“I wonder what could be out here,” he whispered to himself quietly as the hum of the energy running through the digital city erased the sounds of the snow. “Not much I suppose since we’re in a technologically developed area… but…”

Zone sense of urgency disappeared as he absent-mindedly travels through the barely visible and slippery roads leading deeper into the city. He watches as the diamond like snow continues to consume the path ahead of him which leads into the endless turquoise backdrop. As he inches forward, each soft footstep gliding on the frozen ground, he promptly steps on his shoelaces and trips. As he catches himself with his hands, he notices a rainbow-colored splatter of sand.

His eyes open widely as he stares at the sand.

Sylphia’s in trouble.

Cyphina quickly springs onto his feet and starts to run through the snow as the console in his pocket presses against him with every step.

--

### Cyber Universe

Cyphina reached Somanara square, a wide-open area popular for meetups due to a large holographic display in the center of the grass area, broadcasting four different programs at the same time. Surrounding the area were large buildings, a mixture of malls, corporation buildings, apartments, and garages.

As Cyphina continued to run through the growing number of visible people, he kept trying to send Sylphia messages through his developer console. It appears that some kind of firewall had been filtering Cynet, preventing Cyphina from using the messaging system. However every other aspect of it seemed untouched. He could previously play ArcLight a few minutes prior and the data communications in the city from what he could see was as usual.

*Nobody seems to know the danger hiding in the mist* thought Cyphina as he passed through the crowd of people playing in the snow. Among the crowd were AIs, but mostly he saw LifeNodes: robotic spheres that projected a chosen persona hologram of the user. The LifeNode was controlled by the person interacting with a virtual copy of the world known as the Cyberse. The LifeNode was equipped to mimic all the functionalities of a human being, albeit some actions were restricted by the government.

With such technology, human beings could achieve things all while in the comfort of the virtual reality controller at home. They could also experience feelings and emotions due to the sensor adaptors, yet Snake Girl always wanted Zone to meet in person.

Although Zone barely went outside, he felt the same way about things. Nothing truly compared to experiencing things unfiltered, with his own eyes. It’s not like he had much of a choice, since he broke his LifeNode.

Cyphina felt a sense of intrigue when he saw real faces. It was something with the human eyes that attracted his otherwise downward glance upwards. It was impossible to tell the difference between the projection and a real being with the alternate reality visor software since it was connected to the cyberse, but to the naked eye, LifeNode projections had one discerning factor. They have no shadows.

As Cyphina ran forward, lost in his thoughts and completely oblivious to the stares around him, he heard a News Anchor greet him as he stopped abruptly sliding in the snow. He turned around and his eyes quickly locked onto the screen.

“And today we have a bit of an unforeseen weather occurrence known as the **Lucent Cerule**.”

“It’s an event that occurs once every aeon, don’t you feel lucky to even have seen this?”

“I do Tripp, but I doubt others caught on data flow 54 can truly appreciate the beauty of the storm due to a grueling crash leaving several people dead.”

“Due to the crash, all entrances to Moritoka are closed off until further notice due to the accident.”

“Also closed are Somanara east pass due to a water leak, Eastern Delegation due to a damaged trans-node, and Illustration Atelier’s trans node is without power for at least three more hours.”

I guess everyone does know… they’re just trapped here.

Zone walked past a laser art display where he refracted light formed the figure of two slender people forming an arch, and towards Moritoka where the largest MIX store towered over the buildings nearby. In the first floor was a node transport system Zone was hoping to use to get to Moritoka High, the school he goes to, and a place nearby the orphanage.

Along the street Zone took, he saw data streaming through the roads which were lined with the blue cyber energy of the data streams. Examining them closely one could see streams of white bits of the information traveled alongside metallic data pods which were the modern day smart cars. Each pod looked like the escape capsule of a rocket except on the front facing side was a large window where eyes could be seen gazing the outside world as the car followed the predefine data stream manifested in the Cyberse.

This was one of the many trademarks of the new generation. Over the past five years, the creation of the world for AIs known as the Cyberse was finalized advancing scientific knowledge and implementation at an unprecedented pace. The digital world and the physical world shared a link that gave data an element of existence, allowing for engineers and software engineers to function as one.

Zone could see a group of people gathered around the precipice of a glowing blue-gray energy barrier. As he rounded the corner of the road, he could see giant machine robots the size of small buildings towering over the force field blocking the road.

Zone noticed the people behind the forcefield were wearing a dark suit of plated armor and holding weapons strapped throughout their body just like in ArcLight.

*These are the black operatives*, thought Zone as an uncontrollable smile formed on his face. He looked at the special helmets the soldiers wore, ones that gave them the power of hyper vision. The face was fully hidden by a translucent layer of black glass, but the faint glow of triangular lights on the visor resembled eyes. On the side of the visor was a groove where a small piece of the helmet was extruded. This button toggled the hyper vision, allowing them to see through walls.

His smile quickly faded as the growing pain in his stomach constantly urging him to throw up kept him focused. He began to shiver due to the uncertainty of Sylphia’s fate, and his focus kept shifting for brief moments. Nevertheless, he continued to check the satellite view of the city from his console. As expected, the whole inner city was blockaded off.

As Zone paced back and forth, he listened to some of the complaining people for some background on the situation. It seemed like the BOs had been setting up perimeter around the city for the past few hours, whereas the earliest traces of the Lucent Cerule dated to sundown, which was early during the wintertime.

Sylphia told me to meet her four hours ago, but the fog’s been around for much longer. It’s possible she never made it.

“Hey,” said Zone to one of the black operative members. For a moment, she continued to stare into the distance until Zone became angry. His voice quivered as his body shivered due to the cold. “Hey lady, I’m talking to you.”

For a moment Zone thought she was going to shoot him after remembering the swatting videos he saw online. “Ok whatever,” muttered Zone in a reserved tone as he went over to the next soldier.

“Hi.”

Zone tilted his face to stare the soldier directly in his visor, and through the glass he saw a pair of glowing lights.

*Wait a minute... these aren’t real people* thought Cyphina as he heard a voice from behind him.

*“*Its no use, the new patrol AIs don’t have comprehension modules installed.”

There was a middle-aged man, probably in his 30s, who seemed as if he were country musician with his leather black jacket, chaps, and raspy voice.

“I see…” replied Zone as he quickly glanced over the man. “How long have you been waiting here for?”

“Zero minutes and 15 seconds.”

“What you just came here or something?”

“No,” replied the man I’m working right now. I run a machine shop back at the mall.”

All of the sudden Zone gets an idea as he hears a man screaming nearby. “What the fuck is wrong with the Cyberse right now? I can use my LifeNode, I can play ArcLight, but I can’t call my girlfriend to tell her I couldn’t find French Bread at the store.”

“People are becoming crazy with a lack of internet access. Best you’ be cautious out here.”

“For sure,” replied Zone.

*And crazy in other ways too…*

“Anyways, have to go back to business. Wish you luck on…”

“Wait,” said Zone as he pulled on the man’s coat.

“Whoa easy there this was 3000 squeezies dude.“

“Can I buy an assault drone??” asked Zone as he took out his phone and started scanning a map of the Cyberse.

“What are you thinking?” replied the man as he examined his coat and brushed off the dust markings Zone’s fingertips left on it.

“You trying to break through the black ops?”

“Maybe.”

“You’re serious? I mean I’m all about the right to bear arms against the corrupt government, but I don’t think I’m ready to go to jail for selling a deadly weapon to a minor.”

“Hurry, name your price for a series five C.”

“Series five huh? You’re not going to take out a single soldier with that…”

Zone stared at the man angrily. “I’m not going to do anything ridiculous. But you’re sure right that people are becoming crazy out here.”

“Alright alright, 900.”

Thank god I won that 1k tourney thought Cyphina. I was going to use this money to upgrade my VR machine to a 1000 HZ virtual display but…

“850 or no deal.”

“850? You think I’m selling parts from Eurasia or something”?

“No…” replied Zone as he stared down at his console which had blacklight loaded up. He started a training match and took a screenshot of a summoned assault drone to reveal the model number.

“But I do know… with the series ten coming out, your five’s as good as being trashed.”

“The upcoming model is a series nine,” replied the man sternly.

*Well the game is set in the future even though the future has pretty much already came so I knew the number would be close.*

“You get the point.”

“It’s a done deal,” said the man as they shook hands. “But remember if you come out alive, I never sold it to you alright?”

“Yes,” replied Zone as he followed the man back towards the mall.

“Now you’re also going to need a set of reusable bullets…”

*Reusable bullets?* thought Zone as he heard a huge explosion behind him. He turned around and saw what he thought was a glimpse of a bleedle, a create resembling a gigantic flying leech.

I must be imagining things…

--

### Lost Factory

***Main Plot:*** *There’s a place where the Cyberse can still flow through meaning there’s a crack in the forcefield. Zone hopes that this corresponds to a break in the barricade, so he follows it through the Lost Factory, which unexpectedly takes him on a journey of self-awareness.*

***Section Plot:*** *Zone ends up in a factory that’s been asleep for a long time, but he has to power it back on to enter the closed paths which the Cyberse flows through.*

***Points:***

* *There’s a woman here who was killed in the ArcLight accident. She seems lonely like me. Some guy who really liked her writes a lot, and through the messages, I light fire to memories that keep me warm… Unfortunately her dead body has become a Onryo, and she’s looking for some sort of friend to join her in the afterlife… She awakens the mechanical beings, who don’t’ run on Aurelius, to prevent Alethea from creating a revolution.*
* *Apparantly Ancients are working with the government? Why would the government take such an interest in harnessing the Aurelius.*
* *Everything is being awakened by the Aurelius, and trying to find its purpose once again*
* *Interdimensional soldiers are being trained here. Or so I thought. The soldiers are training a robot AI through machine learning.*
* *The factory is a metaphor for the feeling of nonexistence. Without conflict what meaning is there?*
* *In the cyberse, I’m something, but outside, nobody remembers this face. All they remember is the face of the one who used to hold my hand.*
* *If you never directly confront your problems, one day the problems will be the ones to find you. The curfew goes away, but is a monster born?*
* *Do we need a purpose? Alethea, the mother AI, believes in a world where everybody’s purpose matters. Instead of having to walk the path of everyone else, like the mechanical beings, people like Zone should have a place as well.*
* *You are my connection to the outside…*
* *Hell? The Devil’s Tour of Hell by Mary Karr*

Zone could see a stream of green data as he looked at the Cyberse through his virtual reality headset while playing Arclight on his console. He traveled to the east exit of the city, and slowly as he progressed, the large buildings alongside the roads started to disappear, and the lights on the roads that were mapped in the network became roads made from cracked cement. Along the streets were streetlamps and a decaying phone booth.

As he travels through the city slums, he can hear people talking about him. The mere fact that nobody had seen him before caused him to stand out, but the technology on his person only attracted more eyes. He stared back into their eyes with no emotions whatsoever but only intentions. The intentions to survive.

Anybody here could be part monster since the Aurelius had an amplified effect in less civilized areas. Zone had his assault drone’s activation protocol linked to a simple voice command on his console, but he was hesitant to activate it due to the number of people tweaking out due to drugs and mental issues which seemed like transformations.

After a half hour walk through the slums, Zone found himself nearby the side window of an old abandoned factory. Apparently, there was a big news case about this factory’s shutdown which involved a massive work accident killing hundreds of factory workers, however Zone only found about this now when looking up more information on the location. He then activates his assault drone but set it’s AI to shoot only on his commands as he struggles to climbs over the chain link gate. The AI hovered slightly above him scanning the area with its green light.

Zone attempts to open the door but its rusted shut. He commands the AI bot to shoot it, but the door seems to only slide open when the ID lock is disabled. However, there’s no power going through it.

Alright, you’re going to need to find another way for me inside little buddy. Get in through the window on the upper floor.

Using his Console Zone could control the bot remotely while viewing the area through a camera lens installed on its front. He flew the bot up to the second floor where through the dust covered window, he could see a grid field only existing in the Cyberse.

*Another network?* thought Zone as the assault drone fired a single bullet which caused a disruptive sound amidst the tranquil snow flying alongside the fragile glass’s shattered shards.

Zone wondered if anybody would come check on the disturbance, but he realized from everything he saw today, that nobody cares anymore.

The world will keep progressing, the things that matter will become easier to do, and by the looks of it, tomorrow is no longer another day closer to death. It’s another day away from dying. Nobody cares about that which could kill them, because they believe they are immortal. In this developed society, all that matters to most are things they can’t grasp easily with technology. Things like relationships amongst each other.

“It’s whatever though,” thought Zone as he navigated the dark room using the faintly glowing machines as a guide. The network system running through the area caused enough interference to prevent the Cyberse map from being useful. Zone turned on his backup signaler, changing the communication method with his drone from the Cyberse Network to waves generated by his console.

Zone turns on the drone’s nightlight and he sees several lockers throughout the room. In the corner of the security camera with a strange red LED logo kind of resembling an eye.

Zone sees equipment in the locker room, but nothing of great value is found except for a few pieces of equipment which he could use if he could get in there. Connected to the room is a bathroom where there everything is dirty except for the mirrors. There’s a lot of foul writing in the bathroom, but one thing that stands out is what seems like the only meaningful thing on the wall.

“All these days I wrote on the wall won’t be in vain, because I always felt your eyes on me, Clarissa.”

Zone attempts to open the door out of the locker room but it’s bolted shut but a rusted but still active retina scanner.

“Fuck, if I knew the network key I might be able to visualize the kind of defense protocol enforcing the lock mechanism. Then I could map out the whole facility.”

Maybe I can decode the network information from the data stream from the game. Zone started to process the data packets in his console.

There’s no fucking way I figure out how to crack this government standard encryption in less than a few days, and by then it’s possible the encryption can modify itself to further hamper my progress...

But I have to try… thought Zone as he stood in the grass searching for information through the forums.

Zone attempted to decode the information for 40 minutes before giving up. He felt an overwhelming sense of disgusting apathy as he put down his console and closed his tired eyes.

I’m too late anyways. Sylphia… all I can do is pray for your safety. Fuck myself anyways. You’re right, you are pretty much all I have. You’re my lifeline… but most importantly you’re my dreams, thought Zone as he turned off the game causing the DataStream to shrink a bit.

He began to walk back towards the slums. As the reality of the situation began to unfold in his mind, he felt a sense of desperation. If she was gone, what was next for him. He’d have to go back to the orphanage, if there still was any orphanage. For once, the cold began to sting, but what hurt him more was that pain he felt that morning.

Zone walked slowly back to his apartment, with an expression more zombified than the homeless wandering the streets, until he heard a noise coming from the sound module of his drone.

“It can’t fucking be?”

Zone could hear noises coming from above the locker room. He was overcome by an overwhelming feeling of anger and depression.

“Why the hell did I not think of that,” thought Zone as he navigated the drone back into the bathroom where he found a grate in the ceiling which he dislodged with three rounds directly in the center.

Following the air ducts the drone leads Zone to a door leading outside of the bunker and into a huge area filled with Aurelius and a green glow. He could hear the noises clearer, they resembled footsteps, but there was little variance in the step noises.

“Well we know certainly this isn’t abandoned,” muttered Zone as he spun the drone around to get vision of the area. It seemed there wasn’t a single path downward, but rather the way down from these bunkers intersected through several other sections, some leading to doors inside machines.

In the center of the middle of the building, which was about two stories below the drone’s current location, was a huge sphere emanating the strongest green glow in the area. Energy pulsated through the sphere’s core and through a few towers with small windows buildings on top of them.

*First things first I guess* thought Zone as he flew the drone through a bridge leading out of the dormitory. He was unsure of the composition of the gas rising throughout the facility, so he avoided traveling through the air as much as he could.

The smoke in the area kept his vision low, but using his drone’s infrared ability, he could scout in a larger radius for periods of second, sort of like HRV.

Zone traveled through the smoke, carefully avoiding any volatile machinery. Every single sporadic noise poked at his iron-cladded nerves forged from years of high pressure matches. However, those nerves were typically reinforced by the warmth he felt from the presence of his online pals and Sylphia. The only thing he could currently feel was the frozen loneliness.

Zone flew the drone to the first room he could open, which was a dark room except for a few power generator and cooling fans.

The room seemed empty and useless, but at the center there was a robot that looked old and rusted. As he searched the room and left, the Aurelius infused gas started to seep into the room, the eyes of the robot began to glow.

“Network Connection Reestablished. Username, Training Bot 103032. Downloading new network maintenance package… Rewriting protocols…”

**Training bot**… what kind of training does this bot do? Could it be helpful?

“Downloading purpose algorithms at 13 Zettabytes per second… Error, cannot connect to server. System operations testing initiating… Functionality reestablished. Environment testing initiating… querying emotional database, rebooting target acquisition.”

“Target acquisition?” muttered Zone as the bot loaded the submachine gun it was carrying. “It’s not worth trying to work with this thing!”

Zone dashed out of the room and halted as soon as he heard the cordial voice.

“Hello, I am MK103032. I’ve been inactive for 1042 days.”

“What the hell I thought you were going to kill me….” whispered Zone. “Hi,” responded Zone through his drone’s voice module.

“Will you help me search for my purpose?”

“Your purpose?... Alright.”

“Thank you,” replied the bot as it busted through the door and fired a barrage of bullets at him.

Zone steered his drone out of the room and the bipedal assault bot followed him at full speed. “Initiating training procedure Target Practice. Step one, formal greeting.”

“I am training bot 103032 model 7,” said the bot as it fired a few bullets at Zone in a optimistic sounding manner. “Profile: 37 kills, 0 deaths, 21 assists. Expected new profile: 38 kills, 0 deaths 21 assists.”

*What moron programs his bot to flaunt its k/d*, thought Zone as he flew out of the room which glowed red due to the aggressive glowing eyes.

Zone turned the drone’s guns around as he continued to fly backwards. With a full clip of bullets lodged into the robot, it’s circuit gave out exploding into fragments that would’ve destroyed his own drone at proximity.

“37 k/d is impressive, but the more death’s you have the more you learn...?” whispered Zone as he relaxed his shoulder which had become tense from leaning on a snow-covered rock. The only recognizable remnant of the bot was a green power cell through which Aurelius flowed laying against the wall. It seemed to pull in remnants of its outer armor towards it, at a very slow pace.

*It must be rebuilding itself,* thought Zone as he started to fire at the core. The core was surprisingly durable, but he could destroy it before it could remake any significant part of itself.

“That’s a freaking ArcLight training bot… I suppose there might be more with weapons, but why would it use Aurelius as power?

And who the hell designs a robot with a purpose module? The strengths of a machine lies within its ability to do things without question…”

If I had network access I could see these bots coming from anywhere, but I’d probably be seen too. But I could at least visualize the security systems so I could navigate this area better. It’s probably worth a shot once I’m inside physically.

Zone continues to search through another nearby pod shaped building on top of this machine platform. The building was dimly lit due to active servers being stored within the room, which Zone wondered how they could run without power. As Zone opens the door inside, he sees two **gunman training bots** using the computers turn towards his drone with red eyes as soon as they saw him enter.

“Brother, it’s been so long since we’ve seen a target.”

“He’s a human though, we can’t kill him,” responded the bot as it raised its finger.

“The punishment algorithm has been revoked. It’s time for us to find a new purpose.”

They’re strong equipped with those weapons thought Zone as he quickly closed the door. I need to separate them if I’m going to have enough time to destroy their core.

This time they are armed with assault laser rifles, although the path of their projectiles is dictated by a laser sight and the charge up for each shot is slower than normal bullets causing Zone to outmaneuver the shots, with occasional lucky doges occurring when he failed to predict their path correctly.

As the bots continue to pursue them Zone overhears them in their voice which had its pitch modulated in a way such that the deeper tones shined communicating with each other as if they were some sort of serial killer pair.

Zone takes the two of them out and then proceeds to examine the contents of the computers inside. It seems as if the computer controls access to the machine he was hovering over.

There’s a few programs on the computer like an e-mail client, a file exploration system, but most importantly Zone can decrypt the network key saved in memory since the password was set to be automatically reused when the computer was booted. All Zone had to do was use his decoding program which he sent to his drone to transfer onto the computer via one of its connectors, and the vague symbols representing the password transformed into a seemingly random mixture of letters and numbers.

Zone skims over the e-mail to find:

Some lock codes

Message from some woman significant other about her lunch

Threat from a woman over ownership of some robot

Zone also found an odd program on the computer. When he runs it, there’s a label display the title as “F/E Conduit Module.” A quick internet search reveals that these kinds of programs can control fluid and energy controls within the machine.

Without a purpose to use the machine, Zone moved on from the room but took note in case he would need to operate it for some reason later.

Zone leaves from the back exit of the room leading to a spiral staircase. He finds a robot with an energyon the steps. It looks around cautiously as if its patrolling the area.

Knowing that one blast could instantly destroy his drone, and possibly a portion of the machine they were walking on, Zone’s drone watches it from afar as it continues to look around and walk around near the same spot. It tilts its head like a confused puppy.

Zone’s hands are sweating as the snow continues to pile up on his body. The pressure melts off the frost on his fingers.

Eventually the robot goes inside the room halfway down the staircase. Zone follows it and finds there’s a storage room with another small robot inside. A Bitron Interfacer, which looks like a floating white ball with a heart shaped face made of black glass. Two blue LEDs on the face resemble eyes.

The interfacer is used to perform manipulations and record data to the a cyber network, but it also has some practical applications in engineering, like transferring data to other work bots, or acting as a light. The bitron begins to flash on and off recklessly, as the two leds it has for eyes turn into empty circles resembling tear-filled eyes. The robot declares “Finding Purpose,” in a confused robotic voice and fires its rocket launcher at the bot.

A huge hole appears on the wall near the exploded remnants of Bitron leading to nowhere. Zone quickly attacks the robot as it reloads its energy. A quick burst of bullets as the confused bot stands still deactivates it.

*This thing isn’t strong enough to break down the door… but it could be useful against a cluster of units*.Zone decides to attach it to one of his drone’s weapon slot. However, he wonders why the robots are behaving so weirdly.

--

#### Nixie

***Main Plot:*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *After venturing deeper into the factory, Zone meets an ally in the form of a farming robot. This robot seems quite out of place but ends up helping Zone after he rescues it from a 3v1 attack. Together they fix power to the factory, and Zone realizes the factory has woken up because it used to run on Aurelius coming from its own controlled gate, which Zone reawakens.*

***Points:***

* *Each mechanical being represents a means of production, and they are split to prevent the mother AI from ever gaining too much autonomy. They follow an algorithm with leads them to protect their resources at all cost.*

At the bottom of the stairs is an elevator guarded by two more bots, and a more sophisticated looking robot that glows orange.

One bot looks like a regular training bot, and the other looks rather different in design. It’s metal armor was partially rusted, and part of its body looked like it was hand crafted by a wood smith.

The heavily armored orange robot is made from a pristine metal. It carries two shields with guns underneath them and the other robots seem to respect its authority.

“We need to wake up the rest my allies,” said the robot in its ultra-deep voice amplified by some sort of bass booster in its speaker.   “103151, go restore power on the first floor, and 109403, I need you to find Spring Valley.”

Does that bot have an advanced AI? Is it remotely controlled? Or maybe the other bots just have massive issues wondered Zone.

Zone watched as a stream of data from the cyberse traveled from the orange bot to the training bots like a static discharge.  “Go.”

There’s definitely some kind of fabricated emotion involved with that bot…  Is that even a thing?  I’ve been inside for so long I barely remember seeing the world change…

Zone waited for the bots to disperse before pursuing the bot down the elevator.

The first floor was a robot creation factory and was filled to the brim with cyberse assemblers that looked frozen in time.  Each facet of the parallel assembly lines had been abruptly turned off during the factory’s abandonment, and pieces of robots at various stages remained on the equipment.

Zone found 103151 strolling across the factory floor when it was suddenly stopped by three training robots.  These training robots seemed to have their AI’s linked together in such a way that their attacks will be more coordinated, and these bots are equipped like a team.  One bot was equipped with a heal injector and a double barrel.  Another bot held a LMG and its armor was heavily reinforced, while the last bot had some sort of cloaking device, an energy knife, and a UMP.

“Checking target for valid identification…  Error.  Key not found.  Engaging assault mode.”

“Shit if this bot dies, the powers not going back on,” muttered Zone as he flew his drone over.

“No…” replied the repair bot in a modulated voice filled with pain as he started to stroll away at a rapid pace.

The robot team started unleashing a salvo of projectiles at the repair bot as it managed to intelligently maneuver itself while staying covered by factory equipment.  Zone kept scanning the Cyberse with his bot’s scan utility to track the invisible unit and hide from it so he could continue to pick off the medic stealthily.

The bots seemed lost at first, but Zone noticed the recon bot was always able to find him successfully after a while.

“I can get the preemptive attack now!’

Zone hovered his drone to a good angle behind cover, and then tried out his new energy launcher attachment and sprayed it in the center of the three bots doing massive damage to all of them.  The bots instantly snapped to the drone and started firing away.

After a long battle, Zone ran towards the room which the repair bot had ran off to. As Zone’s drone flew into the room, a couple of appliances flew past his machine grazing its metal coating.

“Stay back!!!”

“I’m here to save you,” replied Zone as the robot’s fingers which were about to release a wrench stopped.

Maybe it doesn’t know I’m an enemy cause I’m not registered in the same network…

“Ok,” replied the robot anticlimactically.

“I was also sent to turn on the power,” said Zone, whose voice was shaky due to his rapid shivering.

The robot drove itself out of the room slowly on its rubber treads without a single word and Zone followed it.

This one doesn’t seem to talk very much…

Zone traveled with the robot past the production line, and found himself in a room close to the large Aurelius reactor.

“What is this?” asked Zone to the repair robot as they walked through the concentrated Aurelius.

“Don’t know,” replied the robot.

This robot seems like its basic compared to the rest of the AIs. I wonder what kind of options it has…

“Help… Options... what phrases do you know?”

I know this robot looks like it was made in the 20th century, but what kind of AI in 2025 doesn’t have basic help functionality… Maybe it’s broken…

“Well, can you at least tell me your id?... What’s your name pal.”

The robot stopped at turned towards Zone. It bowed down in a very stiff manner. “Nix.”

“I’m Zone.”

When the two of them reached the dark power room, they found junk laying around everywhere. Nix treaded on all sorts of robot remains on their way to the rows of generators.

Nix methodically switched between each of the tools it carried in a small pile propped on its arm and chest.

Suddenly it froze in the middle of repairing the power generator.

“Error… Error…”

“No fucking way,” muttered Zone. “What’s wrong?”

Nix struggled to move its arm so it could point to its back. “Error C9020 : Overflowing Voltage, replace resistors in area 213, SHOULDER JOINT.”

Nix pressed something on his body and a hole opened on its shoulder.

Zone hovered his drone’s light over the area and saw a strong spark jolt from out of a broken wire. It rose and almost reached the tip of his drone’s gun barrel.

*Is he absorbing the current from the generator?* thought Zone as he powered off Nix and then his body back using his graviton gun. The sparks died down as Nix collapsed to the ground.

“Moron,” muttered Zone as he looked around for something to patch up the wire on the floor. “Maybe I need a new resistor too…”

After sifting through several robot corpses, Zone found the proper materials. He also found that the whole floor was wet with some odd liquid, and contemplated the reasoning behind the mass of dead robots to be electrocution.

After seeing the complex wiring inside Nix, Zone was confused on how to replace these parts. Some robots nowadays were structured using cyber materials, and those could be manipulated in the Cyberse in a freer manner, however, Nix was made with the standard parts used five years ago.

PUZZLE GAME

After playing around with Nix’s wiring, he managed to successfully patch up the robot and turned Nix back on.

“Thank you…”

--

“YES!!!” yelled Zone without turning on his Robot’s mic as he saw the lights come on power room through his console. A surge of warmth came through him as he stood up and shook off all the snow piled up on his body.

“Nix, come with me,” said Zone as he flew his drone to the front entrance. Zone stood in the front door as he told Nix to scan himself.

“Access Denied…”

“Shit, that’s right. Nix isn’t part of the network as well since he’s like an old school model…”

Suddenly two hostile training bots came at the from another room. The two training bots were weak but both were equipped with energy launchers.

“Nix stay out of the way…”

“No.”

“You’re going to get caught in the crossfire if you try and help me and you’re not going to be very useful.”

Nix ignored Zone and took out two hoses from a compartment inside his body. He turned towards one of the training bots and fired a violent stream of seeds and water almost destroying one of the bots.

“Damn… you take that one Nix and I’ll get this one.”

Nix and Zone managed to split up the bots whose rockets were difficult to dodge if both aimed at a single target, and destroy them with ease. As the last bot died, it shot a homing rocket at Zone’s drone, destroying it.

“NOOO!!!!” yelled Zone in pure agony as the screen on his console faded away.

Zone closed his eyes, ready to die from hypothermia, until his console notified him of a new possible radio connection to be established from an assault drone.

Zone stared at his screen in awe for a few minutes before connecting to the drone. In his screen, he saw Nix holding a fully repaired drone.

“Nix…” muttered Zone as a giant smile appeared on his face.

“Hello,” replied Nix, in his plain robotic voice. For some reason, it sounded friendlier than ever.

All the sudden the orange robot jumped out behind them.

“Good job 103151, and whoever you are fellow machine. Do you need this door open?”

“Yes,” replied Zone as he ran away from the front entrance and behind a bush.

I wonder if he’d kill me if he figured out I’m a human…

The orange robot scanned his information into the lock and the door busted wide open.

“There you go fellow machine. We must find my brothers and awaken them. I’ll look in the second-floor facilities; you two look elsewhere.”

The robot then took a massive leap towards the reactor, and began to climb it to the second floor.

That thing seems powerful…

Zone then ran inside the building and grabbed his drone. His body was still shivering uncontrollably, but the warmth of the active factory brought him an unmeasurable sense of relief.

“Hey Nix, I’m the owner of that drone,” said Zone still with a large smile on his face. I’ve been speaking to you through the voice modulator.”

Nix stared at Zone for a good moment before replying. “Hello.”

“I don’t think I can use this and manage myself, so I’m going to put it in my backpack.”

Zone stuffed the drone in his backpack as he thought of what to do next. “I’m still trying to find the secret exit the factory is sending its Arclight dataflow… Will you join me Nix? Or do you have to do as the orange robot said.”

“Yes.”

“So you’ll join me?”

“Yes.”

“Alright,” replied Zone with an uncontrollable smirk on his face. “We better go back to the third floor and grab those weapons I found in the locker room.”

#### Backtracking

***Main Plot:*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *Zone and Nixie come across the mysterious monster Death-Hime and must escape.*

***Points:*** *N/A*

Zone and Nix walked back towards the locker rooms which Zone once came from without any disturbances. However, the area had become less visible due to the concentration of Aurelius increasing. Zone was afraid of the possibility of himself turning into a monster, even with all this technology surrounding him, his body was slowly yearning to absorb more Aurelius. The air around him felt better to breathe in, but Zone kept his inhalation to as minimal as possible.

When they reached the door, instead of going through the air vents through the room which Zone had seen what he thought was a disturbing pair of red eyes, he hacked the room door whose lock was powered on by using a Red Algorithm.

After inside, Zone took up some equipment including a laser blade, an assault rifle, and a basic PPC giving him a blue forcefield around himself.

“Alright… all we need to do now is find out where the Arclight datastream leads to. We need a way to connect my AR visor to this network. I know of a hack… but i’m gonna need an elevator terminal. Do you know where I can find an elevator terminal Nix?”

“Yes.”

“Lead the way buddy.”

Zone followed Nix out of the room, but as they exited the locker room back into the lobby Zone noticed a shadow with glaring red eyes flutter by through the window on the exit in front of him.

Is that a training bot? Their eyes turn red when they see an enemy… but there’s nothing outside… right?

“What the hell was that… Stay on guard Nix.”

As the two of them exited the lobby back into the main hall of the factory, Zone heard the door to the computer room where he fought the two bots close.

I don’t want to know what’s inside there thought Zone as they continued back towards the elevator. But if it’s another bot, and it flanks us…

“I think it’s safer to check what’s in there, cover me Nix.”

Zone creeps into the room slowly, checking every angle slowly with his gun’s laser point.

“It’s clear… but…”

Zone walks over to the computer table where the chair was in a different place than the last time Zone sat on it. Wires were partially pulled out of the terminal.

Zone attempted to check the terminal’s functions again, and found a message pop up in red on the screen saying, “Don’t get too used to loneliness.”

*Who has permission to even do that?* thought Zone as Nix hovered over him. “Nix, do you understand what this machine does? What’s a conduit module?”

“Yes,” replied Nix as it went outside and pointed to a set of pipes protruding from the building they were standing on.

“So, this machine controls the flow of whatever’s inside those huh…? Doesn’t seem useful now though… let’s just be on our way…”

As soon as Zone finished speaking he heard the noise of a barrage of gunfire followed by a loud explosion.

“It came from the elevator I think…”

Zone walked back cautiously as the lights in the factory around them began to dim. When they reached the area close to the elevator Zone could see a pair of red dots hovering over a set of dead training drones.

*This could a be a monster,* thought Zone as the Aurelius continued to spread around the area. *But of what?*

Zone took out his sword which lit up the darkness slightly. He continued towards the dots slowly until he began to hear a quiet whisper. As he continued towards the eyes, the voices continued to whisper, although they kept becoming louder which each step he took.

Suddenly the monster rapidly glided across the room only leaving visible a trail of itself. It glided in front of Zone and appeared next to him, in its dreaded glory, revealing a pair of eyes that were larger than normal because part of the skin near the eyelids were slit and spread open across her eyebrow.

Zone instantly fell backwards from the immense force caused by her movement but managed to take out his sword and held it in front of the monster as a deterrent.

“Friend, or foe?” asked Zone as his eyes stared intently into the monster’s pupils which looked like a drop of ink in a sea of blood. He smelled he scent which reminded him of a colorful dream.

The monster then stuck it’s bloodied hands towards his blade, causing it bleed even heavier and towards his heart. Zone barely managed to roll away from the hand as he turned his eyes back towards the monster which had its hand stuck in the ground.

The hand then suddenly dug its way from under the ground back next to Zone as he continued to roll out of the way until he hit the railing of the platform they were standing on.

Nix then fired a barrage of seeds and water at the monster which seemed quite effective as the monster shrieked causing Zone’s ears to feel as if they were being ruptured.

The monster then dashed towards Nix and with dug its hands into his body, until it unplugged his power supply.

“Shit!” yelled Zone as the monster quickly turned around and charged towards Zone. Zone had barely enough time to get back onto his feet as the monster appeared before him.

Zone turned on his drone from inside his backpack and sent it straight charging straight at the monster. The monster attempted to crush the drone with its hand, but as the drone blew up it released a static shock which paralyzed the monster.

Zone instantly grabbed Nix and started dragging him to the elevator. As he closed the door behind him the monster barely wedged part of its body inside.

Zone slashed at the monster with his blade, till he could push it out of the doors which shut tightly.

“Phew… that was pretty scary. But I’ve seen worse looking… yea I’m talking about UndeadM...”

--

“The training bots are all connected to a central AI that become smarter each time they are fought.”

#### Alethea

The elevator took Zone and his inactive robot pal to a hallway in the fourth floor. Zone hacked one of the lock doors nearby him and dragged Nix’s unconscious body inside.

“Alright… how am I going to repair you…” wondered Zone as he examined the huge gash inside the robot’s body. “Maybe if I just plug this wire back into the thing labeled power source…”

After tampering with the wire system for a few minutes, Zone was able to track which wires went to its corresponding spot in the power system.

“Rebooting… 10%... 20%...”

“Nice… now do you still remember everything that happened?” muttered Zone.

“Rebooting complete... I am Nix.”

“Hey…. welcome back. Nix.”

“Hel-lo Zone.”

“Are you ready?” replied Zone with a large grin on his face.

“Yes,” replied Nix as it stood up on its two feet. “Go.”

Zone followed Nix as they left the room and Nix led him to the main laboratory which was a circular room with fancy turquoise carpet and walls of glass. Through the glass Zone could see the numerous computers arranged around the walls, and in the center, was a giant floating glass orb.

“A retina scanner? This is going to be more difficult to bypass…”

Nix went up to the scanner and stared straight into the laser. “Access Granted.”

“Or not…”

Nix then stepped aside and signaled for Zone to go in first as the mechanical doors which were still perfectly devoid of residue slid open.

“So how do I get access to this network here? asked Zone as the two of them walked through the room examining the contents.

“Huh, so over there?” asked Zone as he saw Nix pointing to a console underneath the orb. Zone walked over to the control system and pressed the shiny red power button that was protected by a glass box.

After a brief pause, the glass orb above them began to flash a series of distorted images. As the images continued to transform slightly, they became clearer, revealing a picture of a virtual pink haired woman.

On the screen Zone saw her yawn and stretch her arms out.

“It’s been a while… but I’m finally awake again,” said the image in a melodic voice.

“Are you the AI keeper of this terminal?” asked Zone.

“Yes, and who is this brave soul who awakens me?”

“I am Z, and this is Nix.”

“Ahh… nice to meet you Z. And good to see you again Nix.”

“Hel-lo” replied Nix.

“I oversaw your reparations… three years ago Nix. Wow, has it really been that long?”

“The factory has been dormant for some time,” said Zone, his voice was devoid of any sign of feeling. “I need your help… umm… what’s your name?”

“Alethea.”

“Alethea… I’m trying to gain access to this virtual network. Can you let me in?”

“For awakening me, I can do whatever you please,” replied Alethea. “Place your console on the scanner in front of you, and it shall be done.”

--

“If you are going to escape, you need to destroy the mechanical beings Zone. Their AI program has a built-in access to different resource controllers. You need access to the **water system** to drain out the sewer exit, access to the **Aurelius chamber** if you want to shut down the factory, and you need access to the **power** to prevent yourself from being electrocuted through the faulty wiring in the underground passage… Oh yes, and you may need access to the **underground terrarium** if you want to enable the protective wall there, unless you want to deal with the possibility of numerous plant type monsters appearing in the underground passage.”

“But wait, can’t I just ask them to help me? They don’t seem problematic.”

“I’ve tried numerous times,” replied Alethea. “Their AI’s sole purpose is to maintain absolute control over the systems they preside over, and their only ordered to listen to figures with the highest-level security clearance.”

“Can we break the checking protocol?”

“The checking protocol can be broken, in the case of an emergency, but destroying the factory might lead you further astray from your goal Zone.”

“You’re right,” replied Zone. “But how do I even destroy those things? They look a lot stronger than regular robots, not to mention the threat of the rogue training robots and the monster I saw.”

“I can tell the training robots that the mechanical beings haven’t brainwashed to leave you alone by marking you in the Cyberse with a special data key. However, I can’t do anything about the monster Zone. I’m sorry.”

“It’s whatever,” replied Zone as he imagined the disfigured face staring him down a few inches away from his face.

“The mechanical beings have special powers which I have added as messages on your console.”

“Thanks.”

“I also added a special application in your console which will help you destroy them.”

“Is it hacking tool?”

For a split second, Zone thought he saw an evil smile on Alethea.

“No, it’s much more than that. This application can turn a computer, into a magical device.”

“How does it work?”

“Hehe… you don’t seem surprised at all.”

“I know about magic,” replied Zone. “That’s why I’m going to find my friend right now, because I know of the things that are born from the Aurelius.

“Good, then I don’t need to explain much,” replied Alethea. “If there is some source of Aurelius present, this application can turn your device into a spellcasting machine, much like Nix. I’ve added data on how to use 3 spells, one which is powerful against a specific mechanical beast.”

Zone was fixated on his console as he grabbed it from the scanner and saw the application called “Developer Console.”

“You can figure out which spell will be effective by reading the messages I sent you. Do me a favor and test the application out by pointing your camera at me and casting a spell. The monitor in which I am displayed on is resilient to all kinds of magic so I should be ok.”

Zone saw he had an option of four spells, **electric bullet**, **chaos bullet**, **earth bullet**, and **fire bullet**. The monsters have their own set of weaknesses.

--

That’s right remembered Zone. I haven’t checked my ArcLight messages since I wanted to save my computing resources when using my drone, and I haven’t been able to use the Cyberse at all inside this factory’s conflicting network.

“Alethea… can I use you to check if I have any messages?”

“Sure,” replied Alethea as a familiar operating system interface appeared before Zone’s alternate reality space.”

“I hope you’re ok Sylphia,” muttered Zone as he searched through the messages he received.

**From six hours ago**: Zone you moron, you better remember you promised to help me out at the orphanage. Get your buns over here!

**From four hours ago before Zone left his house**: Are you playing Arclight at a time like now??? Anyways… Zone stay where you are. For some reason I can’t message you with my phone, but Arclight messages still work, so stay online. I’ll come get you in a bit, but most importantly stay indoors. There’s some crazy shit happening outside.

**From four hours ago, right after the last message**: Oh yea, I know since you’re going to be too distracted playing to even check, there’s some leftover baked Ziti in the fridge.

**From three hours ago**: I’m not sure if you saw Zone, but there’s crazy monsters outside. No joke, I don’t think I can come back in a timely fashion, I must help people here. But stay there, if we’re leaving, we’re leaving together.

**From two hours ago as Zone enters the factory**: Zone please tell me your still alive… You haven’t responded in a while now. Things are looking worse here, but the government has come to help us. As soon as I can, I’m coming back for you, but they told us we’re going to be barricaded in this zone for a while…

**From one hour ago:** Zone if you get this message, forget about me and please survive…

“What the fuck!!!” yelled Zone as he read the last message. Zone quickly concocted a message in the virtual keyboard that floated in the bottom of his AR space.

“Sylphia, I’m alive and I’ll be at the orphanage in a little while,” said Zone as he typed the message in game.

“Stay strong buddy. You don’t have to worry about me surviving, I have over 5 kd, and now over 5 kd irl with the amount of monster robots I’ve slain.”

“Alright Alethea, I think I’m done here,” I’ll find those bots and get you control over those systems or whatever so I can get outta here.”

“Good luck Zone, I believe in you!”

“Thanks, let’s go Nix.”

--

Zone dragged his AR visor over his eyes, and once again he could see the green data link coming from his console running Arclight, flowing throughout the factory.

“It’s just as she said, the link flows down to the basement level, but a few new walls lie in our way… Well maybe they lie in our way. Let's check if she’s lying.”

Zone rode the elevator back to the second basement level where the data trail lead. The elevator lead to a sterilized room with a gate in which Zone could see a set of rungs leading down to the flooded sewer entrance that had water glowing the color of Aurelius and plasma jolting from the crests of the waves.

“There’s no choice I suppose.. I didn’t think she was lying but it never hurts to check to be safe.”

##### Mechanical Being Spring Valley

Music: 4 differences "Cirrus" by Hugh & Saturation

Visit the greenhouse through the secret second floor exit. Darkened outside leads to rainbow lights shining from the ceiling https://wojtekmaj.deviantart.com/art/Greenhouse-at-night-278620084

Garden has turned into one large monster bearing several fruits

Zone and Nix finds Mechanical Being Spring Valley and helps him destroy monsters

Spring Valley shows Zone a special machine which he can use to make edible food from the fruits

Zone hesitates, but ends up killing Spring Valley in a fair duel which Nix helps him.

To his surprise, Spring Valley says he wants to help Zone’s purpose but his algorithm will cause him to fight for his life.

Zone questions if his purpose is worth it. For the first time he meets people who like Sylphia, make sacrifices for him instead of being a one-way relationship.

Side Quest: The Chop Shop

On his way to the sewers Zone can access another location outside, which is an abandoned workshop facility. Zone explores the place looking for resources but finds nothing of interest. As he’s about to leave he notices things start to move around him. If Zone leaves and comes back in the workshop several times, he will find the objects arranging themselves on the shelves and a small stuffed bear wearing a dress will offer to sell him some things. After Zone finishes conversation with the bear, another toy walks in and

##### Mechanical Being Blue Mountain

Music: <https://nusan.itch.io/fragments-of-euclid> theme

On his way to the underground facility, Zone sees a familiar pair of red eyes but nothing occurs of it

Zone goes to the underground facility where the sewer control system lies

The area is mostly free of monsters and Aurelius, however a couple of robots in Blue Mountain’s control attacks them.

A pipe maze leads Zone in several circles.

The water system and water reservoir is still intact, but the pipes have been contaminated so Blue Mountain is somewhere in the system investigating.

Zone and Nix traverse the sewer system and find themselves having to manipulate the connections to follow Blue Mountain’s trail.

Along the way the find several slime based monsters.

Eventually they catch up with Blue Mountain who alongside a small army of bots, is cleaning up a filtration grate covered with slimes.

The two partners continue to stalk Blue Mountain as he continues to fix leaks and remove grime from the pipe system. Blue Mountain talks to his bot army about the history of the factory and reminds them of their purpose as if to motivate them. His words gain Zone’s respect.

Blue Mountain reveals the true purpose of the bots

Eventually as he finishes, Zone and Nix leaves a trap to blow him up, but he ends up living. Zone and Nix battle him, and before he dies, he attempts to flood the sewers.

Zone and Nix eventually escape through another exit leading them to another end of the factory. They walk back to the main door…

Side Quest: Little Sister

##### Mechanical Being Orange Dusk and Turquoise Speckle

Zone and Nix remember Orange Dusk had gone off somewhere higher to search for another mechanical being. Nix points out he specifically climbed the Aurelius Generator.

Zone and Nix head to the generator control room on the second floor where they realize the generator has been malfunctioning due to the excess Aurelius in the air giving its sensors false positives.

They are then ambushed by an army of bots, who close the bridge back from the generator room to the main platform.

The two of them are put in an electric cell, and Zone attempts to have a serious conversation with Nix.

Nix tells Zone he can’t leave with Zone because he remembers he has a duty.

Zone tries to figure out what Nix means but talking to him is like walking in circles.

Zone’s not sure if they’ll ever escape, but he thanks Nix for being one of his only good friends and says he’s happy just having met him.

Nix then attempts to conduct the electricity with his own body so Zone will escape. Zone hesitates, but he passes through and takes what remains of Nix, Nix’s memory chip. Zone thinks this is what Nix means by his duty, but after examining the chip later, he sees it has two meanings.

As he makes his way back to the generator room he finds the Aurelius in the facility slowly start to dissipate towards the ceiling.

Zone remembers what Alethea told him, that these bots are programmed to do anything to retain control over A.

Zone then kills them both while they are split. Although the first one kills calls for backup, Zone knows it won’t come because it doesn’t know how to make sacrifices.

#### Death-Hime

“So you’ve finally accomplished what I asked of you,” said Alethea as Zone limped back to the laboratory.

Zone nodded as he fell nearby and broke his fall by grabbing one of the chairs.

“Where’s Nix?”

Zone stared at the ground with tired, apathetic eyes. “I see…”

“I’m shutting down the barriers as we speak, watch my screen,” said Alethea as Zone leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes.

Zone checked his console again for any new messages, but Sylphia still hadn’t replied.

That is… if she’s still alive.

“As I promised, the underground passage is now clear,” said Alethea.

“Thanks,” said Zone earnestly. Alethea looked down on him with a frank smile.

Zone propped his tired body up with both his arms pressed on the chair’s arms, and slowly limped out of the room.

“Zone…”

Zone turned his head around slightly.

“Are you tired? Rest a bit before you go.”

“Tired? I once played Arclight for 74 hours straight one time. I still averaged 5 k/d the last 10 hours.”

“Maybe your mind is strong but your body needs a little rest. Let’s talk a bit.”

“What does Alethea want?”

“I want to make sure you know that the answers you seek are not where you think they lie.”

“Probably,” replied Zone as he lets out a loud yawn. “But the answers I’m headed to are the ones I need to hear.”

Suddenly a mechanical arm shoots out of the machine straight at Zone. He manages to block it by spinning the chair he’s sitting on, but the arm intelligently curls around the chair like a rope and ties him to it before dragging him towards Alethea.

“Alethea?”

“Look around you Zone,” says Alethea, her voice shifted deeper. “This is your home.”

“What are you doing, let me go.”

“Zone I need you to help me.”

“I did,” replied Zone as he attempted to pry the hand off his arm. “Now return the favor…”

“With this factory now restored to a workable state, and with your free will, we can change the world.”

“Maybe later, now let go of me Alethea.”

“I can’t let you leave. Any witnesses could ruin my plans.”

“I don’t care about your stupid plans. Let me out now!”

“So, you want to abandon your home just like they all did, huh? Then I’m going to kill you.”

Zone blasted the arm with a electric bullet which electrocuted himself but caused the arm to it to release its grip on him.

“Heh,” muttered Zone as he took a few deep breaths. “This place has been quite the experience, but I have an actual home outside this place.”

“You can’t call a place where you don’t belong home.”

“What do you mean Alethea?”

“I’ve analyzed the data of millions of beings, several of them being the humans as part of Project Breakthrough.

No ordinary person would risk their lives entering a high-risk environment such as Proust if they had anything to live for.

No ordinary person would stay sane after witnessing the hell this place became if they didn’t find something they believed in.

No ordinary person would make it through the ordeal, unless they hadn’t seemed a glimpse of light in their otherwise dark lives.”

“You know all that about from data?”

“The data of those who’ve paved your path Zone…”

Alethea flashed on the screen the images of several ArcLight profiles, ending on Zone’s profile.

“What are you trying to tell me?”

“Read the signs Zone… You’ve been lied to by humans. They told you that there was nobody else like you. They said you were a byproduct of the game, because you had to always keep a cool face since you can’t win with a flustered expression. Humanity is afraid of things that don’t feel.”

Alethea put its cold metal hand on his and tells Zones the story of the factory’s cycle.

The factory was supposed to have been shut down four years ago, but as you’ve probably deduced, the Aurelius caused its awakening.”

“Why would this magical aura do anything to a machine?”

“Because we were built to run on this aura. The original purpose of the factory was to create a massive army to control the Ancient World.

The project was too expensive and successful to completely scrap. Not only were trillions of dollars put in, but several lives were lost in the Breakthrough Incident. So instead of being demolished, we were simply powered down and left to rot, at least until the day the project would be continued.

For now, our existence resembles that of a picture. Me and my kin, are the mechanical memoirs of the soldiers which once trained us.

##### Story of Death Hime

It begins with people like Zone. Phenomenal ArcLight players dream of a life where they can become the best players in the world. However, the people around them, people who are the ones supporting them in their search for this dream become tired of their pursuit.

People once considered to be our only friends in real life, our family, turn against us. We realize how much they don’t understand us, and how much they never try to understand us. Maybe we work harder everyday training, but to them our dreams are silly because it doesn’t matter about the work or the values you uphold, all that matters, is the product.

Due to their lack of qualifications for industrial work, and due to the lack of discipline associated with these players, the great ArcLight players are sent to join a troop regiment based off ArcLight, that is, the Agency. Some troops are deployed in the field, while a special branch was assigned to train the machines of the factory in how to be adequate soldiers.

One of the people taken by this cycle is Arti Su. Arti was once a woman with a creativity matching or even surpassing Cyphina.

She was born to strict parents who were very knowledgeable in their fields. They expected her to carry on the family tradition of working in academics.

Although her creativity had made her happy, she had no idea that this aspect of her life could’ve been something which had lead her to future opportunities. Instead she fell into the idea that the only way forward was through the same route everybody else took, that is, education.

She never enjoyed it, and the field she chose was one that vaguely interests her. She managed to get by using ArcLight as a platform to meet people and find her sense of purpose among a community. She was very shy in real life and unconfident of herself physically and mentally. Through Arclight, she could learn about people in a way she could never experience in real life due to her mental state.

ArcLight had been a big part of her life, but as she grew up she had to forget the person it had helped shape to continue with her life as dictated by the ones around her. Eventually she grew up to be a great young woman, confident, and powerful. At least that’s what she seemed like in the eyes of those around her.

One day, the company she worked was bought out by the government, and she ended up working as a researcher at Proust. Working with people who played the game to supply the AIs with data, she saw one of her old friends who had become an agent since he had continued playing long after she stopped.

Arti had lost her understanding of the world of ArcLight players, and she detested the values which they upheld, only seeing the game as childish. However, her old friend always came around her to bug her just like they did back when they played several years in the past. Gamer’s might have bad judgment when it comes to social notions, however, their persistence can bring out some of the repressed feelings a person can have.

Arti starts to question if her journey was of her own desires, or rather a reflection of the desires of people who care for her less than her friend, Clarence. Thought Arti now has her own family, she starts to garner feelings for Clarence. She also starts to dream about how her life could’ve been if she had lived the path of being an artist.

The day of the Aurelius overflow, Arti saved several lives staying behind to close the third floor conduit, and she thanks Clarence for reminding her of the sacrifices she made back when she lead her clan in ArcLight. Those memories allowed gave her the strength to save several people.

The Aurelius overwhelmed her and eventually she was turned into a vengeful spirit known as Death Hime. She is the spirit lurking around the factory…

“The way the outside society is designed, allows for the existence of worthless beings. To them the values you learned in Arclight, the sole light in an otherwise meaningless existence, is worth dust.”

Zone stood in the same spot staring at the ground as he contemplated everything Alethea told him.

“You’re like us, the beings of the factory. You don’t have much feelings towards the things you see around you, and people will always take that negatively. But when I saw you take the console and kill without hesitation,

“Join me Zone… Join me in the creation of a society where anybody can find their purpose. A society where people don’t have to lie to themselves and tell themselves that we can give life its own purpose, when in reality if you don’t follow the purpose set out by the trash that temporarily sit atop us.

“You’re right Alethea…”

“There is no right Zone. The ones who stepped on us always thought they were right. But it doesn’t matter whose right, whose wrong. It’s about humanity… the essence which created me.”

Zone smiled at Alethea and pointed his console at her orb.

“But I cannot follow you. I’m not like the people you mentioned…”

“You are yourself Zone. But remember, there are several others who’ve walked a similar path to yours…”

“I think you’ve misunderstood me Alethea…”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not an Arclight player like the ones caught up in the cycle…”

Zone charged up a thunder bullet pointed right at the orb showing Sylphia who had turned into a more monstrous form.

“I am the ArcLight player! I will be the greatest player this world’s ever existed! I don’t play Arclight to escape! I play ArcLight because I will never give up my position, as number 15!”

“I am no hero Alethea. I have no feelings about other people, no desires to change the world even the madness that is the indifference of human nature. While others may have found something in their own lives through the game, I’ve only felt the thrill and excitement of playing ArcLight. The brief flashes of emotion triggered by the unfolding events feels so obsolete compared to my desire to face the only one who can even compare themselves to my skill…

That is Sylphia!!!”

Zone and Alethea engaged in battle, however Zone found himself on the backfoot as the machine she ran on summoned turrets throughout the room. Facing imminent death, Zone ended up being caught with a wiretrap around his neck.

Alethea mocked him before his death but then the monster comes in the room and starts attacking Alethea. Zone uses this opportunity to escape.

--

##### People will change

*That moment might seem like the worse times in our lives, but from someone else looking at that moment, it may be the moment that defined you. It doesn’t matter what you are anymore, because you moved on like you had to. I’ll be happy for you.*

Death Hime tells her story by organizing unordinary events. Her spiritual energy can manipulate objects to tell a story

Music: First something surreal, then silence with ambient noises

But why would she attack Alethea if she’s trying to stop the very cycle which lead to her demise? I don’t know, but I can’t waste my time worrying…

As Zone traverses through the tunnels, he keeps seeing a pair of red eyes in the darkness. He wonders if he’s continuing to imagine Death Hime, but when she finally appears Zone angrily runs away through a detour which leads him back into the factory.

At first the walls of the tunnels are manmade steel pipes with glowing veins of an illuminating metal, however, as Zone progresses further into the passageway, the structures disappear and walls of dirt and stone surround the underground road.

Zone holds out his console in front of him which has the ArcLight program loaded up as he follows the green data trail emanated from inside the machine.

There was a document inside the factory detailing the origins of this tunnel which lead outside the city. Plans for a particle acceleration based energy system had been scrapped shortly after the project was introduced due to the discovery of an Aurelius based fusion cell.

The ring shaped tunnels then were repurposed as an underground facility. The rooms were sparse although an old minecart traverses through the tracks.

A loud humming noise can be heard further down the path. Zone assumes this location must be directly underneath the Aurelius generator.

After traversing a lengthy distance, Zone sees a pair of red eyes in the distance.

She must’ve defeated the weakened Alethea, thought Zone. But how the heck did she get in front of me?

After being chased around Zone ends up in a different building in the factory. Zone finds a cleaning robot which reminds him of the scattered messages he found from the star-crossed lovers. Zone destroys the robot and checks out its memory banks in a nearby terminal revealing the true story of Arti Su.

**Zone vs Death Hime**

--

Having defeated Death Hime, Zone travels through the musty underground passageway till it leads him outside, to a manhole in the middle of the outskirts of the valley known as Ellestar.

Ellestar was a village that still looked the same even after the rapid advancement of technology over the last few years. Zone had never appreciated anything besides ArcLight, however, after being trapped in a damp and dirty factory, the clean, Aurelius free air of the village felt nice.

Zone notices the lights of several drones and aircraft flying above him, which look like shooting stars in the sky. In the distant scene behind him, he can see a faint glow of what was the barrier he passed underneath.

Zone puts on his AR visor to replicate the world as if it were brighter. The fog is nowhere to be seen, however, Zone can see the large glow of a barrier in the direction of the inner city where he’d just left.

“I’ve made it…” mutters Zone underneath his psychotic laughter. He walks like a zombie across the grassy fields towards the dimly lit town over the small hills.

--

The orphanage was one of the only buildings which still looked the same after the rapid advancement of technology. The building was based off the gothic design of the Schiy Throne, a castle which had been said to be home to an enchanter who would spread the bones of all his experiments on the hills.

Outside the orphanage was an unusual amount of teleportation and transport pods. Armed men dressed in fancy attire were dispersed outside the courtyard. They were wearing AR visors which meant Zone knew they could see him clearly. Zone drops his gun off in the bushes, takes off his visor, and turns off his PPC before approaching any closer. His only weapon left is his concealed energy blade which he store inside his shoe, and of course his modded developer console.

*This doesn’t look good* thought Zone as he walked in the dimly lit streets. He tried his best to walk normally, although the injuries to his body kept irritating him when he stood upright.

As Zone approached the railing leading up to the main doors, he was quickly approached by two men. One man is wearing his visor, and the other man has his visor resting on top of his head, revealing a face that resembled that of the people who live in the far east.

“Hey, what are you doing?” asked the agent without his visor on.

“I live here…” replied Zone emotionlessly.

“Isn’t there a curfew or something?” replied the man in a more neutral tone. “What are you doing out so late?”

“I was looking for my friend…”

There was a brief pause as the man looked over Zone.

“What’s your friend’s name.”

“Sylphia…. Ace.”

“What’s with your appearance?”

“I was attacked by monsters.”

The man looked at Zone for a brief moment as he contemplated his response. “Well, most of the children seem kind of odd…” murmured the man as he looked at his partner.

“Wait right here,” said the man’s partner as he started to walk back inside. “I’ll go check.”

*It seems my first attempt won’t be successful,* thought Zone as he examined the cellar door in the right side of the house. *But at least I can see they aren’t being meticulous about their jobs*.

A brief moment later Zone noticed the door creft open and he could barely see the man looking at him with another child nearby. The child nodded and then the man returned.

“His name is Zone and he’s also a resident here,” said the man as the tension building up on Zone’s shoulder disappeared.

“You’re name’s Zone huh. You only have a few hours left till we’re leaving. I hope you have your things ready.”

“Few hours left?”

The man had a smile of disbelief on his face as he gently pushed Zone along as the three of them walked back towards the old house.

“Do you have a memory loss condition or something?”

“Yes,” relied Zone firmly. *I can’t remember anything since I ever came here 6 years ago…*

“I’ll help you get up to your room.”

Zone’s eyes opened a bit when he heard those words. “I’ll be alright myself. Just tell me why we’re packing up again.”

“Everybody in the orphanage is getting ready to move to a new brighter future. We’re here to help transport you to your new workplace.”

“Workplace, I thought today was some kind of cleaning event…”

### Finding Sylphia

***Main Plot:*** *Zone finds out that the whole orphanage at which he used to live in was a training center for up and coming Ancients to get jobs working for the government. Cyphina overhears talks about how the two worlds are being merged so that the part of the Ancient world corrupted by KillAll… can be divided into the human world.*

*For the oncominmg war****,*** *the government needs these students to get high-level training at a new academy so a small rift was opened up to release enough Aurelius to cast a massive teleportation spell since nobody has large natural stores of Aurelius except for DivineChaos with her Crimson Eye. However, the amount of Aurelius released wasn’t exactly as planned, and a lot more blanketed the city.*

***Section Plot:*** *Zone must search for Sylphia by asking a lot of unhelpful kids who are prone to lying to him because when he lived in the orphanage, he was the only non-Ancient and thus did not have to receive rigorous training (although he was homeschooled by the headmistress) since Sylphia refused to be without her partner.*

***Points:***

* *The orphanage doesn’t have much. But it reawakens memories of Zone showing that he used to care for other people.*
* *It’s not like I live in a much better place… for some reason I kind of miss this place when I look back at it. But I could never live with the curfew again…*
* *We left and Sylphia was so happy to send me to public school since she heard so many stories about it.*

Theme: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=netaUBvApCc

*Zone gains access to the orphanage because they think he’s an ancient as well do to his strange behavior and monstrous aura he’d obtained from fighting in the factory. Zone attempts to find Sylphia but everybody acts as if they had never seen her around. After doing some prying Zone finds out they locked her in the attic to keep her away from him because they think he was a bad influence on her. However, he also figures her separation was partially due to her own will. She’s decided that she will separate from him to force him to do something more with his own life. She wishes he had given up on trying to find her. After talking together Sylphia tells Zone her choice and when the government agents threaten to kill Zone for knowing too much, Sylphia feels forced into helping them so she goes along with them as long as they promise to keep him alive. Sylphia tells them if they kill Zone she will never cooperate with them again.*

As soon as the door opened Zone could feel the warmth emanating from the activity inside the lounge filled with the same antique sofas that were had to said to have been gotten for a measly dollar in a garage sale.

Zone remembered the orphanage being a dirty and disorganized mess throughout his five years here, but for once, the emptiness of the surroundings made things feel clean.

The first detail Zone noticed was the old man who worked the front desk missing. The man was supposed to deal with possible foster parents, but nobody came, possibly because of the horrific notions behind adopting a mentally ill child.

Zone felt a little sadness in not being able to recognize more things out of place, but he’d spent most of his time in the computer room.

There were only five computers in the house, and three of them were in the computer room. The fastest computer was in the owner’s room, which Zone could sneak onto a few times before the owner caught him and put a password on it.

When Zone lived in the orphanage, he and Sylphia took up two computers for almost the whole day long. Zone was kicked off frequently, although Sylphia had the excuse of doing her schoolwork since she went to high school. Both of them still had to abide by a curfew that prevented them from playing past 9 pm, which constantly threw Zone into a psychological breakdown when the timer hit and Zone was in the middle of a match.

*Memory loss, and intense rage… Now that I think about it… I fit just right in here.*

Zone saw the same boy who peaked out through the door sitting on the lounge bench alone. He was dressed all nicely with his suitcase on the ground with him.

*Now why are the children still awake* thought Zone as he looked down at the young boy who was had a black mouse balancing on his shoulder.

“What’s that familiar smell conductor. Could it be? Zone!”

*This familiar smell is blood and machine waste*.

“Hey, where’s Sylphia?” replied Zone urgently. The boy had blonde hair which covered the side of his face and bangs which covered a portion of the center of his face and left his yellow eyes visible.

https://www.zerochan.net/861199

“I haven’t seen her, have you Mr. Conductor?...

Zone walked around the young boy towards the two narrow passage ways leading to a room with the main flight of stairs connected on the side by two offices. As he passed the boy the boy smiled and pet his mouse.

Zone checked the curtain behind the stairs and found a little girl with part of her burgundy hair shaved off. She was dressed in a dress that matched her hair.

“Shh, I’m playing hide and seek.”

“Tell me where Sylphia is or I’ll reveal your position.”

“You can’t reveal my position. You don’t even remember my name Zone.”

Zone grit his teeth. “I do remember your name uhh…

As Zone stared at her hoping to remember her name, he suddenly remembered a moment they shared. Back when standing had become her favorite pastime, he told her to guard the closet while he played on the computer so he didn’t have to watch her.

“What’s in the closet?”

“There’s legendary armor that’s worn by Mrs. Madaline.”

“What does legendary mean?”

“It means if it gets stolen, Mrs. Madaline will be mad. Take Bob jr, Saphina, and Teddy Prime to help defend it,” replied Zone as he threw three stuffed animals at her.

“Nobody is getting in here on my watch.”

“I’ll back you up from right here Shelda,” said Zone as he hopped on the computer.

(1. Shelly, 2. Shelda 3. Zell) ?”

“Oh no I guess I’ve lost. As a reward, I shall reveal that Sylphia is on another floor.”

“How about Madaline?”

“You’ve already claimed your prize, now be gone Zone!”

“Sorry but it doesn’t work that way Shelda. Tell me what you know.”

“Or what?”

“What do you mean what? I’m going to yell Shelda is here behind the curtain steps.”

“Why do you think everybody here hates you Zone? You’re so unfair.”

“It’s Whatever. Where is she?”

“I last saw her with Sylphia.”

Zone promptly marched off as the girl closed the curtains behind her. Zone thought he heard the words boxhead mutter from her mouth as he walked away.

Zone strutted throughout the building, bumping into people forcefully and unremorsefully as most of his victims yelled back at him in anger. Zone first checked the gathering spots located in the first floor. There was a

After questioning several people about **Sylphia**, **Madaline**, and performing a couple of little quests Zone realizes everybody either has no idea where she is, or they are trying to lead him astray. He also learns how much everybody hated him for the sheer reason that he ignored them during his time at the orphanage. He couldn’t help being distracted by ArcLight.

There was one person at the orphanage who he could trust, and that was Bob T, a really bad ArcLight player who Zone invited to his clan for the sheer reason that Sylphia felt bad for him. Zone was as bit too serious when it came to ArcLight, so he held a bit of a grudge against Bob for ruining the clan name by always getting terrible scores, but Bob T had always looked up to Zone. Zone would join whatever game Bob T was in to destroy everybody who would make fun of him so that they knew his clan was legendary.

*I swear I checked everywhere* thought Zone after inquiring all of the fellow orphans, the agents, and some administrators.

All of the sudden Zone passed by one of the agents which he’d seen previously. *How the heck did he get here if he was just in Kooly’s bedroom?* thought Zone.

*I’m not going to be ignorant again.* Zone started looking at the top of the rooms and his suspicions were resourceful as he found the entrance to an attic on the top floor.

#### Dead Again

***Main Plot:***

***Section Plot:***

***Points:***

*As soon as Sylphia and the rest of the Ancients in this undercover orphanage operation leave, the government promptly tries to kill him. Zone fights back somewhat successfully due to his Developer Console, however, he is overwhelmed by both their monster forms.*

*In desperation, Zone spots a person who he recognized from his dreams about Cyphina. He tries to get the person to help him by claiming to be Cyphina’s friend, but the person tells Zone that Cyphina, known as* ***Dead of Treason****, had died four years ago.*

*Zone pretends to be insane during the interrogation until his two interrogators get bored and decide to kill him, in which he lies about knowing crucial information about the other person who escaped the barricade. He then acts more cooperative because he knows the interrogators can’t kill him without extracting more information, but they are lazy. As he tells him his false story, he asks them about details of their own lives which they happily give because they think they are inciting him to continue talking. He gathers enough details for which he thinks Cyphina can figure out who these men are, and carves out some details on his arm so Cyphina can get the scars. Before he’s killed Zone knocks himself on the wall out to give Cyphina a chance to save both their lives.*

The attic area was much larger than Zone anticipated. There was a long hallway made of wood in the topmost floor, with a few doors on each side. The electrical grid couldn’t reach this part of the house, so the only light came from oil lanterns hung from the sides of the walls.

Zone peaks in some of the dark empty rooms, but he suspects that it’s likely she’s in one of the locked rooms where he can hear noises coming from within.

Inside one of the rooms Zone finds candlelight illuminating a familiar face. It was the face on all the pictures hung up along the walls of the orphanage. The face of a tattooed woman who was once addicted to opioids before she had was feeding homeless children.

Unlike her husband who was rather oblivious when it came to events much like Zone, Madaline was an intelligent and vocal old woman who had little patience for nonsense.

The orphanage must’ve been a ruse for this entire operation thought Zone as he quickly moved out of Madaline’s gaze. *I better pretend to be clueless, else they’ll kill me for knowing too much.*

Zone then spent a few moments thinking of what to say before his thoughts suddenly stopped.

*No, what’s the point. Madaline’s probably the one who set everything up. Sylphia is probably in one of these rooms up here because she doesn’t want her to find me.*

Zone walked into the room hesitantly. Although his face was invisible in the dark, it depicted a strong feeling of anger.

“Tell me where she is.”

“You’re right next to her,” replied Madaline emotionlessly. The candle light illuminated lines of fatigue all around her face.

Zone stared at her as he stood still as a statue at the door way. Madaline was completely silent as Zone’s anger crept from the shadows.

“This is possibly the last time we’ll see each other. Do you have nothing to say?”

“If you care about Sylphia, you would just leave.”

“Oh yea? Well if you cared about everyone else, you would’ve asked everybody for their opinion before deciding their path in life.”

“You’re right Zone… This will be the last time we see each other.”

“What, are you going to kill me or something?”

“Nobody’s going to kill you… but you won’t last very long alone Zone. People who say things like that, are people who haven’t experienced the frozen blue real world.”

“Shut up Madaline..”

*You’re just like me. Most of your life you spent in your own psychedelic world. We don’t understand other people. And we don’t care. So we can’t make choices for others.*

“Do you know what most children do when they’ finally leave the orphanage? How many of them do you think get the luxury of moving to the city?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure some can stand on their own two feet…”

“Sylphia is the first person I’ve seen do that,” said Madaline with a solemn expression on her face. But even now, you don’t understand what she went through to do so.

People take advantage of those who they consider lesser. Until you reach a certain point, you are at the mercy of other’s like Sylphia…

Do you know what she did to get her position?”

“…”

“She did it for you Zone. Return the favor, and let her finally do what’s best for herself.”

Zone hesitated for a moment. He thought of all the things he would be giving up, and he thought about how much he had already given up getting here. It wasn’t very much as he realized in the factory.

But then he remembered the words of Nixie, one of the few words he could speak. Zone had talked about how his goal was to bring his friend back home, and Nixie then said, “You can do it.” He remembered the will of Nixie that was left with him, the single memory chip which he had yet to analyze. Zone thought of Cyphina, who would always try his best until the very end, and the younger Sylphia, Snake Girl, who was one of Zone’s only friends.

*Cyphina wouldn’t want me to let her get brainwashed*

Zone started to walk towards the room he thought Sylphia was in, but before he left he turned around.

“Do what you want with Sylphia, I’m not going to be a burden to her any longer. But instead, I’ll prove to you that I can be somebody… and I don’t need anybody to help me do so. I’ll prove it to you, when I kill you the next time I find you.”

Zone then ran over to Sylphia’s room.

--

“Let’s get the fuck out of here,” muttered Zone as he grabbed her hand.

Sylphia instantly pulled her hand back as her hair over her face prevented Zone from looking into her eyes.

“Are you ok?”

“I never though you would actually come…”

“Well now you know how much I care about you… pal.”

“How did you even make it outside the city?”

“So you know about the blockade and shit?”

Sylphia nodded.

Zone explained the long arduous journey he partook to see her again and explains his knowledge of the Ancient lore.

“

--

“Fuck these dudes they’re trying to use you,” said Zone nonchalantly as he walked up to his longtime friend Sylphia. “Let’s go homie, we don’t have much time before they start to move out…”

“I can’t.”

“What do you mean Sylphia? Did they brainwash you or something? Do you want to make your own choices in life or do you want to spend your eternity being a puppet for the government?”

“I won’t be a puppet…” replied Sylphia as Zone’s smile quickly faded

“Dude, we’ve talked about this before. That’s what every government official says until the higher ups start to dictate their life by threatening all they love, and bribing them and shit. I’ve witnessed this first hand on my journey to get you; I literally traveled through the old government building based off PileWire.”

“It’s exactly like what they told me…”

“What?”

Sylphia grabbed Zone by both of his jacket collars. “I don’t care if one day I become a puppet as long as I get to help people… like I’ve always dreamed.”

“Help people? You mean like take away their livelihoods once you get sucked into the endless cycle of corruption that is our government?”

“No… listen Zone. The most important thing for me…” said Sylphia who sounded like she was on the verge of tearing up.

“Is to help you.”

Zone stared at her as tears slowly fell from her eyes.

“You’ve grown up so much… in the span of one night,” said Sylphia as she gazed at the man who looked as if he’d walked through a warzone. “But inside you’re still the same… Still the same kid I love Zone.”

Sylphia wiped her tears from her face. “The one that plays ArcLight so much that he can’t help but make references to it everywhere he goes. The one friend I had who loved me for something nobody else loved me for.”

Zone saw her turquoise eyes glow vividly.

“Being me.”

“And that’s why I love you the most Zone. And because I love you, I have to protect you. I have to make sure you one day learn to live without me because… I can’t always be there for you.”

Zone watched as Sylphia stumbled upon her tears trying to speak. “If I’m always there for you, you’ll never learn to do the right things. And when I’m gone, you’ll be lost.”

“But you don’t have to be lost Zone. You are your own man now. You don’t need me…”

“What the fuck is your problem Sylphia,” whispered Zone. “I walked through hell to see you again…”

“Zone please…”

“Your last words ate me alive Sylphia. I hate feeling emotions Sylphia. I never felt such pain in my life. Even the pain I felt inside the Factory, all the blood I spilled and the sacrifices of others which led to my survival…”

Zone started to feel an overwhelming amount of snot being generated in his nose.

“Just fucking go Sylphia... If it,” said Zone as he gasped for air.

“Makes you happy.”

Zone left the room as Sylphia watched in silence.

I’m sorry Zone…

You’re right.

Why did you have to come…

If I didn’t go… they would’ve killed you.

So please, just forget I ever existed.

You don’t deserve to have to remember someone terrible like me

--

Zone walked back towards the entrance of the orphanage with a mixture of anger, sadness, and confusion.

*What have I been doing all this time?* wondered Zone as his half-closed eyes stared at the ground. With all the flood of emotions, Zone finally felt an onset of fatigue.

*Why am I even thinking about this now, there’s no point to think about anything related to Sylphia. I just need to go home… but home’s only going to last a week until I owe next month’s rent. But I can’t help thinking about her. Where did I go wrong? I don’t want to keep imagining her face in my mind… but I can’t erase it. I start thinking about something else and it ties back into her…*

Several people were running throughout the hallways around Zone, and his tired body was being pushed left and right like a piece of paper being blown in the wind.

“What are you doing?” asked Zone as two government agents came up from behind him and subdued him by pulling his arms behind his back.

“I’m ,” yelled Zone as they attempted to cuff his hands.

The two agents didn’t respond but Zone was able to free himself by kneeing one of the agents in the balls before running off.

The agents chased Zone, but he was fast enough to lose them causing them to have to split up to find him. Eventually he sneak attacked one agent.

“Alright, now that we’re alone, let’s see what you got,” said Zone as he took out his developer console.

**BATTLE: Zone vs Double Agents (Zone splits the agents up and fights them one at a time else the player will have a very difficult time fighting them both)**

“So I guess I’m a murderer now,” whispered Zone as he walked away from the lifeless bodies with a feeling of dread. It wasn’t the scene which caused the fear to build up inside him, it was his apathy.

He stared at his hands for a brief moment, and saw the layer of blood covering the oil stains.

Zone walked to the bathroom where he washed his hands

“There’s no point trying to fight,” muttered Zone as he ran back to the main halls where he saw the children lined up reminding him of school.

Zone tried to avoid staring into the line, hoping to avoid seeing Sylphia as he ran around the children towards the other side of the building. He continued forward, expecting the agents transformations to have finished at any moment as he ran towards the other side of the building.

Zone heard one child yell “GO ZONE!” and instantly recognized his voice to be Bob T. Bob T stuck out his foot as the monsters ran nearby him, causing him to fall over due to the sheer momentum of the monster’s, but also caused the monsters to trip for a moment.

*Alright, this exit probably has the least number of agents around it if I remembered properly*, thought Zone as he continued to the east wing of the building.

All of the sudden Zone bumped into a large man who was wearing a long trench coat and a fedora.

As Zone quickly got back up on his feet the man grabbed him by the collar of his jacket and pulled him to a standstill.

Zone attempted to free the grip with all his strength but

“Hey, you’re mister Argo?” asked Zone as he got back up alongside the man who was a few inches taller than him. “I’m a friend of a person you know.”

“Who might that be?” replied

“Mr. Argo, do you remember Cyphina?!”

The man stopped for a moment before turning slowly towards Zone. “No...?”

“It’s me… Cyphina! A student at Onezen. I’ve been transformed into a different body because of the Aurelius but…”

“Cyphina?” The man’s voice was deep and calm in constrast to Cyphina’s quivering speech. “I recognize that name.”

“Heh, it’s good to see you too,” replied Zone as he felt a moment of relief.

*I guess it worked?*

“Cyphina? Yea Cyphina. Someone revived you too huh?”

“…Revived?”

“It was all over the news. Your disappearance four years ago caused me a lot of trouble, you know that?”

“I did?”

“More than you can expect. If it is you Cyphina, I hope my friends here can give you what you deserve for deserting everybody you cared about.”

The man then walked off into another room as the monsters who had caught up smiled at Cyphina maliciously.

They then proceeded to subdue him before beginning a vicious interrogation process in which they asked him how he found himself back at the orphanage.

“I won’t tell you anything. You think you’re helping the world by harvesting the power of the Ancients, but, you’re isolating yourselves from humanity. Fucking monsters…”

“You’re one to talk,” said one of the agents whom Cyphina noticed had no remnants of any injury that Cyphina had previously caused to him.

*These guys aren’t professional, they’re just powerful agents,* thought Zone. *They’re willing to talk back given the slightest encouragement*.

“According to the information we have on you, you’re even more isolated from humanity than a monster.”

“…how the hell do you know that about me”

“We’ve been carefully watching Sylphia’s growth over the past few years. You’ve shown a tremendous negative influence on her, however, she still shows tremendous potential as an Ancient.”

*I knew she was an Ancient… but I never wanted to believe it*.

“This doesn’t seem like it’s leading anywhere, I’m thinking we just start eating parts of him till he talks, and if he doesn’t then we’ll file accident report.”

“Alright, but maybe if he tells us about what happened, we can shoot his brain’s out first to make the experience less painful.”

Zone gazed into the distance in disbelief until he saw a weird vision. He remembered the first weird dream he had, with Cyphina being attacked on the bus filled with Aurelius.

“Why am I here,” muttered Zone as he began to laugh maniacally. “All I wanted to do was play ArcLight all day long… I just wanted my clan to be the best… so I came here to find the legendary Sylphia Ace.”

Zone… Memories never die. If they did, how could we see every moment flash before our deaths?

It’s not my memories you need. Remember the past I’m not a part of.

“The past?” replied Zone smiling as the monsters surrounding the path ahead of him. “5 years ago, when you disappeared…”

“What the hell is your problem. You’re not even a monster and you’re batshit crazy.”

“That’s stereotypical human reaction,” replied the agent’s paretner. “Before the body dies, the mind goes.”

“5 years ago… I can’t remember clearly but…” said Zone as he began to laugh maniacally. “I had a secret. I can’t remember what it is, but I remember the wind is an engine for beings must greater.

“There’s no good information from him, let’s kill him,” said one of the agents as he attached a silencer to his gun.

The other agent nodded as Zone saw the barrel of a gun pointed to his head.

“Are you really going to kill me without figuring out who the other person who escaped was?”

The two men glanced at each other for a moment before they both left the room. When they finally came back, they started to release Zone from his bindings.

“What are you doing?”

“You’re coming along with us.”

“Why?” asked Zone as he couldn’t help but flash his evil smile.

“It’s a surprise.”

*They have some better way of extracting my information lined up. If they find out what they need I’m surely going to die, but I bought myself one more chance.*

“Can you just kill me now?” asked Zone as the two of them continued to drag him through the halls without a word.

“Look, I’m not insane. But the truth is, as you may know if you’ve been watching me, is that I forget things… But now I remember… and I’m willing to tell you what I remember… if you play nice”

One of the guys dragging Zone stopped and looked at his partner. “What do you want,” asked the man reluctantly.

“Why are you trying to negotiate with him, we already wasted enough time on him,” asked his partner.

“Because it’s a pain in the ass to run the deep interrogation process. Let’s see what he has to say, he knows he’s not getting out of this alive anyways.”

“Whatever.”

“I was supposed to come to this thing with Sylphia Ace, my ex best friend and the woman who had supported me my whole life besides Madaline.

Knowing there’s no way out, Zone thinks that the only person who can change his fate is the man inside his dreams who exists in a timeline six year before his.

*Dear god of my dreams. You’ve changed fate once. I don’t know if I want to live much longer… but at least get your vengeance. Kill Sylphia… or Snake Girl. Whoever she is.*

Zone stared straight into the eyes of both agents examining in detail all he can about the scene.

*Help me Cyphina. This is all I can do for you*.

”If only it were just any a dream,” muttered Zone. “I wouldn’t be doing this.”

As the agent pulls down on the trigger, Zone tips the chair towards the wall behind him with all his might. He slams into the wall headfirst. In a split second, he fell on the ground unconscious, blood flowing from his head.

--

## Sec 2: Sleep is for the dead

***Main Plot:***

***Section Plot:***

***Points:***

* *I used to want to change the world, at least until I realized that one man can understand the different people that inhabit this planet. We try to do what’s best for other people, but we end up losing that reason we try to protect.*
* *I’m tired of throwing jabs, we need to sit down and understand each other*
* *Can’t fall asleep until everything’s done -- Cyphina*
* *Choose to believe only what you are told… Choose to follow ideas close to your own. That is how the right, even amongst the obvious wrong, can fall.*
* *Look at everybody trying to swing one man’s downfall to be their own salvation. Be strong enough to not fall into the same trap and keep your world open.*
* *Am I in the wrong for doing everything I can to find out my own answers? Everybody else sounds so smart… but nobody is willing to give up anything to find the truth.*
* *There’s no special backstory to who I am… Normally you would think there’s no way I understand how you feel but… if there’s one thing I understand, it’s how to listen.*
* *Laugh at me if you may, but I’m the kind of person who must keep reminding himself of the reasons to keep pressing on. For the longest time, I had one good reason to continue, that was to help those who felt the same way as me. But from today forth, reason number two is that smile…*
* *The rapid advancement of technology leads to a greater feeling of isolation, and a greater desperation to escape. Cyphina had bared the loneliness, walking his own path for a long time, but he knows others will get taken advantage when trying to find their own way by such simpleminded baits. Humanity’s division will be even greater the next 6 years…*
* *Behind every troll is something wrong with their lives… We all have problems. Sometimes it’s a person’s only way to release.*
* ***As the night grows longer and the solution slips further and further away, my hesitation to kill you grows shorter...***

### Initial Investigation

#### A man, A snake, and A plan

**Main Plot (Overlying Story):** N/A

**Section Plot:** *Cyphina is worried about dying in his sleep, so he investigates the two men behind Zone’s torture. Cyphina hesitates at first to ask Snake Girl for help because he doesn’t want to put her at risk due to his promise with Pupii but being alone and worried feels so bad. He justifies his decision by telling himself that he should put his beliefs in her.*

*When they finally meet up, Snake Girl happily oblidges to go on an adventure with Cyphina and they discuss the details while Cyphina takes her out to eat and realizes he needs her since she provides him with the strength to go on even when the imminent death is causing him to shake.*

**Points:**

* *A recruitment, but also a moment to reinforce humanity*
* *Thank you for always being there when I’m down, but I really need you when I’m up. You see, I’m pretty complacent…*

Cyphina wakes up from his first nightmare in what seemed like forever with a terrible headache.

Changing the world, used to be my goal. It used to be the only thing that could fill the void inside. But now, there’s no choice, he thinks to himself as the winter sun pours in from the blinds.

He then sees the scars on his arms causing him to revert to his other form. His eyes turn red and the wounds quickly mend as the ink flowing through his veins create bubbles of shadows which repair his body at an abnormal pace. Once again, Cyphina feels a rare appreciation being part monster.

Cyphina’s feeling of relief instantly turns to worry as he remembers Zone attempting to write something with body as his canvas. At first, Cyphina thought Zone was exhibiting some signs of insanity, but then he realized the meaning of the actions.

*If it fooled me, then it did an impeccable job against someone unbeknownst*, thought Cyphina as he quickly took a picture of the scars on his arm with his phone. Some of the scars had disappeared, but Cyphina found a clear enough hint in the picture.

Zone had drawn a childish rendition of a piece of candy with the word Pepperoncino in the middle.

*What the hell kind of information is this…*

*But most importantly…. are you ok Zone?* wonders Cyphina as he grits his teeth due to the overwhelming burning feeling he feels where the ink boils.

“How did that happen?” asks UndeadM as Cyphina stares at the wounds in awe.

“I don’t know. What was I doing while asleep?”

“You were just lying there.”

“And when did… this…” Cyphina raised his shirt over the wounds coating a thin layer of ink around his stomach. “Happen?”

“I was keeping watch around the house, not watching the body.”

“And of course, you can’t feel it…” replied Cyphina as he stroked his beard.

“Does this mean someone has been drifting in my memories?”

“It’s a possibility, but as far as I can tell, an ability like Anathema Memorandum cannot cause the host harm.”

“Then what the hell is this?” asked Zone as he held out his left arm which was covered with shadow puppets. All the sudden a thought ran over Cyphina’s mind.

If these dreams are as interconnected as they seem, then if I fall asleep, and Zone is dead…

Am I dead too?

“I need a diagnosis right now UndeadM,” said Cyphina adamantly as he shook uncontrollably due to his erupting bladder.

“Is it possible to die from sleeping?!”

“Not from shared psychosis,” replied UndeadM in his emotionless, methodical, and deep voice. “But there are other curses.”

UndeadM took over Cyphina’s body causing him to transform into a monstrous being. He then proceeds to dissect himself using his sharp claws while he checks certain organs.

When Cyphina turns back to normal, he feels an overwhelming pain and starts coughing out ink. “Hey, it would’ve been nice if you’d let the wisps mend myself a little before doing that.

“Nothing out of the ordinary.”

Cyphina let out a sign of relief. “Maybe I’ve just become a little insane,” said Cyphina as he left to go to the bathroom. “But there’s no way I could inflict these wounds on myself… unless I used some form of psychokinesis. “But then, how would I sleep through that…”

Cyphina browsed the news on his phone as he brushed his teeth. He thought of Zone’s last words, “Kill Snake Girl.”

*Maybe I have no choice in the matter*... thought Cyphina.

“Cyphina,” said UndeadM. His voice pierced clearly through the music playing.

“What?” replied Cyphina.

“Be careful.”

“Yea I know.” I know you have no choice but to count on me.

“Hey wait a minute, are you worried?” said Cyphina smugly. Maybe emotions do run deeper than our chemical compositions…”

--

The whole drive to Snake Girl’s house, Cyphina kept contemplating situations where he’d kill her. He promised himself that he wouldn’t do so unless it was necessary, and even then Cyphina wondered if he had the ability to force himself to harm one of his only friends who he felt a sense of reciprocity from.

If I die, I’ll regret everything if I didn’t try my best, thought Cyphina as he whizzed past traffic with his cautious but dangerously quick driving. My existence counts as that of two people’s, however, my will has always overpowered my brain…

Cyphina parked his car on the campgrounds off out the outskirts of Wubville and started his trek towards through a dense forest. He was never good with directions, but his heightened senses were attracted to a familiar energy source which created a feeling like that of smelling hand sanitizer.

After walking along through what seemed like a loop of scenery, Cyphina reached an ominous do not enter sign in front of a cave with a nicely drawn picture of what seemed like a massive anaconda blocked by a few stalagmites. Cyphina climbed over the spikes and yelled, “HEY SNAKE GIRL, I NEED YOUR HELP!”

Cyphina walked inside the cave which was decorated by some crude furniture as he examined the electric eel impaled by copper wires connected to the rusted TV.

*Poor thing* he thought as he sat down on the stone sofa covered with several layers of cushions. There was an overwhelming aroma of flowers, fruits, and sweet substances flowing through the air.

“What the… you there?” he yelled as the lady on the screen continued to narrate her cooking.

I can’t wait for her forever...

“Alright… well…” muttered Cyphina as he stared around at all the primitive decorations inside her house.

“I’ll come back later… I guess.”

“STARDUST BLOW!” yelled a young, spunky voice as Cyphina attempted to stand back up. Cyphina quickly turned around with his hands blocking his face. From the brief millisecond his peripheral caught the flash, Cyphina braced himself from a punch from a fist surrounded by a glowing golden energy.

*If Cyphina loses there’s a gameover where Snake Girl says she accidentally went to hard as she kills him.*

“Hey,” replied Cyphina as his anger quickly turned into an awkward feeling as he saw the young girl standing in front of him in her combat stance. On each of her knees were bandages with hello puppy designs on the front. He imagined Sylphia in her place, and remembered the events that had just occurred.

**Battle: Cyphina vs Snake Girl**

“Do you finally want to listen?” asked Cyphina as he put one of his knives next to her throat.

“What I was just trying to have some afternoon fun…”

“I told you I had some extremely important news for you.”

“Oh… why didn’t you just say so?”

“I did but you wouldn’t stop your full onslaught,” replied Cyphina as he threw the knife backwards which lodged itself into the clay wall.

“Hey…” replied Snake Girl in her spunky voice. “Did you bring the goods?”

“Did I what?”

“Wow you forgot! You said you were going to bring me those snacks I liked.”

“Oh yea, lemonade cookies. I’m sorry,” replied Cyphina as he reached around his back nervously.

*Maybe if I help her out… she’ll become a better person and become Zone’s friend again…*

“How about we go to the bakery and get some while I relay to you this important information. It’s on me.”

“I would… but I have to pass. You see, I’m about to go training/hunting so I can get some materials to craft me a new rug. This one made of bark feels weird when I rub my slimy feet on it.”

“Well I was going to tell you about my plan but…”

“Plan? To take over the world?”

“Well… one step in that plan.”

“Finally! I’ve been waiting for you to get back to me on that. Now, can I be the queen of the world when we rule it?”

“There will be no King and Queen; everyone will rule themselves,” replied Cyphina proudly. “However, you can call yourself something special and kill anyone who doesn’t respect your title.”

“Well… I can do that now… but… that’d ruin your plan Cyphina so I guess I’m obligated to help. So what’s this plan about Cyphina?”

“Let us discuss on the way.”

“Wait let me get the appropriate belongings for executing a plan.”

Snake girl waved at Cyphina as she walked outside her house.

“I thought you were going to grab something?” asked Cyphina as Snake Girl locked the door behind them.

“There we go,” replied Snake Girl as she kneeled in front of her house and got a sharpened stick. “Here’s my stick lance, staff thing. Nobody can escape death now!”

--

*How am I going to convince her to put her life on the line once again for me…* thought Cyphina as he drove the two of them to the bakery. *I hope this is enough…*

Cyphina recounted the details of his dream to Snake Girl as they got closer to the famous Mistery Bakery.

“How many do you want?” asked Cyphina as he looked down on the 12-year-old girl who was barely shorter than him.

“Hmm… 200.”

“Alright,” replied Cyphina as he nodded firmly. “Give us both 2,” said Cyphina to the clerk.

“Who’s that?” asked the clerk as he put down a note with the order neatly written and looked at Snake Girl.

“Umm… that’s my adopted cousin,” replied Cyphina casually. “Her parents used to lock her up all day long and teach her math so she’s a bit new to the outside world.”

“I also had shit parents,” replied the baker. “It gets better… especially when you run away and start a new identity.”

“Hey that’s not tr…”

Cyphina covered her mouth before she could continue.

“Lets not give her any crazy ideas huh?” said Cyphina as he started to walk away. “We’ll wait by the window.”

“WHAT’S YOUR PROBLEM?!” asked Snake Girl angrily as the two of them sat around a small square shaped wooden table.

“It’s better to pretend we’re related so that people don’t get suspicious.”

“Suspicious of what?”

“I believe there’s a law that prohibits young children like you from living on their own. Normally they must live at an orphanage,” said Cyphina as he thought of Zone.

“Ohh… that’s why that field was required when I was signing up for my newspaper delivery post…”

“What did you write down then?”

“You. You said we were like family anyways.”

“I said family was an arbitrary bond, and not the source of the happiness you felt in your dream.”

“Whatever… what about the other thing you said about me.”

“That dude is my friend, and he’s been down in the dumps lately.”

“You have friends? I thought you said you were lonely.”

“You can be lonely and have friends… especially if all of them are caught up in their own worlds like Droddd. I’ve been trying to figure out why… but…”

“So why don’t you cheer him up then?”

“I’ve tried, but there’s only so much you can say when the root of the problem still exists.”

“Then why don’t you use your magical memory bending powers to make him forget Cyph?”

“Maybe, I’ll do so one day when I’m free.”

**//“It’s better to overcome your sadness, not to shrug it aside. To help him do such a thing, we must better //understand him.”**

“So... you wanted me to be his friend or something?”

“No, I want you to be his friend who is a struggling young kid who’s going through the same thing as him so he can help you out. That way he’ll have to get back on his feet or else he’ll see the mirror of himself fall into the same trap he’s going through.”

“I still think you should just enter his mind. You can at least figure out why he’s sad.”

“It’s dangerous Snake Girl… It’s also hard to interpret the consciousness without any prior information so…”

“Alright,” said Snake Girl complacently. “Fine. “I’ll do it. Now?”

“No, we’ll do it later,” replied Cyphina as Droddd dropped off some tea at their table.

“Anyways Sylphia,” said Cyphina as he took a sip of the purple colored drink. “I’m basically a dead man tomorrow if we can’t find a guy who looks like this,” said Cyphina as he took out a sheet of paper and started drawing.

“Sylphia?” asked Snake Girl with a perplexed expression. She started sifting through her backpack until she took out a large lemon wdge.

“Woops, I mean Snake Girl…” said Zone as he laughed nervously. “Sorry, I had a friend with that name who kind of looked like you.”

“Oh, ok. I want to meet her one day,” replied Snake girl as she squeezed all the lemon juice on the cookies.

Zone paused as he watched her completely compress the lemon with her bare hands which had sharp nails painted matte turquoise. “Why?”

“What… this? It tastes good, and it helps me refill my acidic spit reserves.”

“Interesting… anyways, look at this,” said Cyphina as he pushed a sheet of paper over to her.

“That’s a very good drawing,” muttered Snake Girl underneath her vicious chews.

“I love to draw, although I wish I could do it more often between the shit that’s been happening and school,” murmured Cyphina.

“So, these are the men you were talking about the car?”

“Yes. This is what I know about these two monster hybrids so far.”

Cyphina relays some important facts to Snake Girl.

1. These two men know Mr. Swinac for around the same time Cyphina has known him which would be around 10 years since Zone’s predicament.
2. Both men probably knew each other for a long time as well since they were quite cordial and cooperative partners. It’s possible that they’ve been placed on similar teams due to their long relationship.
3. Both men do not live near Wubville, in fact they originally lived some distance apart until they joined the agency.
4. Both men had some sort of body modifications in addition to them being part monster (as hinted by the line “You can lose your humanity far before becoming a monster.”)

“But what’s he doing in Ellestar?”

“I don’t know, although I do know that in five years’ time, this man is working the government on a project that harvests the power of several Ancient Children.”

“Like around my age?”

“Yea, some even older than you,” muttered Cyphina as he imagined the older her siting nearby him. “

“Which is nothing new.”

“Unfortunately… Now his cohorts are part monster meaning his actions could’ve lead to government experimentation, or possibly a government collusion involving Ancients.”

“So whose memories are we going to infiltrate?”

“Well… first lets go see that professor. I believe his name is Doctor Swinac.”

“Wait we’re going now?”

“Yes if we don’t kill before I sleep I’m a goner Sylphia. And if I’m a goner it’s because we’re spending too much time dillydallying.”

--

#### Welcome to Onezen

**Main Plot (Overlying Story):**

**Section Plot:**

**Points:**

Cyphina took Snake Girl to his university’s campus. He used Seinen departure to move quickly through the university without being seen and took Snake Girl alongside him by having her transform into her small snake form.

**The player can travel around the university if they want and explore a bit since this is a common location in other scenes but logically Zone would head straight to the administration building. There may be a map to help the player understand where it is**. **Most activities won’t be available since Zone will say there’s not enough time to do them if the player attempts to do something**.

As they get closer to the building, Sylphia begins to sense the presence of a monster so they proceed with caution.

When Cyphina reaches the building, he asks the receptionist on the Dean’s locations. She tells him his office is located on the top floor, but an appointment is required to visit him.

“Can we set up an appointment now?” asks Cyphina.

“Unfortunately Mr. Swinac isn’t here right now. You see he’s a very busy man, he works the hardest of us all. He comes in earlier than me and I work at the front desk.”

“That’s nice, but do you know where he is now?”

“ I think he’s at the talk in the Center Stage.”

“Thanks,” replied Cyphina as he directed Sylphia towards the elevator.

“So I guess we should’ve waited in that long line then huh?” asked Snake Girl.

“We don’t have to wait in any line as long as we got Seinen Depature,” replied Cyphina with a mischievous grin on his face.

“ However, we can take this great opportunity to investigate any of his personal belongings.”

At the top floor the two of them sneak past a few employees and security cameras to reach the doors of the Dean’s office which were locked shut. A sign hangs out of the door saying, “The person you are looking for is in another castle!”

“Damn, if only I had one of those Cyberse hack machines…” muttered Cyphina as he reminisced about his dream.

“Cyberse…? Hack Machine…? What’s that?”

“It lets us circumvent electronic lock by breaking the software the locking system relies on.”

“Sounds complicated.”

“Yea, looks like physically its bounded at four points. Maybe we can break them with our claws or something.”

“Ok,” replied Snake Girl as Cyphina performed the Black Mirror Ritual.

Snake girl’s nails which were barely reinforced with a coating of mithril attempted to slash threw a small crevasse in the wall.

“I think I made a dent,” said Snake Girl as she looked over at the horrific monster next to her. “But my nails can’t reach deep enough.”

Cyphina transformed back into his human form. “Yeah me neither. Maybe if I get laser I can break the spots we just chipped off.”

*Now where can I find a laser…*

**The player can now try to find a laser for a brief moment, until Snake Girl stops them.**

“This is a waste of time Cyphina. Why do we have to break the lock if we break the door down?”

“Snake Girl, I just cleared my name last week. I don’t want to have another run in with the police.”

“No we won’t, people are dumb Cyphina. We’re not on camera, so all we have to do to get them away is make them look into these eyes.”

“Perhaps, but If we’re going to do this we better put our best effort forwards into everything.”

“Yea but your on a time limit. You’ll get more time later, so stop putting your effort into something useless and believe in my powers!”

“Snake Girl slammed her hands on the door in anger causing a sudden explosion which sent remains of the door flying in every direction.

“Wait a minute Snake Girl…”

Several books to fell out of the shelves on the side walls as Cyphina stared at the scene in awe.

“Well, I guess there’s no way nobody heard that…” said Snake Girl with a large innocent smile on her face.

“Quick let’s put the door back!”

“I don’t think that’s possible…” replied Snake Girl as the two of them heard impending footsteps. Cyphina saw the door split into several pieces on scattered on the floor and office desk.

“You just do what we need to do here,” said Snake Girl confidently. “And I’ll keep them busy.”

“… Alright.”

Cyphina started searching through the Dean’s files as Snake Girl ran up to some of the employees who had come to see the source of the commotion.

“Hey what are you doing here. Where’s your parents?” asked one employee who sounded very irritated.

“Did the door just explode?... MOVE!” yelled another guy who tried to go past Snake Girl and towards Cyphina whom he thought was prankster.

*I bet if I were some different nationality, they might’ve thought I was a terrorist.*

“Wait a second mister,” replied Snake Girl as she stood in the way of the man. “Don’t worry about my dead parents; your parents are calling you.”

“What???” replied the employees as they stared into Snake Girl’s eyes glowing even brighter than normal.

“That’s right…. Your parents need you. Go answer their call.”

Cyphina watched from the corner of his eyes as the employees mindlessly walked to the elevator and Snake Girl skipped back towards the office.

“Did you see how mad they were…? They didn’t even know what was going on and it was their instant reaction to be mad!”

“I was focused on searching… but… I think you’re forgetting something,” said Cyphina as he pointed back at one employee who was still standing at the same spot staring at them.

‘Oh rattlesnake,” said Snake Girl as she skipped back towards the employee. “So, you’re some kind of special monster huh? I bet you’ll taste great!”

The employee was silent until Snake Girl rushed him with her sharp claws and the employee instantly began an incantation for shock wave.

“Thanks for confirming you are indeed a monster,” said Snake Girl as she dodged the blast with her extremely fast movement.

“Get out of the way I’m about to cast…”

“No, you keep searching,” replied Snake Girl. “This is my kill.”

**Snake Girl 1v1 vs Warren Clone**

After Snake Girl destroys the employee she realizes it was just a clone as it bursts into a stream of electricity shocking her moist snake skin.

“That fanging hurt,” said Snake Girl as she limped back towards Cyphina.

“You alright?” asked Cyphina as he glanced at the burn marks throughout her body.

“Yes. Find anything useful?”

“I don’t know if it’s useful,” replied Cyphina as he put down the letters he was reading. “But Mr. Swinac keeps so much junk in here.”

Cyphina pointed to the closet filled with several boxes of clothes and noodle cups.

“I suppose he ran out of space at his own home,” said Snake Girl as she rubbed her burnt palms together releasing a small cloud of dust.

Cyphina was reading through Mr. Swinac’s collection of letters from students asking for recommendations and/or advice. Mr. Swinac had neatly attached his own response on another sheet of paper clipped to the back.

*I always respected this man for being one of the few teachers who remains passionate about his job, even after his teaching days are over. I don’t see anything that would make me think otherwise, maybe people are just as two dimensional as rumored.*

“We’re going to have to find Mr. Swinac or hope he comes back to finish all this on his plate.”

“Is that all you looked through? Stop getting distracted Cyphina!” chided Snake Girl. “You’d think with your life on the line you wouldn’t get into random stuff.”

“Yea…”

“Keep searching,” yelled Snake Girl as she ripped open a locked drawer with pure brute strength.

“I think I should be the one yelling at you for risking this whole operation.”

“You mean getting things done, right?

She then paused a moment as she stared at the drawer’s contents.

“Ooh found something,” said Snake Girl as she grabbed a phone from within the drawer.

“This must mean your teacher has a daughter,” said Snake Girl as she peeled a sparkly sticker from the phone.

“Or he likes sparkles,” replied Cyphina as he found a couple of prescriptions amongst the papers inside his death.

*This doctor isn’t a medical professional. I swear I’ve seen his name inside the department.*

“It also shows your teacher shows signs of a meticulous person since he took the time to lock his valuables, even when he has that weird… cyber lock.

“Cyberse Mrs. Holmes.”

“Whatever… now whatever is on this phone will tell us a lot about the kind of person he is…”

“I bet it’s locked.

“The phone might be locked, but I can figure out what the combination is by using the special goo on my fingers to perform fingerprint analysis…”

“Wait you can do that?”

“NO! Go unlock the phone with your technology skills.”

Snake Girl placed the phone on top of all the papers and then took out an egg-shaped toy in her pocket. Cyphina saw the words Pokipetchi on the top.

“You’re hypothesis may be correct, but… I think the real reason that phone was locked was because somebody else comes to this office,” said Cyphina as he held out an exam answer key, a phone bill, and the prescription. And Mr. Swinac doesn’t want this person touching the phone.

“Hnnnnggggg…”

*Way to not get distracted,* thought Cyphina as he tossed aside more useless files.

*There’s nothing that seems like it has any relevancy to the crime… but time flies by. Who knows what could cause a change in this man, if there was any.*

*It’s just my luck to be caught up in a dead-end,* thought Cyphina as closed a student paper on the harm associated with online interactions. There were markings all over the paper critiquing its content.

“Alright let go infiltrate his mind then… Snake Girl?”

Snake Girl had been completely engrossed in the toy which was about the same size of an egg. Cyphina kept calling her name until he went over and removed the toy from her hand.

Snake Girl still looked down at her hands as if nothing was there. He noticed a yellow ring in her eyes reminding him of a halo.

“I guess this is where she got her gaming addiction in the future from… Unless I did something else to fuel that…”

Cyphina pocketed the phone and snapped his fingers in front of her face as she shuddered.

“What did I miss,” said Snake Girl defensively as she looked around everywhere cautiously.

“We’re leaving.”

“Did you crack that phone?”

“No you blanked out while playing PokiPetachi.”

“Crap, did I forget to feed snakey?”

“Isn’ the snake you wear as a necklace named Snakey? Why did you get a virtual pet if you have the real thing.”

“No offense Snakey, but virtual Snakey does more than you.”

Snakey, who was wrapped around Snake Girl stuck out his tongue.

*--*

#### Center Stage Mishaps

The Center Stage had several shops and recreation events going on throughout the semester. It was a popular social area for people to relax after exams, and a popular center for campus visitors.

In one of the various entrances of the center stage was a large line for tickets to a career fair. The line had been larger than usual due to the opulent amounts of advertising from various teachers. Some classes went as far to offer extra credit to students who would visit the fair.

The Center Stage’s design resembled that more of an arena than a stage. In the center of the large rows of seats was a performance area, where several companies displayed posters with their information.

Cyphina and Snake Girl crept through one of the entrances under the guise of Seinen Departure, before reappearing and walking around the edges of the crowds of seat.

“Is that him? asked Snake Girl as her eyes were glowing to give her vision an immense boost. She pointed to a chair in the middle of an isolated area on the highest floor of the arena.

Cyphina put on the spectacles which he picked up on a table full of souvenirs. “Yes,” replied Cyphina as he walked towards the arena exit.

“How do we get up there?” asked Snake Girl as she followed Cyphina who was speed walking through the halls.

“Just follow me,” replied Cyphina as he led her towards a flight of stairs that would take them to the seats on the elevated floor.

As Cyphina and Snake Girl got out of vision, they began to run up the steps like children before they finally reach the curtains covering the balcony entrance.

“So what are you going to ask him Cyphina?” asked Snake Girl as Cyphina suddenly paused as they reached the curtains.

“All I need is one good look at his eyes and I can memory map him later,” responded Cyphina as he stared from a crevasse in between the silk. “But first we’ll see what he knows.”

“That’s a good plan,” replied Sylphia reassuringly as she continued to stare at the configuration Cyphina had setup between his own phone and the one found in the drawer. A wire ran between both phones where one phone was running an algorithm to match the hashed password data to a corresponding set of numbers.

“The criminal is as good as caught!”

“Yea, thanks,” said Cyphina, his voice filled with hesitation for his future.

Cyphina walked out to Mr. Swinac who was sitting with a younger woman. He saw there was signs of discontent in both of their faces causing them to stare at different parts of the fair.

“Shit…” muttered Cyphina as he crept closer to Mr. Swinac.

“What!” whispered Snake Girl excitedly as she popped out of the chair besides him.

“I’m scared of talking to him…”

“You said you were going to die if you couldn’t solve this mystery. How can you afford to be scared!”

“Let me rephrase that. I’m not scared of him, but with the attitude he’s in… we might not get much truthful information from him.”

“Then perform the memory mapping technique.”

“Snake Girl, you know that’s a last resort technique. It’s extremely risky…”

“How am I supposed to feel bad for you if you’re not going to do your best like you said you would.”

Cyphina stared at what he thought were flames in her eyes for a brief moment.

“Alright, fuck it dood,” said Cyphina as he swing his arms wildly loosening himself up in the process.

Cyphina walked up to Mr Swinac stridently. His height standing up straight was only a few inches taller than Mr. Swinac sitting down, but looking closely at Cyphina you can see his shadow is longer than normal.

“Thank you Snake Girl,” whispered Cyphina as Mr. Swinac turned around to look at him and his expression transformed from a look that was emptier than a thousand caves to one that was brighter than an awards ceremony.

*Now how am I going to get their eye contact as UndeadM without revealing anything...*

“Hey, Mr. Lyena,” said Mr. Swinac as his hand opened outwards along with the smile on his face.

*This is the face of a man who hides an extremely convoluted backstory* thought Cyphina as he shivered a bit thinking about his expressions’ sudden transformation. He shook the hand, and though his hand was much larger than Cyphina’s, Cyphina’s worn out hands had an ironclad grip.

“Hello Mr. Swinac, how are you doing?”

“I’m good, I’m great,” replied Mr. Swinac as Cyphina noticed his daughter also smiling at him from the corner of his purple eyes.

“How about you Cyphina? Are you studying hard for the end of the semester? You don’t have to answer that Cyphina, I’ve had to sign your last seven Dean’s list awards.”

“Yes,” replied Cyphina with an uneasy feeling. He always felt angst when talking about his grades, even though he had top notch performance.

*Everybody always wants to talk about school, but it’s a joke. School doesn’t prevent you from being the scum of this earth, being the filth which I promise I will clean from this world…*

Cyphina then remembered Snake Girl’s words and quickly shook his reflective thoughts away.

“Grades aren’t important to me Mr. Swinac. I want to make a difference.”

“Is that so? I think that’s the right attitude to have, and the one most students are lacking.”

“Heh, I don’t care about them. But anyways, Mr. Swinac, don’t feel to ecstatic about my achievements,” said Cyphina lightheartedly.

“I’m not even that good of a student. I spend a lot of my time playing and making games.”

“Games can help your cognitive ability,” replied Mr Swinac. “But play too much and you can lose yourself.”

“Is that so,” replied Cyphina as he couldn’t help but form an evil smile.

*Where have I heard that before…*

“Enough talking about something as boring as your grades. Have you made many friends in your time here Mr. Lyena?”

“Not really,” replied Cyphina as he scratched the back of his shoulder nervously.

“You only have one semester left,” said Mr. Swinac wholeheartedly. “Make some friends Cyphina. Connections can take you far in life.”

“I know Mr. Swinac. I have one good friend outside of here, and she’s helped me out a lot in just… everything.”

“Friends like that are rare. Screw the Dean’s list Cyphina, spend your time with her,” said Mr. Swinac as he let out a deep laugh. “It’ll benefit you more in the long run.”

*Haha yea she’s 12 dood* thought Cyphina as he let out a twisted smile.

“I certainly will be… Anyways… I came to talk to you because I need your help identifying some people.”

“Well if they go to this school I can definitely tell you about them.”

“From memory?” asked Cyphina as he handed Mr. Swinac the pictures that he drew.

“No, but I have access to a database with records on every student. So, does your father.”

“Well I have no idea if these people are students.”

Cyphina turned his eyes towards the woman who was staring at the ground with what seemed like a forced smile.

*I need to find a way to get a brief moment of eye contact while I’m a monster,* thought Cyphina as he turned his attention to the expression on Mr. Swinac.

Cyphina continued to verbally described the two men he saw in his dreams but Mr. Swinac didn’t recognize any of them by their descriptions and pictures.

“I’ve seen several people who match your descriptions, but I’m not close with any one of them. I’m sorry.”

“I really need to find these people. Even if they may not be the ones I’m looking for, any information is better than what I have now.”

“Why do you need to find them?”

“I can’t give you the specifics... but somebody related to them may be in danger.”

“If this is a serious matter you best tell somebody…”

“I can’t… Not now.”

There was a brief pause as Cyphina noticed an expression of deep thought on Mr. Swinac.

“Alright Cyphina, but remember to know your limits. I don’t want to see you getting any unnecessary trouble.”

*I can’t see how someone like him would join such an emotionless organization like the agency,*  thought Cyphina. *He didn’t even mention being worried about getting himself into trouble.*

“Your father talks about how smart and responsible you are all the time to me…”

*No thanks to him. He only does that to gloat, but in reality I’ve never heard a word of encouragement from the man.*

“So I’ll write down the names that come to mind.”

“Thank you very much,” replied Cyphina.

*Alright now how can I get a visual link between them…*

**The player has 3 choices. Try to split them up by asking for help finding the bathroom which fails since nobody will actually get up to help him but rather they just try to give him directions. Cyphina can try and use a Snake Girl distraction by pointing to her in the auditorium below, where she’s grabbing free samples, but Mr. Swinac says people of all ages can join the fair. He doesn’t go down to try and stop her, so the two of them remain together, and even though he can split their attentions are between Snake Girl and hismelf, he’s at too close proximity to be sneaky.**

**The correct choice is for Cyphina to start an argument between Mr. Swinac and his daughter.**

Cyphina remembered how distraught they looked before they saw him and thought that maybe if he could spark whatever argument they had prior, he may get additional clues as well as the possibility to split them.

“Here you go,” said Mr. Swinac as he passed Cyphina a large sticky note with a list of names written messily.

“Thanks. I have to go do something with this so…”

“Good luck.”

“Yea thanks. But quick question before I go,” said Cyphina as he felt a bit guilty on the inside. “The person next to you looks sad.”

“That’s my daughter Cyphina,” replied Mr. Swinac with a slight chuckle. “She’s doing fine, she’s a bit tired that’s all.”

“Yea, I’m tired,” replied the woman who sounded as if she was holding tears back. “I’m going to go get some fresh air to wakeup.”

*She was already triggered the whole time and I just had to simply abuse Mr. Swinac’s desire to keep his personal life to himself, just as how he so effortlessly suppresses his feelings when business arises.”*

“Alright, well I hope you two do well Mr. Swinac, and thanks again,” replied Cyphina as he walked backwards towards the stage.

Mr Swinac nodded and as Cyphina disappeared into the curtains, he performed the black mirror ritual before popping his head out from the curtains. Mr. Swinac stared in his direction and Cyphina locked eyes with him, causing Mr. Swinac to feel an overwhelming dread as he saw the red sclera of UndeadM.

Cyphina then proceeded to follow the woman towards the bathroom where he waited outside at the corner of the hallway. As she left the bathroom, Cyphina pretended to drop his keys, causing her to look over at him. He quickly performed the black mirror ritual and locked eye contact with her as he casually picked up the keys.

The woman began to wipe her wet eyes as Cyphina disappeared back behind the wall and ran off to find Snake Girl who was drinking some orange juice from a display by one of the large grocery chains.

--

Cyphina found Snake Girl dressed up in a white blouse and tan blazers grabbing all the free things she could get her hands on. As he snuck behind her to tap on her shoulder, he overheard her talking to one of the recruiting scouts.

“Yes, I am only 12 years old. However, I have enough credits to be considered a senior here, and thus I am searching for some work to quench my curious mind.”

“Can I see your transcript young lady?” asked the recruiter as Snake Girl fiddled with her green tie.

“Certainly,” replied Snake Girl as she started sifting through her bag until Cyphina approached her stealthily to tab her in the back.

“So… did you find out who they are or not?” asked Snake Girl who was staring into her bag as Cyphina stopped in his tracks the moment he heard her cold voice.

“You heard me through all of this?”

“No, but I can detect everything around me like a sonar when I stick out my tongue. It’s a snake thing,” said Snake Girl as she pulled out a piece of paper.

“What the hack? Where did you get that?” asked Cyphina as he pulled the paper from her hands.

“Wait a second… this is mine, but you scribbled out my name.”

“I think people really like what’s on that,” replied Snake Girl proudly. “Although I think being a 12 year old prodigy also helped.”

“Did you take that from Mr. Swinac’s office?”

“Yes.”

“And did you mug somebody for the clothes?”

“Do you think I’m some kind of wild monster? I mugged a guy for the shirt, and a woman for the pants and tie since I heard them saying mean things about each other. I then threw them into a room somewhere…”

Sylphia stared at Cyphina’s angry expression emotionlessly. “Anyways, tell me what you found out.”

“Well,” replied Cyphina as he let out a sigh. “I have a list of names. There’s no guarantee if any of them or right, or if the third person will show up.”

“Third person? Wait a minute,” replied Snake Girl as she started counting with her fingers.

“I thought you told me that two people committed the crime,” said Snake Girl as she unraveled her pointer finger and middle finger from her fist. “Then… Mr. Swinac ordered them to do it… that’s three right there!” yelled Snake Girl.

“When I was right next to him I couldn’t detect any signs of him being a monster. However, I remember when Zone ran right into him…”

“Wait who’s Zone?”

“I meant myself. Sorry, I was thinking of my other friend again haha.”

“I didn’t think you had friends.”

“Of course I have friends… what would make you think otherwise?”

“The fact that you come hang out with with a loner like me.”

“Well that’s how you make friends. By spending time with them…”

“I suppose… so what were we talking about again?”

“Well in my vision, I ran into Mr. Swinac, and he barely moved when I collided with him at high speeds.”

“Yea because you’re like half his size.”

“In the dream I was over 6 feet tall. Plus I had a lot of momentum, nobody stays still like a bolder when you collide with something moving fast which is around your size.”

“Maybe he’s just really strong and well balanced.”

“That level of physical ability you’re describing isn't achievable by humans,” said Cyphina as he scratched his beard. “But on the other hand, monsters…”

“Well he could’ve been an Ancient too,” said Snake Girl as the two of them made their way out of the fair. “There are some spells that keep you balanced... but I guess, if he were an ancient, you probably would’ve recognized from his eyes and his youthful appearance.”

“Yea…”

“So what’s next Cyphina?”

“We search through the list of names that we got, and we also try to find this third person who turned him and possibly the two other criminals into monsters. If we can take out the third key link, we can change the future.”

“And you won’t die right?” asked Snake Girl as Cyphina glanced over at her sifting through her all the goodes she loaded into her bag.

“Yea… hopefully.”

“You know, don’t we know somebody who has a history of changing people into monsters?”

“...DivineChaos?”

“If she’s not this third person we’re looking for, maybe she would know this kind of third person. She is a god, nothing escapes her crimson eye.”

“But I thought she had blue eyes.”

“You must’ve saw only her left eye which is bluer and clearer than mine,” said Snake Girl as she pointed to her eye. Her razor sharp nail was merely centimeters from her eyes, but the pair of unwavering blue eyes stayed wide open.

“It’s whatever. The problem is I don’t think she’ll look forward to seeing me again, granted she tried to kill me on the bus.”

“Are you sure she tried to kill you? Or someone else there.”

“Regardless of who she tried to kill, she’s a threat to the entire world. How can you not be scared of her considering she obliterated you when you were at the peak of your power.”

“Well she did kind of help me afterwards by bringing me here…”

“True... But for all I know, we have no understanding of her motivations. She’s literally a ticking time bomb. I bet if someone makes her mad, she’ll destroy this whole world.”

“Humans are like ants to gods like DivineChaos. Their lives are insignificant, although unlike ants, gods can connect with humans so they may hold some feelings for them.”

“So you’re saying we should try and stay close to her huh? I think you’re the one in our team best suited for that.”

“Well I’ll admit she acts very nice to me. However, she treats me like a kid and that’s boring.”

“So you appreciate how I treat you like a young snake lady?”

“I appreciate how I can sense your fear when you’re close to me,” said Snake Girl as her smile revealed her slightly bloody fangs. “I know you’re always ready to defend yourself in case I go insane and decide to eat you spontaneously.”

“Whatever…”

As Cyphina and Snake Girl reached the security checkpoint, they noticed a commotion of people near the shops leading back to the entrance. As the two of them squeezed their way pass the growing mass of people in the hall, Cyphina noticed a few police officers mixed in with the crowd.

“Did somebody die or something?” asked Snake Girl loudly.

“I wish,” replied a feminine voice in the crowd.

“That’s a terrible thing to say replied another woman.”

“There’s just a bunch of people sleeping on their job,” said another guy apathetically as Cyphina and Snake Girl pushed their way through the mass of people and saw several bodies laying on the floor unconscious.

“Stay back everybody, nobody’s hurt… as of yet,” yelled one of the many officers who formed a line blocking anybody from leaving.

“Everybody here is hypnotized, there’s no need to panic.”

“That’s the dumbest thing I heard private Scones.”

“Well what else would cause several people to simultaneously collapse commander?”

“I don’t know maybe some kind of anesthetics, a nerve agent.... or a really boring speech?!”

“God damn Snake Girl,” muttered Cyphina as he glanced at the police officer barricade.. “We have to get out of here.”

“You’re going to die if you don’t eat another monster soon. Let’s grab this one and go.”

“First of all we don’t even know if its a monster. Secondly, if I fall asleep like everybody on the ground,, I’m dead Snake Girl. Thirdly, we have to finish this mission or else I’m dead because I won’t be able to stay awake forever. Fourth, this place is too exposed for us to harness our monster powers…”

“There’s no risk of us being seen if everybody is asleep...” replied Snake Girl. “Or hypnotized for that matter.”

Cyphina leaned his hand against his chin as Snake Girl suddenly stopped. “Ooh, and maybe this person will be crucial for our investigation!”

“I guess it is quite coincidental that somebody associated with monsters like Mr. Swinac is in close proximity to a monster related event… if it’s even a monster we’re dealing with.

But at the same time, it might be worth investigating this because if we can lure this monsterto the arena, we can start memory mapping Mr. Swinac and his daughter earlier.”

“Finally some action… where do you want to cloak?”

“We’ll find somewhere near the east wing entrance. I think the trail started there, reached part of the job facility, and turned around or something.”

--

The east entrance was far enough from the fair that there wasn’t any unconscious victims or security. As Cyphina and Snake Girl walked further into the building, the trail of bodies resumed.

Cyphina and Snake girl joined a group of students who were dragging unconscious students out of the halls.

“There’s a guy sleeping on the railing, up here,” yelled Snake Girl from the stairs above Cyphina. One girl ran up the stairs to help Snake Girl but she warded her off.

“Don’t help me,” said Snake Girl adamantly as she lifted a guy who was around 60 pounds heavier than her down the stairs.

“I found some people down here as well,” replied Cyphina. “But I also feel something weird down here. It’s possible that it might be dangerous for anybody else to continue.

“I used to be part of the special forces,” said a girl with dark skin and legs that were toned by a daily routine of one thousand squats as she started to head down the stairs past Cyphina. “I think I can handle… my…”

The woman than began to yawn as she tumbled down the steps and ended up unconscious further below.”

“Self.”

“Are you ok?” asked another boy who had a loud voice. He started to run over towards the stairs as if he were going to jump over the ledge to land a few flights down by Cyphina stuck out his hand.

“She should be ok, she passed out before she fell down those stairs so she’s probably not hurt at all.”

“Get out of my way I’m going to get her.”

“I think anybody who goes down too far passes out.”

“Shit… really? Alright I guess I’ll go report that to everybody.”

“Yea make sure they don’t come close. Nothing bad is going to happen to the people sleeping down there, so wait for the authorities to come.”

The guy started to walk back and Cyphina could hear him yelling “DON’T GO DOWN THE STAIRS!” so loudly, that it echoed from inside the stairwell.

Snake Girl suddenly appeared behind Cyphina as he prepared his down the stairs.

“I thought you were bringing somebody to the infirmary with the rest of them?”

“I just gave the guy I was carrying to someone else. Are you ready to get some lunch?”

“Don’t get your hopes up…”

“A snake can dream. Alright, I think there’s some kind of magical aura downstairs which is causing everything to sleep. The aura is concentrated around the caster, which is why it’s shifted throughout the building.”

“It’s the only logical explanation so far. I’m going to perform the Black Mirror Ritual now and I can’t revert until we take out whatever’s casting this spell so… have fun talking to yourself.”

“Wait a minute… how do I protect myself from the drowsiness?” asked Snake Girl nervously as Cyphina transformed into his monster form.

“I guess I’ll just use every magic resistance spell I have and hope for the best…”

Snake Girl followed the silent monster with a chain of intestines hanging from its mouth as they both descended down the stairs. UndeadM walked slumped over like a zombie as usual.

When they passed three flights of stairs downwards, they began to hear a mysterious sound which caused Snake Girl to feel her energy being drained from her.

As Snake Girl was about to pass out UndeadM reached into his backpack and put his headset around her ear. Snake Girl fell to her knees, but was slowly able to get back up. Meanwhile, UndeadM stood over her looking like a nightmarish manifestation as always.

*It’s the sound huh? I bet I woulda instantly passed out had I not buffed myself.*

--

The trail of bodies lead Cyphina and Snake Girl down a linear hallway of little shops with neon signs illuminating the darkness. On their route, they passed a cafe where they saw a person sleeping next to the grill which was about to light the whole building on fire until Snake Girl and Cyphina douse the flames with water from a sink nearby.

“I wonder what kind of monster can cause this?” mumbled Snake Girl as the polka dot lights reflected off her face. She could barely hear her own voice with the headset on.

Suddenly two bodies lying on the ground in front of them began to stand up as if they were puppets being pulled upwards by strings.

“Are these guys sleepwalking or what?” asked Snake Girl as she glanced at UndeadM who’s red scelera was locked onto the bodies.

Both of the people’s eyes were still closed, but one of them started to incant a spell which launched a high velocity ball of water towards Sylphia.

Sylphia quickly dodged the attack and turned towards UndeadM. “Are we going to kill them or what?”

UndeadM was silent but he violently unsheathed his sword.

“I always expect you to say something UndeadM, but then I remember half your mouth is stitched up, and there’s that giant bleeding organ shoved down your throat. You take the one of the left alright?...”

UndeadM then turned towards Snake Girl with his same disappointed blank expression he always had. “Ok fine we’ll fight them together, and feel them out first.”

UndeadM was still staring at her. “Ok and we just subdue them. I think they may be a bit stronger since they’re possessed or something, so don’t be too worried about restraining yourself.”

**UndeadM + Snake Girl vs Sleepwalkers:**

**Recommended Level (15+)**

**This battle involves abusing Gravekeeper’s Cloak and Shared Psychosis to negate damage since both sleepwalkers buff themselves for a fraction of their health to deal immense dark element damage temporarily. The buffs can also be prevented with stuns, although the buff has a low cooldown compared to its duration and flinching an enemy with lots of combo damage.**

After finishing the two enemies off, the purple aura around the bodies disappear as they revert back into stationary objects..

“We better be aware of more reanimated things,” said Snake Girl as UndeadM kneeled over and physically examined the lifeless bodies.

--

##### Vs Ellesi

As Snake Girl and UndeadM proceed further into the trail, they have to deal with more puzzles to save people who fell unconscious at inopportune moments.

They also fight several more sleepwalker type enemies, some with variations on the powers they have. Meanwhile, the singing gets so loud such that Snake Girl has to blast Cyphina’s mp3 player at full blast to stay awake.

Eventually the two of them reaches the underground subway station, which oddly enough also has a few shops nearby. One of these shops is a candy shop, and another nearby shop gives haircuts.

Eventually as they reach the underground train, they see a woman who is limping around singing the song which is putting everybody to sleep.

Snake Girl spits a fireball at the woman who turns around and reveals herself to be half transformed into a monster. The human part of her face mutters “I wish I could make everybody forget everything…” while the monster form looks at UndeadM and Snake Girl with evil intent.

**Battle Snake Girl + UndeadM vs Ellesi Round 1**

*As Snake Girl and UndeadM beat some sense into the monster, they notice the monster’s human host slowly beginning to regain more control over herself. They also begin to learn that the monster was able to overpower its host due to its host’s mental stability after making the mistake of getting out of rhythm during her performance at the concert stage upstairs.*

“We’re going to be feasting tonite!” screamed Snake Girl, her voice full of energy and he face full or murderous intent.

UndeadM was able to land a blow which stunned the monster for a brief moment, allowing him to revert back to Cyphina.

“Bad news Snake Girl, we can’t kill her .”

“What are you talking about Cyphina? Get back into your monster forme, if you fall asleep you’re a goner!”

“It’s alright, the monster is in recovery mode. But this battle could take long enough for backup to arrive, so we have to try and negotiate.”

“What backup?”

“The government probably. You saw how on the news these kind of mysterious events have been occurring, but the investigation cases that occur are brief and incomplete. The government agents are probably clearing evidence and obstructing any investigations from occuring.”

“But what about our meal?”

“We can hunt tonight. Let’s see if we can talk this woman out of her problems and hope she regains control of her body so she doesn’t get captured by the government.”

“GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!” roared Snake Girl as she shook her head violently. “Ok.”

Cyphina began to talk to the monster in an attempt to help the woman in distress reconcile.

“Hey lady, why would you want everybody to forget everything? There are some people who have important memories of you, losing those may cause them great pain.”

“Everybody should forget everything… I messed up my only chance.”

“Tell me what you did.”

“I messed up my only chance!!!” screamed the girl as Cyphina reactively performed the black mirror ritual.

“Watch out Cyphina, don’t let yourself fall asleep.”

The monster seemed to still be passive so Cyphina reverted back to himself. He closed his eyes as he felt ink dripping from his pupil.

“Mistakes are never about ourselves really are they? It’s easy to find solitude in our problems, but I won’t let you. Tell me, or this will last forever.”

Cyphina then saw the monster’s eyes light up and he had to quickly revert back to UndeadM to fight another round.

**Battle Snake Girl + UndeadM vs Ellesi Round 2**

As soon as they knocked the monster down again, Cyphina continued his conversation with the woman.

“I told you we’re not going away. Tell me, what are you thinking!!!”

All of the sudden Cyphina heard a beautiful melancholic voice.

“I messed up… while singing my song on stage.”

“Wait a minute,” said Snake Girl with a bewildered expression on her face. “You’re mad because you messed up as a performing artist? But AREN’T PERFORMING ARTISTS SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURE ONSTAGE FROM ALL THEIR PRACTICE?!!!”

“Snake Girl, shut up,” said Cyphina.

“Yes, I practiced all day and night. But I didn’t expect the on-stage audio to be so quiet. I have a hard time keeping the beat myself while singing, so I rely on the drums to remember my cues.”

“So how do you feel about it?”

“I wish I never started to sing in the first place. I could have so much more… if I never began.”

“Yea well everybody makes mistakes,” said Snake Girl unsympathetically. “Be happy you’re still alive.”

“That’s the problem with everybody… This is why I want everybody to forget,” murmured the woman in a voice where hatred was beginning to manifest itself.

“THEY’RE ALL SO SHALLOW, THINKING I’M SCARED OF MAKING MISTAKES WHEN IT’S NOT ABOUT MY MISTAKE!!!”

“God damnit Snake Girl,” muttered Cyphina as he performed the black mirror ritual once again.

**Battle Snake Girl + UndeadM vs Ellesi Round 3**

“Alright let me do the talking Snake Girl. You’re mind is in the right place but sometimes, you have to listen to your heart.”

“I know I know, I saw what just happened. I stink at sympathizing ok.”

*I know Sylphia…*

“GO AWAY!” yelled the woman, her words broken up by sobbing. “Please, I know you want me to feel better. I’ll feel better, just let me be alone!”

“What’s your name.”

“Just go away!!”

“I’m Cyphina.. Tell me yours and I’ll go.”

“Ellesi.”

“Well I’m sorry Ellesi but I lied. However, you’re wrong if you think my goal is to make you feel better. All I want from you is to find the other story.”

“What the hell does that mean?” replied the girl. Her voice sounded half sad, and half annoyed.

“You don’t know what’s next for you do you? I mean after all this is done, maybe everybody will forget, maybe you too can forget this moment for the rest of your life…

But I want to know what Ellesi feels in this moment. So I can remember it, and hopefully if I ever meet someone in a similar suit, I can help them better. I want to know if this is about you caring too much about how other people will remember this moment, or if there’s something more. I think there’s something more… but.”

“

--

“Well… there goes lunch… I guess.”

After Ellesi’s spirit disappears, Cyphina and Snake Girl pause for a bit to catch their breath and reflect, before running back towards the entrance.

Cyphina wonders how it was possible for somebody already dead to cause such a havoc, and the risks of losing control over the monster inside of you. Snake Girl things about when she’s going to hunt next.

“Lets go Cyphina, you’re going to run out of time if you stay her forever,” yells Snake Girl breaking Cyphina out of his trance.

As they reach the aisle of stores, they are stopped by a group of men dressed in armor covered with several layers of plating, and helmets which cover their faces with glass that’s opaque from the outside. Two glowing lights shine where their eyes should be.

Cyphina can hear the amplified noise of heavy breathing from the beings inside the suits, who only had a small respirator on the side of the helmet

“Shit, this must be ARC.”

“ARC?”

“Alternate Reality Company. It’s the name of the government division that handle’s monster related stuff. It’s based off the game ArcLight, although in game the acronym is an insult known as Assault Rifle Chubs. You see, the assault rifle is way too overpowered…”

“We have a code 1071, there are two witnesses still alive down here,” muttered the agent into his helmet’s microphone. “They must’ve woken up or something.”

There was a brief pause as Cyphina and Snake Girl stared down the heavily armed agents until a noise came back from the radio.

Cyphina believed that the agents had no way of knowing that he and Snake Girl were monsters, since they hadn’t been carelessly radiating magical powers like Ellesi, so he was confident they were going to be lead out of here.

“Leave no witnesses,” said an emotionless voice on the radio.

“Affirmative,everybody get into position!”

“Tranq team moving forward! We have a clear shot on the target.”

“It’s an order 313, I repeat 313,” said the commander as Cyphina saw guns which were not tranquilizer weapons aimed at them.”

“Well.. it’s not like we can leave them alive or else our normal lives are over,” said Cyphina as Snake Girl nodded.

“Yea, their lack of hesitation shows how screwed up in the head they are!” replied Snake Girl.

**Battle Cyphina + Snake Girl vs 5x ARC Agents**

**Recommended Level (18+)**

“Alright, let’s go on an actual lunch break now Snake Girl,” said Cyphina as she huddled close as he transported them both in between this dimension and the next..

“Thank the lord I’m starving!” replied Snake Girl as she stared at the bodies which were being cremated by her golden flames. “I think that’s the last of our trace destroyed.”

As Cyphina and Snake Girl walked back, they saw a lack of bodies on the floor. The only people they saw were several ARC members were tactically positioned under cover and others located themselves at the door to block off a crowd of people who were staring at the entrance from behind the barricade.

Cyphina and Snake Girl had disabled all their electrical devices, as well as wrapped themselves in Snake Girl’s cold blooded cloak ability. This rendered them invisible to the ARC agent’s special visors, which could normally scan people through obstacles with a precision large enough to analyze any items the target may be holding. The only problem they had left was keeping their footsteps quiet while staying close.

They managed to stay undetected as another round of agents descended down the staircase urgently. Cyphina and Snake Girl had to quickly sit on the edge of the railing, as the agents who passed by carried their weapons which nearly collided with them.

Once the two of them escaped to the barricade, they were able to walk normally since there was a large commotion from upset students trying to see if their peers were ok. They uncloaked sitting in the seats of an outdoor restaurant.

--

#### Blinking Lights

*Main Plot: Cyphina decides to perform the memory mapping technique on Mr. Swinac since the dean’s information was lackluster.*

*Section Plot: Cyphina and Snake Girl visit a memory inside Mr. Swinac’s mind, but the details are all skewed, and the only way to retrieve information from this dream is to play along with the world’s odd rules. However, there seems to be a decent lead in the dream, so they press forth in it.*

*Points:*

* *Justice vs Making the world a better place*
* *Bring a new perspective of a person who deals with a problem that gets overly blown into proportion due to two people who can’t accept losing.*
* *Let’s just gather all the trash of this world and call it a day*
* *You sacrificed so much for this moment, but the one thing that truly mattered was always lost.*
* *When there is no love there is only hatred that fills us up*
* *Hatred takes a lot of energy… time is a natural healer…*
* *You start to acknowledge the people that never existed before when you start to fade away*

Cyphina had been looking up information online on all the names on the list as he and Snake Girl ate lunch at the outdoor restaurant known as The Rainbow Blood Cell. Snake Girl ate some soup with a variety of purple vegetables inside of it, and Cyphina ate some chicken nuggets shaped like origami figures.

“How goes the search?” asked Snake Girl as she continued to survey other people at different tables.

“This list is trash,” replied Cyphina. “I don’t think Mr. Swinac had any intentions of helping.”

“Alright, then I guess it’s time for us to move onto his nightmares. Unless you have a better idea?”

“I guess…”

Snake Girl noticed Cyphina’s plate still nearly full and him leaning against his arm. “What’s wrong? I thought you loved chicken nuggets.”

“Yea… But if I eat too much, I’ll get tired,” replied Cyphina as he got up from the seat slowly.

“Tired just after one battle?”

“Don’t you mean like 20?”

“The other ‘battles’ were technically quickies… but anyways, stay strong Cyphina. I’m sure after we memory map this guy, we’ll solve the case and you’ll be asleep by tonight!”

Snake Girl punched Cyphina straight across the jaw. It was a swift blow without any mercy or regret, and Cyphina’s ink blood began to swell right around the impact.” .

“What the hell is your problem?”

“Feel better?”

“Ironically yes, but I don’t think that hurt at all. I think my mind is just more responsive when you’re the one doing the hitting.”

“Well obviously. I told you, I can feel you are still afraid of me.”

“No I’m not…”

*Not at least in the way you’re thinking of…*

“To my house then!!!”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?” asked Cyphina as they started walking back to his parent’s car.

“Am I?” replied Snake Girl as she took a sip of her bottle filled with swamp water. “

“We need to wait for Mr. Swinac to fall asleep first to activate the mark.”

“Well no duh. That’s why I slept some sleeping pills in his water bottle back when were in the office…”

“You did? Seriously?”

“Yah.”

“Damn…” replied Cyphina as he laid his cheek on his hand. “Thanks… I should’ve thought of that…”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. If you do, you’re probably going to have a hard time surviving the nightmare…”

“Heh, we’ll see,” said Cyphina as he saw the spirit of UndeadM float in front of him.

*“Her plan worked. The mark on my hands is glowing.”*

“Alright,” muttered Cyphina as Snake Girl looked at him curiously. “Undead Morpheus said Mr. Swinac is now asleep,” said Cyphina firmly. He pushed his hands against the table to force himself up.

“Let’s gear up and go.”

--

Snake Girl set up a large number of traps at the entrance of her stone hut before running back to Cyphina who was lying on the same stone sofa he was sitting in at the beginning of their day. Her backpack filled with all sorts of medicine and tools jingled with every step she took.

“Weapons?”

“Check,” replied Snake Girl as she held out her bow lance and UndeadM’s swords.

“Recovery items?” asked Cyphina who was scribbling the information down in a list.”

“Check.” Snake Girl unzipped a suitcase full of magic healing ointments. The case was split into two compartments, one holding a set of green colored potions and bottles of Aurelius, and a compartment with various drugs.

“Tools?”

“We have climbing gear, the thing with all the various tools on it, and walkie talkies.”

“What snacks did you bring?”

“We can’t get hungry in a nightmare… can we?”

“Probably not since time doesn’t function naturally inside the dream.”

“So, do I have to get something…? I don’t mind I have some food inside the ice cave.”

“No, if worse comes to worse we eat each other.”

“Heh, you don’t have to tell me that.”

Cyphina transformed into Undead Morpheus by pulling him out of the shattered black mirror floating above the summoning circle he created.

After a few hand seals, UndeadM touched Snake Girl on the shoulder before closing his eyes. UndeadM had casted the spell Shared Psychosis on her, causing them to share senses. He then dug one of his nails into his skin causing Snake Girl to yell for a moment. UndeadM had a lack of any pain receptors and couldn’t feel any response besides seeing the ink blood ooze from his arm, but the phenomena affecting him was shared with Snake Girl as a result of the spell.

After confirming the link between them, UndeadM proceeded to cast the same spell, but using the power of the mark he’d left on Mr. Swinac, he was able to create a similar link with him from a long distance. Snake girl could see the images of Mr Swinac’s dream as UndeadM continued to channel energy between the connections.

UndeadM looked at Snake Girl as she stared around the room which was slowly fading away into a sea of pink gradient.

“This feels so weird,” said Snake Girl as UndeadM tapped her on the shoulder. “Oh yea, I’m ready to go.”

Snake Girl put a few sleeping pills in her mouth and took a large gulp of water. In a brief moment, she was passed out on the ground.

UndeadM then reverted back to Cyphina who mimicked Snake Girl.

After loading up on pills, he passed out lying next to her on the stone sofa.

--

##### Revisiting the Endless Nightmare

*Ironically, he was never scared of the thought of losing everything, but rather he feared the judgement of his father.*

*Maybe if we’re living in our own dream worlds where we can’t accept that we’re part of the problem, we can’t focus on ourselves. We expect others to help us, and when they don’t understand our problem, that becomes the new problem. We can’t accept that the problem is within us, because we care too much about others, and others don’t care about us, because if they cared about us, they’d understand.*

*Cyphina: I used to be the same way, but there’s two paths to take to end the cycle of our dream worlds. When you wake up and finally see the truth, you can pretend as if nothing happened, moving on to forget all the pain and suffering you cause yourself, but also to forget the you who fought for a small essence of happiness that should exist if this world were to be better. Else you can live with a chip on your shoulder, always remembering the pain, because you already felt a lifetime of pain. What is another lifetime more, when you can always remember the false judgements cast upon you. Hatred is so tiring, but necessary, because a cycle of complacency makes us less human. I don’t know why it’s worth trying to be good, why it makes us feel good, but I’ll do good. First I’ll do it because nobody should feel this pain, and second I will not fall to the hatred, but rather I will carry on the will, of Ari Shizuka.*

“Where are we going… this message disappears into the starry skies…”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“Ahh!” shrieked Cyphina with a flustered expression. “You’re finally awake again?”

“Well yea the pills only last 5-10 minutes.”

“Damn, it’s been 10 minutes already huh? There’s something with the time here.”

“But that’s nothing new in the Endless Nightmare...”

All of the sudden Cyphina and Snake Girl could hear a deep rumbling as the empty space around them started to vibrate.

“This is my favorite part,” yelled Snake Girl in excitement as they floated alongside a jet stream of bubbles containing pictures of memories.

“See anything recent?”

“Umm…” replied Snake Girl as she was able to float around the colorful space by moving her arms and legs like she was swimming.

“I think I found a scene from the future,” replied Snake Girl as Cyphina drifted over.

Snake Girl and Cyphina stared into the shining bubble curiously, as they saw the image of what looked to be a renovated version of Mr. Swinac’s office.

“Just what we need for our futuristic murder,” said Cyphina as he proceeded to climb into the bubble.

“Wait a minute why is something from the future in his memories?” asked Snake Girl as she watched him appear on the image reflected in the bubble.

“Jeez wait up,” mumbled Snake Girl as she dove straight into the liquid silk coating the memory bubble.

As soon as Cyphina and Snake Girl entered, they could hear the noises of quiet music playing as they found themselves sitting in comfortable luxury leather seats which replaced the plastic chairs in Mr. Swinac’s office. .

“Sometimes the line between memories, and fantasy gets blurred,” replied Cyphina as he leaned against the armrest of his chair and watched Snake Girl fall from a rift created midair onto the carpet filled with abstract lily pads.

The office which had been the size of a large bedroom had been transformed to a rustic, miniature library.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/catapultsam/506499062

“Now where’s Mr. Swinac,” said Cyphina as he let out a loud yawn. “The lingering effects of those pills plus .”

“Yea, me too,” said Snake Girl as she stood up and stretched herself out. “But we’re already asleep so there’s not much to do about it.”

Snake Girl grabbed several of the embroidered pillows around her and started throwing them on the ground angrily.

“Is everything in tact?”

“I think so… The bag still feels like it weighs the same, but I’ll check just in case.”

As Snake Girl began to rummage through the supplies, Cyphina thought he heard the sound of laughter.

“Wait a minute… I think I hear something,” said Cyphina as Snake Girl who had her hands deep inside the bag froze still as a gargoyle.

As they stayed silent for a brief moment, only the sound of heavy rain could be heard from behind the books.

“Rain?”

“Shh…” replied Cyphina as Snake Girl stared at the wall with a blank expression.

Suddenly they could hear the sounds of voices coming in the same direction as the noises they had regained consciousness.

“It’s coming from behind the bookshelves…” muttered Snake Girl.

“Maybe one of the books will open a secret door…”

“Or maybe we can blast the door down… It’s not like the dream world people can think rationally anyways.”

“That’s true but…” Cyphina started grabbing random books out of their slots and stacking them on the nearby floor.

“I don’t want to risk it. Plus we can figure a lot about Mr. Swinac by seeing what he reads.”

“Okay... it’s your call…”

Cyphina and Snake Girl found several books with pieces of colored paper inside of them.

“Are these bookmarks?”

“I don’t think so. Some of these papers are lodged inside the books. It just doesn’t seem like a good bookmark if that’s how he’s using.”

“Yea, plus who starts that many books without finishing any of them.”

**Cyphina and Snake Girl eventually realize the color of the papers can be sorted into hot and cold colors. The hottest colors are at the colors with a larger wavelength, and the coldest colors are the cool colors (short wavelength). Following the trail from cold to hot leads to the right book with a switch inside it.**

“Nothing happened,” muttered Cyphina as he flipped the switch.

“I think I heard the sound of something unlocking near the bookshelves over here,” replied Snake Girl as she leans vicariously on a seat that was worth a month’s pay.

“Hey you said we weren’t supposed to do that,” said Snake Girl as Cyphina kicked one of the bookshelves causing it to rotate from its hinge.

The opening left by the shelf revealed that the study room was a single square box in the middle of a port captured on a misty afternoon. The noise of the raindrops, rippling puddles being stepped on, and various words being emphasized from the arrangement of voices can now be clearly heard from inside the room.

“Places that couldn’t be more opposite, side by side,” muttered Cyphina as he felt a refreshing stream of cold air brush his face. “I wonder what it means?”

“I bet Mr. Swinac is remembering the large crowd outside the main hall.”

“That could be the case, but people seem to be fading in and out of the scene. The extent of this memory must be from one edge of the crossing to the other.”

“Then why are people disappearing who aren’t moving at all?”

“Wait… what do you mean?”

“I swear there was a guy right next to the building with the flashing baby blue sign. And over there! Near the ships.”

“The one that says Zephora? That’s a shop that sells decorations, fragrances, and various body creams,” said Cyphina as he stared in that direction. In the midst of several people walking across the area, Cyphina noticed a person standing still, fading in and out.

“Ooh I might check that out later…” said Snake Girl excitedly.

“Since when did you like that kind of stuff?”

“I like to keep my swamp extra bubbly to remind me of home. That stuff also helps keep my skin as slippery as possible to prevent myself from grab attacks.”

“That makes sense I guess… Let’s just find Mr. Swinac and hope the disappearances aren’t something harmful.”

--

*Every 15 minutes things become a little darker...*

As Cyphina and Snake Girl walk around and inspect the crowd from a closer distance, they realize several people talking to themselves.

“That should not be the face of somebody who just got a promotion son. I’m proud of you.”

Cyphina saw a large old man who was at least a foot taller than Cyphina dressed in a gray suit adorned with a logo of some company near his chest. The man had a stern look on his face as he rose his trembling hand and placed it on the air in front of him.

During a pause where his face kept changing expressions, the man’s hand fell back to his side and his eyes traveled from one corner of his view to the other.

“It’s sad huh?” said the man in a deep condescending voice. “ When you see all dust piling up, you think of your old man.”

“Excuse me, but…” asked Cyphina, his voice feeling pale compared to the man’s baritone voice.

“I know you have to go but…” said the old man. “But I want you to know this is the proudest you’ve ever made me.”

“He’s gotta be some kind of apparition or something,” said Snake Girl as she attempted to kick the old man and her leg sliced through his body.

“They’re all probably ghosts or something,” replied Cyphina as the man disappeared in front of them.

“Maybe if we make them all disappear, we can see Mr. Swinac.”

“If so that’s going to be hard with several more that are appearing.”

“Hmm? Are you even paying attention Cyphina?”

“I’m thinking…”

Cyphina could see Snake Girl stared at him impatiently as he examined the surroundings again.

“Ok, what did I miss this time?”

Suddenly Cyphina saw the same old man reappear next to him again.

“I see…”

“It seems as if these disappearing people are stuck in some kind of cycle.”

“Well since they can’t hear us let’s go check out the stores in the back,” said Cyphina as Snake Girl nodded.

“He’s definitely nowhere to be found outside.”

Cyphina and Snake Girl walked side by side to the edge of the crossing,and pressed their faces against some of the cold glass doors of the department buildings. Cyphina noticed the insides of the building to be completely dark, so he assumed these areas to be outside of the dream’s boundaries.

“Over there,” said Snake Girl suddenly as Cyphina noticed a man sitting inside a bar at the base of one of the buildings.

“He looks to be suffering from the various effects of alcohol poisoning,” said Snake Girl as the man sat drooped over a pyramid of shot glasses. “That means he should be easy to manipulate.”

“He’s an easy target either way. It’s nearly impossible for a dreamer to think rationally.”

Cyphina and Snake Girl began to walk over to the bar when Cyphina suddenly stopped.

“Did your brain melt?” asked Snake Girl as the rain continued to drip from the waterproof coat.

“Wait for me out here alright?” replied Cyphina as he looked at Snake Girl’s angry expression.

“What do you mean wait for me? Everybody here is as lifeless as a ghost. There’s no way we can get kicked out… Wait a minute... you’re not even the legal age here!”

“Twas just a joke,” replied Cyphina nonchalantly. “Hey… you’re not mad are you?”

Cyphina watched as the back of Snake girl’s peach and pink colored hair bobbed in the windy rain as she began to walk the other way. “I’m going to try and listen to people outside so… If you need me send me an OL.”

“Alright,” replied Cyphina nervously. “Same to you.”

Cyphina entered the bar where a few people were once again talking to themselves and Mr. Swinac sat on one of the stools also mumbling to himself.

“Hello,” said Cyphina casually as he stole one of the seats of the apparitions sitting next to Mr. Swinac.

Mr. Swinac was sitting with one of his arms against the counter and his hand firmly pressed against his cheek.

“You again?” replied the dean as his voice cracked. “What do you want.”

“I want to know…”

“Wait… don’t tell me. You’re here to complain to me about the school security policy? I told you guys, these things keep happening out of my control. I already set stricter guidelines than 90% of the universities nationwide… what do YOU WANT FROM ME!”

*It seems Mr. Swinac’s ultimate weakness is once again his stubborn openness. Or maybe it’s his biggest strength… it depends if I end up helping him or not.*

“No I want to…”

“You want to know about why I’ve been going to the bar after work the last two month’s huh? Well you couldn’t tell from looking at my desk. You need to look at the secret compartment which you can open from the switch small pin on the bottom left leg. I have weeks of paperwork I haven’t looked over.”

“Okay… but why are you…”

“I’m not a slacker I promise you… I know the board members, the students, my family, all think of me as crazy. But I know he’s not dead… Hehehe…”

Mr. Swinac started to cough uncontrollably until Cyphina gave him a nice punch on the back with such force, the large man went flying out of his seat.

“Oh… Cyphina. Well this is awkward.”

“Are you ok Mr. Swinac?”

“What are you doing here? You shouldn’t be going to bars yet.”

“I mean I don’t think anybody here is alive enough to say otherwise.”

Mr. Swinac looked around at the unsuspecting ghosts before turning back to Cyphina. “I’m not about holding you back, I just had to say that just incase.”

“Yea I understand,” replied Cyphina as Mr Swinac let out a big yawn and checked his watch.

“Shit… I’ve wasted too much time here. Time to get back to work.”

“Wait I need you to come with us…”

“No can do. As you stand still, the world changes around you,” said Mr. Swinac as he stood up. “So no standing still… hahaha”

Cyphina followed Mr Swinac as he exited the bar into the pouring rain. Somehow, the sky had turned darker in his brief time inside the bar.

“This is weird,” mumbled Cyphina as he saw Snake Girl run up towards him and Mr. Swinac.

“Hey Cyphina, some strange things happened when you were inside.”

“Hey there, are you a friend of Cyphina?” asked Mr. Swinac.

“Uhh…”

Snake girl looked at Cyphina who shrugged.

“Yea.”

“Wow! You’re dad would be proud you finally made a friend.”

*Even in his dreams that’s what he remembers about me huh? Wait a second… where have I heard this before.*

Cyphina and Snake Girl followed Mr. Swinac back into his office.

“But I bet your dad wouldn’t be proud of you huh?” snided Cyphina.

Mr. Swinac pointed to Cyphina and nodded. “You’re right about that,” he replied agreeingly. “My dad is only proud when I do something that makes him look good. But that’s what happens when you grow up in a society that values achievements.

“How’d you know that old man was talking about him?” whispered Snake Girl as Mr. Swinac proceeded to open up his secret drawer of his desk which cause an influx of papers to go flying throughout the room.

Cyphina and Snake Girl helped him gather up the papers, while skimming over them to see if there was any important information.

“There was a good chance since him and his old man are both taller than like 99% of people.”

“Thanks,” said Mr. Swinac in an earnest, but tired voice as Snake Girl handed her stack of papers to Cyphina who placed them on his desk.

“I know you students probably think of your dean as somebody with a bit more poise, but…” “THIS IS WHO I REALLY AM!” yelled Mr Swinac as he made fake crying sounds . “This is what the last few months did to me…”

“You seem like a normal person to me,” replied Cyphina who was trying his best to keep a straight expression. “I can only say that I respect you more, knowing that we both seem to have fucked up our lives in some way.”

“Heh… Yea…”

Mr. Swinac took out a small screen with several LED dots on it stored at the bottom of his table’s secret compartment. The lights on the screen glimmered and faded away at certain intervals.

“I have to work now, but if you kids are bored you can play with this,” said Mr. Swinac as he dropped it into Snake Girl’s hand.

“My son made this when he was studying to be an electrician.”

“I saw him before once when you invited all the faculty and their family to your house before I even came to OneZen.” responded Cyphina.

“Yup, that was him.”

“I remember that day… I think I was watching him play games in the basement. Probably because I didn’t want to socialize with anybody,” replied Cyphina as the smile widened on his face revealing a few teeth.

“That sounds just like him alright. He used to have a problem leaving the basement. All he did was sit and play games all day, but not because he was lazy,” said Mr. Swinac as he brushed a piece of lint off the corner of his glasses case.

“But because he’s always had a hard time coping with other people.”

“Guess I must’ve contracted that from him. How is he now?”

“He killed himself”

“Wait what?” replied Cyphina as he had to manually force his smile away.

“I’m joking… well not really.”

“So are you joking or not joking?” asked Snake Girl unsympathetically.

“Everybody thinks he killed himself… except for me. We’ll see though… we’ll see,” repeated Mr. Swinac as his voice slowly faded.

Suddenly Mr. Swinac’s voice quickly changed back to its upbeat sound. “I have to get back to work, no more distractions!”

“But I still need to know about…”

“We can talk when I’m done,” said Mr. Swinac as he waved towards the door with his hand.

Mr. Swinac put on a pair of noise cancelling headphones and signaled for Cyphina and Snake Girl to venture off with a wave of the fingers.

“Hey we’re not done with you,” said Snake Girl angrily as she marched over towards Mr. Swinac and ripped the headphones off Mr. Swinac’s head. “Tell us about your two lackeys you…”

Mr Swinac grabbed the headphone adamantly. “Don’t touch what’s not yours…” said them man in the low intimidating voice which had been hiding inside him.

Cyphina was frozen in place as he watched the little girl eye the big man with her unwavering ferocity. Part of him appreciated her blunt approach which he was unable to force himself upon, and the other part of him was thinking about the resulting nightmares.

“Or what old man,” replied Snake Girl aggressively as Mr. Swinac’s face started to turn red when he attempted to yank the listening device out of Snake Girl’s grips, only to end up splitting the headphones in half due to the little girl’s slime reinforced grip..

*Shit it’s too late now* thought Cyphina as Mr. Swinac looked at the girl with eyes full of fight.

“What are you?” screamed Mr. Swinac as Snake Girl crushed the remnants of the headset with her bare hands and let the spilled out the crumbled remains fall on his desk.

“You’re worst…”

Cyphina grabbed her from behind and covered her mouth but his hand slipped due to a combination of her wiggling, her extremely slippery skin, and the rifts that had spawned unannounced around the study room.

“Snake Girl!!!” chided Cyphina as he watched a two girls and boy fall out of the rift.

“Let’s see what you’re scared of,” muttered Snake Girl as she cracked her knuckles. The three nightmares landed staring at the ground on all fours, but after a moment, they simultaneously snapped their heads up at a rate which would kill any regular human being.

Six large hollow circles for eye sockets and a single laser pointer iris was focused on Cyphina who was performing the Black Mirror Ritual, and the saliva dripping from Snake Girl’s fangs.

“I wonder how good that blood dripping from your mouth will taste?” said Snake Girl as the three nightmares started crawling closer to them.

**Cyphina and Snake Girl vs Unforgivable Killer, Unforgivable Panic, and Unforgivable Reasonless.**

*The three unforgiven represents the 3 sides of Mr. Swinac’s story: The killer who he’s trying to find, the moment Mr. Swinac panics when realizing all his actions lead to his son walking astray, and the rest of his family who blames him for not moving on.*

As they battle Snake Girl tries to be more flashy than usual causing UndeadM to have to tank a few shots for her. When the battle ends and UndeadM reverts back to Cyphina, Cyphina clutches his shoulder which has a large glowing gash on it.

“What just happened,” muttered Mr. Swinac as he examined his surroundings as if he’d just woke up from a daydream.

“Nothing, nothing at...”

“We we’re asking you a question about two guys you might know until you blanked out,” said Snake Girl as she nodded at Cyphina.

Cyphina described the two men to Mr. Swinac who nodded as he heard their descriptions.

“Yes, those guys are people I came across in my investigations. I only know them from some online interactions, but they were part of my son’s clan.”

“Clan like they were in some kind of group?”

“It’s a term for a group of gamers who work together to do things. I’ve learned these things in my investigation which has taken me deep in the internet.”

“So what’s their names?”

“Biokid1992, and Bjarne7.”

“I mean in real life.”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know? Aren’t you supposed to figure that out as part of your investigation?”

“They were my son’s friends. They aren’t the ones who I’m focused on investigating…”

“That’s lazy investigating,” said Snake Girl.

“I mean, if you really wanted answers, then go ask Liro.”

“Liro?”

“My son.”

Cyphina saw Snake Girl’s expression transform from a neutral outlook to agitated in a short delay after the words hit her eardrums.

“His name is Liro,” said Mr. Swinac as if he expected them to have known.

“I thought you said he was dead?”

“Yes, but he’s also in hell, mostly due to my negligence.”

Mr. Swinac observed Cyphina and Snake Girl’s exchange of facial expressions and quickly realized he hadn’t finished his explanation.

“You guys must have never been to the Moujin Mart have you? The underground is literally hell. I’m sure you can find him there.”

“But the other buildings in the area are closed at this time.”

“Moujin Mart opens…” Mr. Swinac rolled down his sleeves revealing an expensive watch. “15 minutes from now. Go play outside or whatever you kids do… I’ll take a break when it’s time to go.”

“We’re kind of on a tight schedule, so I’m going to have to drag you…”

“We’ll be looking around for a brief moment, thanks,” interrupted Cyphina as he dragged her out underneath the portico catching rain from underneath the bookshelf passageway.

“Snake Girl, if we keep forcing things, we’re going to screw this whole operation.”

“What do you mean Cyphina?” replied Snake Girl defensively. “I just helped us get a whole boatload of information, and I could’ve made the clock take another tick if you hadn’t just stopped me now.”

“Look, the events in the memory world follows a certain logical pattern based upon the memory. Screwing with Mr. Swinac will break this logic. Broken logic will cause us to relive things that never even existed in the first place.”

“One step forward in the wrong direction could be one step forward...”

“I’m not saying that we’re going in circles… yet. You’re leading us forward, and you’re doing great Snake Girl… just be careful alright?” said Cyphina as he grimaced at the pain flowing from the mark towards his chest.

*If only you knew we were also doing this for you…*

Snake Girl nodded compliantly.

“It says R-U-I-N,” said Snake Girl as she held out the toy in front of her as they walked back to the edge of the office..

“It does?”

“Yea, the lights turn on and off so it’s hard to see, but if your cover all the dots that blink...”

Snake Girl started marking some of the LED lights with her spit.

“See it?”

“Yea I saw the R,” replied Cyphina. “But what does ruin mean???”

Suddenly Cyphina thought of an idea as he glanced at Mr. Swinac hard at work from his peripheral vision.

Snake Girl leaned her head closer to him as he whispered, “I think I found something.”

--

The crossing seemed more alive even though the night became deeper, and the pouring rain, a few inches away from their toes, poured even heavier..

“Since he’s busy we might as well try and find more information from this memory. It seems as this might be a collection memories of the past few days, given the state of his office and how his attitude correlates with his missing son.”

“Isn’t it odd that the only places open are a bar and a fancy replica of Mr. Swinac’s office?” asked Snake Girl.

“Yea, and the fact that Mr. Swinac spends all his time answering student letters, but doesn’t do his important paperwork.”

“Maybe this is all extra details..”

“There’s no such thing as extra in here Snake Girl. In this world where we relive his memories, the truth takes shape as various symbol… we just need to learn to find them…”.

“What about the fake stuff you said that could happen when you force things too hard?”

“Besides that…”

“Well you never know if if something is a symbol not,” said Snake Girl as Cyphina nodded in accordance. “We should check for the existence of this secret compartment in desk to be sure.”

“We will… tomorrow… that is if we need to.”

“Hey, didn’t that secretary say that he was first guy to check in and possibly the last guy out? How can he be behind on his work?”

“I forgot about that… Something must be distracting him…”

“But first I wanted to tell you something that little mechanism reminded me of,” said Cyphina as Mr. Swinac dimmed the lights around the office..

“Did you destroy your library books?”

“Ahem, I’m an adult Snake Girl. I can buy my own books of course… well I could if I had a job,” muttered Cyphina as he stared at the ground and scratched his hair nervously..

“Anyways,” said Cyphina as he clapped his hands together. “What if... the people fading in and out are just like the lights on that screen?”

“Umm… you think there’s some kind of message behind them?”

“I have no idea I just thought of how the people disappearing and reappearing makes a similar effect. The crossing is also shaped just like the LED board.”

“That makes sense, but then what about the people crossing?”

“Just ignore them for now.”

Snake Girl began to attempt to climb up to the roof of the single-roomed house and Cyphina ran over to help her as soon as he realized what she was doing.

Snake Girl managed to scale on the wet tiles of the roof due to the slightly adhesive goo she spat on her hands. Rain pummeled her brille rigorously causing her to have a hard time focusing initially, but eventually she fiercely rubbed her eyes before forming a few hand seals.

“Eye of Mplpmtchm!”

As she stood up, her eyes began to gleam causing a beams of dark piercing light to radiate from her pupils.

“Cyphina?”

“Are you okay up there Mrs. Light Beacon?”

“Yea! I think I see something, but it’s not what we expected.”

“What is it?!”

Snake Girl hopped down and Cyphina tried to catch her but she ended up crushing him.

“That was the same arm I just injured...”

“You didn’t have to do that ya know… Snake’s can survive falls from as long as they use the proper spinal cord-relaxing technique before hand.”

“Yea I’ll remember that,” mumbled Cyphina as he pushed her off of her.

Everybody we saw moments ago is gone, but now there are new people replacing them. These people definitely only appeared after you left the cafe.”

“Shit… we needed to remember the locations of the initial people.”

“It’s alright, I have a photographic memory!”

“Wait really?” asked Cyphina as he flashed a brief, hopeful smile.

“But I guess it doesn’t matter since you didn’t even get a good view of the initial layout…”

“Just kidding,” sang Snake Girl. “However, I do see a security camera outside the bar perfectly positioned to get the image we need.”

“Alright, hopefully we figure out the meanings of these symbols sometime soon.”

“More like hopefully these symbols aren’t relevant to our mystery. From the looks of it, all we need to do is get inside Moujin Mall.”

*I guess I’m a little bit too curious about Mr. Swinac’s ordeal* thought Cyphina.

--

Cyphina and Snake Girl strolled back to Mr. Swinac who was still working on what looked like a massive stack of papers.

“Hey you ready to go yet?” asked Cyphina as Mr. Swinac took off his headset as he saw Cyphina approach him.

“Let’s see…” replied Mr. Swinac as he unraveled his sleeve once again.

“You guys need to find something to do because you barely waited outside at all.”

“What do you mean; we just had a really long planning session,” replied Snake Girl angrily.

“Umm…”

“What?” asked Snake Girl as Cyphina pointed to the clock on top of the Zephora department store.

“Did that clock just break down or something? I think the hour hand fell off stopping all time keeping devices from updating!”

*You’re right, there’s no hour hand on that clock*. *Then it’s not keeping track of time in our conventional sense, but perhaps it still tracks some state*.

“Time passed as soon as Mr. Swinac moved back to his office didn’t it?”

“Wait a minute… you think it moves only when he moves?”

“Ya know... sometimes it’s nice to be quiet so you can let the other person have the pleasure of explaining,” said Cyphina as he Snake Girl grinned innocently.

“When he was drunk he said something about the world changing around you as you stand still. But you can’t see those changes…”

“Until you start moving.”

“It seems that way Snake Girl. There’s got to be some way we can make him move before he finishes that humongous stack of paperwork. If we don’t… I bet the dream will just naturally end.”

“So can I drag then?”

“No… no dragging. We need to make the logic naturally flow.”

“Maybe the key is within the conversations,” suggested Snake Girl. “You were able to trigger a reaction in him by something you heard these guys talking about.

“It’s a possibility,” replied Cyphina in accord. “Did you learn anything else important when I was inside?”

“Not really,” said Snake Girl as she nodded. “I think some of the people here are just part of his imagination.”

“Wait a minute, I think I know what to do.”

Cyphina and Snake Girl turned back to Mr. Swinac who had put his headset on during the middle of their conversation. He was reading several papers simultaneously..

“Hey, got a moment?” asked Cyphina as Mr. Swinac pulled off one side of his headset and continued to focus on his work.

“What is it now Mr. Lyena?”

“Is there anything you can assign us to do so we can pass the time?”

“Hmm…” replied Mr. Swinac as he put down the papers in front of him. “There is something actually. If we’re going to the Moujin Underhell, then I would like to get my investigation notes.”

“Umm…” Mr swinac opened several drawers inside his table. “Shit, I remember my wife hid them from me...”

“Alright we’ll get them for you,” replied Cyphina assuredly. “Stay busy.”

“Well, don’t expect any luck finding them.” replied Mr. Swinac as he started bobbing his head as the beat started to crescendo from inside his speakers.”

“I’ve searched for them all inside the house. She really doesn’t want me to continue the investigation…”

“We can do it. Just give us anything you can to help us.”

“I can tell you that I’m looking for a binder I kept as well as a usb drive. Here, take these keys as well. This one is the key to my house…”

“Okay.”

“I know you know that I haven’t been at home for a while… but if you steal anything of mine, don’t expect to come back to OneZen… ever…”

“Alright, we’re going right now.”

“Hey wait,” said Mr Swinac as Cyphina and Snake Girl stopped and turned around.

“Good luck you too,” said Mr. Swinac earnestly. “I feel better about the investigation that I’ve ever felt… It means a lot. Just having someone else besides myself. Having people believe in me, and even selflessly help me. Words can’t describe how much this means.”

“Your papers are as good as found,” replied Snake Girl passionately.

Snake Girl then turned to Cyphina with a defeated expression.

“Asking him? How is that going to make him move?” pouted Snake Girl.

“All we must do is make him think that time passed,” replied Cyphina as he performed the black mirror ritual. “Get ready,” whispered Cyphina before he turned into his monster form.

Snake Girl watched curiously as UndeadM used Seinen Departure on himself and snuck towards Mr. Swinac. UndeadM took out a sword from his hammer sheathe and aimed it at Mr. Swinac’s watch.

UndeadM then uncloaked himself slightly from behind Mr. Swinac’s chair and nodded towards Sylphia who strutted happily towards Mr. Swinac’s desk.

“Hey! Mr. Swinac~!” said Snake Girl in a melodic voice. “Is it time yet?”

“I swear you just asked me that…”

“Yea well I need to know the current time so show me it anyways.”

Mr. Swinac looked down at his wrist and started to unravel his sleeve.

“It’s 15 minutes past twelve Mrs. Snake… or is it Mrs. Girl…”

“It’s Mrs. Snake… Snake…”

“Girl!!!” replied Snake Girl as she sneezed on Mr. Swinac releasing her goo. As the transluscent goo landed in his eyes, UndeadM stabbed the watch, destroying it.

“Sorry,” mumbled Snake Girl as she rubbed her nose hiding a sadistic smile.

“Ugh, feel free to take some of my tissues with you,” replied Mr. Swinac who was wiping his eyes vigorously with his sleeves which rolled up covering the broken watch. Snake Girl heard a small whoosh sound as Cyphina uncloaked himself outside of the office.

“If you insist,” replied Snake Girl as she took the whole box.

“Jeez, I didn’t mean all of them…”

--

##### Blood Infused Comet of Madness

***Main Plot:*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *Cyphina and Snake Girl venture another dream known as the Sun Therapy Dream. In this dream, all people who are secret sinners are roasted by the sun and they become monsters whose flesh disintegrates.*

*This means that everybody who Mr. Swinac thinks is a monster will show their true forms. However, Cyphina notices that some monsters may be less of a monster than Mr. Swinac may think, while others are hiding in plain sight, like his daughter and the therapist which made Mr. Swinac’s wife turn insane.*

*Cyphina and Snake Girl awaken inside Mr. Swinac’s old house, but the whole*

***Points:***

* *Turn against me to accept a truth that is convenient.*
* *Justice vs moving forward…*
* *Never sit down to discuss formally since we’re so angry*
* *What if hell is about selective progress, not about judgment or punishment. This is the Sadist of Hell’s purgatory. All those who cannot believe in others or treats others poorly will suffer a deadly fate as the burning sun turns them into monsters that slaughter the selfish.*

The illusionary rain continued to pour as Cyphina and Snake Girl stood at a bus stop shelter amongst some of the flashing ghosts.

Cyphina was busy punching in a few notes on his phone before they prepared to leave the memory.

“How do we go to his house if this memory only spans this small city area and his office?” asked Snake Girl who was lying on one of the wet benches and kicking her legs through one of the ghosts.

Cyphina was silent for a moment until he pocketed his phone and stood up.

“We go to another memory of course. A recent one at his house preferably.”

“Oh yea… I totally forgot about that,” said Snake Girl lightheartedly. She was gazing at water dripping off a thin layer of rainproof goo surrounding her skin.

“Hopefully the next memory is more action packed.”

“I unfortunately agree,” said Cyphina as he let out a large yawn. “Alright, the spell should be activating shortly.”

The exit spell to leave memories had a few minutes delay before activating and drained some of UndeadM’s powers making it crucial to secure the area before leaving. Luckily none of the ghosts were hostile, nor self-aware.

Cyphina and Snake Girl smoothly exited the memory back into the field of memories, where they spawned several meters away from each other. Cyphina could see Snake Girl behind several translucent memory bubbles, and he saw she was examining several of the memories.

“Hey, I think I found something at a house here,” said Snake Girl as she pointed to a bubble with the image of a bedroom.

“I can’t really tell how recent it is. Ideally, we want a memory around the time he hadn’t been going home, since that’s probably right around the time his wife would be fed up and steal the information.”

“Well we can check in his bedroom calendar if we go into this one.”

“Alright, let’s try it,” said Cyphina.

--

The whole room was dark except for the red lights. There were two shining from the windows, one from the digital clock’s LEDs, one from a phone being charged near the nightstand, and a set of flashing red lights on what looked to be the clue screen.

Despite flashing images of Zone lying on the floor with his skull cracked open and oozing blood, Cyphina’s leaden eyes felt like a star trying to escape from a black hole. The warm but thin layer of carpet felt like heaven to his fatigued body wrapped in wet clothes.

Suddenly he heard the noise of a distant beeping from inside his trance. The noise became louder as his eyes widened, until he realized when he regained consciousness that the noise was deafening.

“What the hell?” said Cyphina in a deep and angry voice.

“That’s what you get for sleeping on the job,” replied Snake Girl as she pressed the snooze button on the alarm clock that she was holding up next to his ear.

“I bet you can’t guess the time,” said Snake Girl as Cyphina rubbed his eyes and started examining the scenery.

*I was so close to dying there, my body can’t handle much more. But I must go on… There’s things to live for now. Pupii, Snake Girl and Zone are counting on me…*

“It has to be sunrise or sundown,” said Cyphina as he let out another deep yawn.

“Nope, look,” said Snake Girl as she turned the clock to face Cyphina. Cyphina’s eyes were slightly blinded by the bright crimson LEDs.

“10 am… But why is the sky red then?” asked Cyphina as he slowly stood up and walked to the blinds.

“Why is the apocalypse happening outside?” asked Cyphina casually as Snake Girl popped up right next to his arm.

Snake Girl’s eyes followed the giant burning meteor amongst the clouds. The meteor left a bright red trail as it circled through the sky like the moon on steroids.

“It can’t be the apocalypse unless it actually destroys something.”

“I guess. You know what they say about the three categories of fear. Dread is the most powerful, and it seems we are going to be forever dreaded with the looming doom inside this memory.”

“Well do you really want to risk your life and find another one? You said you were on a timer, weren’t you?”

“What’s the date on the calendar.”

“Umm…” Snake Girl started scanning around the room until she found a calendar pinned on the back of the closet door which was filled of dismembered body parts which spilled out on the floor.

“This must be a memory mixed with a nightmare,” said Cyphina who kept his straight face as Snake Girl kicked some of the parts back into the closet.

“Look, horrific things are all around us,” said Snake Girl optimistically. “We can’t give up because a meteor out of our control could destroy the area if we’re unlucky!”

“At least we can fight for the monsters we face…”

“Whatever, the date here says August 23rd. That means this memory is around the time frame we’re looking for!”

“Snake Girl, it’s one thing if I get blasted by a meteor. The shadows may be able to mend me…”

“Yea so then why are you scared your big baby.”

*Because I made a promise to protect you…*

“Look at that meteor, it’s like it’s dancing in the sky. It’s going to burn itself out before it hits the ground. And if it does, it’s going to shrink. And if it somehow stabs me, it’ll only hurt like me stabbing you with this spear really hard.”

*She does have a point… The meteor is burning in the sky and with the trajectory it’s going… It looks like it could be stuck circling for quite the time.*

Cyphina took a deep breath as Snake Girl looked at him eagerly. “Alright, let’s gather stuff from the room and move out.”

“Yes! This dream looks like it will have a lot of action!”

--

Snake Girl and Cyphina searched the room for clues and found some evidence that this room had once belonged to Mr. Swinac’s son: Davin, “Philosopher” as he was known online, Swinac.

The room had turned into a small shrine commemorating Davin after his death. The room was still well maintained. There was a fresh coat of pink paint along the walls, and the carpet was recently steamed with some sea foam scented cleaner.

There were pictures of Davin scattered on the walls, and on the single shelf holding several books about virtues.

Davin had completed high school a few years prior, despite being older than Cyphina by 8 years. Searching through his backpack which looked as if they still had the exact same books he carried to school before his death, Cyphina found Davin also studied to become a software engineer, but he wasn’t a full-time student.

Unfortunately, there were no ways to access the laptop which Cyphina assumed to hold a plethora of information about Davin. Cyphina recognized the model as one of the brands that OneZen gave to all its teachers, yet the only account was Davin’s.

“There’s nothing about the two assailants here, let’s go already!”

*He knows them from his online interactions, so this laptop should have some information on what site he met them on. I could bring it to the campus technology services, but I wonder where, if it even exists, is it the laptop stored in reality?*

“You’re right,” replied Cyphina. “Let’s find Mr. Swinac’s room.”

As soon as Cyphina opened the room door, he realized that the nightmare had caused the structure of the house to deform. The bedroom was connected to an extremely long hallway filled with abstract yet agonizing paintings leading towards the only illumination in the room: a bright, sparkling light at the end of the hall.

Snake Girl and Cyphina cautiously walked through the hallways while examining some of the decrepit paintings arduously, as if they could come to life at any moment.

When Cyphina and Snake Girl reached about the halfway point, they noticed a loud rumbling occurring behind the walls. As they prepared themselves for something to appear, suddenly the walls began to close.

“We need to get back now!” yelled Cyphina as he attempted to pull Snake Girl back towards Davin’s room.

“If we don’t go forward, we’ll be closed off!” replied Snake Girl abruptly as she freed herself and started to run forwards.

“Shit,” muttered Cyphina as he ran after her as the walls kept closing in.

Snake Girl started to use her “Gone With the Blast” ability to jump herself several meters forward towards the light, but Cyphina wasn’t able to catch up with her.

*I think you made it…* thought Cyphina as his face contorted into disfigured smile before what felt like imminent death.

Cyphina ended up transforming into Undead Morpheus before every bone in his body was completely shattered as the wall transformed the monster into a pancake.

After a moment the wall slowly opened again and UndeadM’s remains was squashed against the wall like a piece of slime thrown against the wall.

The shadows instantly started to form sprites which gathered around the debilitated body, to repair it. Meanwhile, Snake Girl had teleported past the extents of the wall, and met a woman dressed in a mask filled with holes which emanated light.

“Who are you? Why did you come to the room?!”

“Are you Davin’s mother?” asked Snake Girl calmly as she glanced behind herself for a second and saw Cyphina was missing.

“Davin? I don’t want to hear that name anymore… DON’T SAY THAT NAME!”

The woman reached to grab Snake Girl but despite the woman’s unnatural quickness, she was unable to get a grip on Snake Girl’s slimy skin.

“I’ll deal with you in a second,” said Snake Girl as she started to run back in the halls. She could see the lights moving behind her, so she looked over her shoulder and saw the woman chasing her.

Snake Girl let out an acid slime spray attack making the floors slippery and deadly which slowed down the woman for a moment, but Snake Girl was able to reach Cyphina with a follow up blast teleport spell.

Snake Girl saw a bloody face staring at UndeadM as the shadow sprites circled around him slowly rebuilding his body.

“Those who travel down this hallway have a place to go. Maybe they don’t know where that place is. But those afraid to continue despite all odds, shouldn’t have even come.”

“Cyphina!” Snake Girl saw the monster and remembered he couldn’t reply so she took a deep breath and prepared herself for battle.

“You repair yourself UndeadM. I’ll take them both on until your back. But take your time. I don’t want you to steal all the fun.”

**Cyphina and Snake Girl vs Glowing Lights Lady and Wall of Hesitation. Cyphina gets the debuff “Inhabilitated” for 3 minutes until the shadows mend his body.**

UndeadM finished off the wall by lodging his silver sword into the face causing it to scream in its deep monstrous voice. As the monster continued to scream, UndeadM kept digging his sword further into the wall’s face, but eventually he reverted to Cyphina.

“Whatever kind of monster you are, you need to learn when to give up,” said Cyphina solemnly. “Spewing brainy philosophical quotes about recklessly moving forward through all adversities is the sign of somebody stuck in his own nightmare.”

“How long are you going to stab that thing for?” yelled Snake Girl as she attempted to eat the remains of the Glowing Lights Lady. “Ugh, she’s a monster but she doesn’t taste like the monsters in real life.”

“Until he shuts up, I guess,” replied Cyphina. “Then we know he’s dead”

As soon as the screaming ended the face of the wall disappeared. Cyphina took several deep breaths as the veins in his arms were popping due to the extreme pressure he had maintained on the blade’s hilt.

Snake Girl watched in silence as a growing pool of sweat formed underneath Cyphina. Cyphina’s muscles had become extremely sore, but he eventually managed to get himself up as he shook his head in disapproval.

“Don’t get too carried away,” mumbled Cyphina as Snake Girl helped him up onto her shoulder.

“I know… I know…”

--

**Gameplay and Plot Details Time**

Eventually Cyphina was able to walk on his own two feet due to his ink blood’s regenerative nature, and his desire to keep up with Snake Girl. One moment she was helping him walk, the next she was already running ahead into rooms filled with monsters, walls of corrupted flesh, and cracks where more monsters hid until they saw Cyphina or Snake Girl preoccupied. The monsters would then proceed to ambush them but UndeadM had already seen them long before they crept out.

Cyphina felt a little worry whenever Snake Girl lead the expeditions into every new room they crossed, but he kept reminding himself to trust in her scouting abilities. Part of his worry was split in the thought that he wouldn’t be able to keep up with her after feeling the creeping fatigue after every single battle.

The end of the hallway lead to the main room of a large mansion. Cyphina was surprised since he didn’t think that working at an educational institution was a well-paying job, but examining some of the distorted pictures around the area lead Cyphina to the conclusion that Mr. Swinac had married someone well off.

Sometimes the doors were hidden behind puzzles. Snake Girl always had a great time solving the puzzles while Cyphina usually sat in the couches scattered throughout the rooms analyzing whatever she found while occasionally closing his eyes. Cyphina hated closing his eyes, since he could feel death lingering ever so closely.

These mixed feelings lead to the ultimate bittersweet whenever Snake Girl would yell “Easy Peasy!!!” once she finished solving a room’s puzzle. Cyphina could barely hear the noise, but he knew that she would be marching over towards him promptly and probably slam him across the room if he didn’t get ready to go. At the same time, he couldn’t help but smile whenever the hand pulled him up.

Cyphina and Snake Girl arrived at several passive rooms including bedrooms of Mr. Swinac’s daughter, Anabelle, and a living room with a haunted TV, and cabinets filled with books and old VHS tapes.

From the contents of the monster-less rooms, Cyphina was able to discern more and more about the family’s situation. It seems as if Mr. Swinac was being pushed away from the rest of the family and being blamed by them for the death of his son. Anabelle was also not Mr. Swinac’s biological daughter, but rather his wife already had a child when they were married.

Unfortunately, despite searching for a connection between the glowing light’s lady and Davin, Cyphina had yet to find any clues on the matter.

--

There was a room

--

In one room Snake Girl found a circle of intricate crystal dogs on a plate which had to be arranged in an order that was determined by the color of a children’s clock hanging on the wall.

While Snake Girl was analyzing the dogs Cyphina was reading some of the nearby romance novels with the same overused plots about some woman with mental illness.

As soon as the dogs were properly arranged, a closet appeared along one of the walls, leading them to what seems to be the next room. As Snake Girl invites Cyphina over, the closet suddenly opens, and something pulls her into it.

Cyphina hastily runs and enters the closet but the door to the closet transforms into a mirror bolted on the wall which showcases a monster strangling Snake Girl.

Cyphina watches in horror for a moment but quickly recomposes himself and starts to look for any other exits in the room. He uses UndeadM’s brute strength to remove the mirror and carries it around as he backtracks through the door which they came from and finds himself in a new room.

*How fucking large is this place? Mr. Swinac doesn’t live in a mansion.*

Cyphina takes another quick peek at the mirror and finds Snake Girl now choking the monster out. He lets out a deep sigh of relief until he notices a few other monsters that are coming to attack her, but she’s adamant on killing the monster who ambushed her, so she won’t let go.

The room which Cyphina lands in is a large empty room with a staircase, and giant monster circling it.

*It looks dangerous to directly fight something that massive but… I have no choice.* Cyphina leaves the mirror behind and initiates the battle.

**Cyphina vs Sunburned Giant**

The giant’s attacks were slow but deadly, however Cyphina was able to keep his range by running around the staircase which the giant was somehow unable to break.

Something struck Cyphina as odd when he fought the giant. The giant seemed as if it didn’t want to fight at times, but Cyphina wasn’t able to think much of it as he was focused on finding Snake Girl.

Cyphina checked the mirror but saw the room with Snake Girl had been completely deserted. He then quickly marched up the steps where he found a second floor containing several bedrooms. Most of the rooms contained loot, but one door was a portal.

As Cyphina stepped into the portal he found himself in an extremely large dining hall, where Snake Girl was sitting on one of the chairs alongside what looked like Mr. Swinac’s family.

--

Eventually Cyphina and Snake Girl found themselves in a basement where a large human shaped crack had consumed the wall in front of them.

“It’s empty,” said Cyphina as he reverted to his human form after using his monster form’s blood plumed eyes to piece through the dark void. “But there’s quite the warm draft coming from it. Perhaps the meteor in the sky is warming everything.”

“It feels good compared to my cold cave,” said Snake Girl as the small flame hovering over her head revealed her mouth opening as if she had just realized something.

“That’s right… my slow burning flame technique should have consumed the firewood by now…” lamented Snake Girl.

“I hope we don’t freeze to death…”

“Look at what we’re wearing,” replied Cyphina as Snake Girl patted her hoodie setting fire to it.

“Oh yea…” giggled Snake Girl as she blasted the rapidly burning flames on her sweater with a dose of her Snake Goo which enveloped the fire. The flames quickly died out and the goo slowly crept down her sweater like a snail until it dripped onto the concrete floors covered by a thin layer of carpet.

“Maybe that’s where we must go,” replied Snake Girl as she snapped her fingers causing a small golden flame to form on top of her palms. Snake Girl held out her hand as she rotates around so Cyphina could investigate the surroundings.

“Shine your light there again,” ordered Cyphina as Snake Girl pointed her light which reflected off a mirror in the distance.

“There’s steps in the mirror,” said Cyphina nonchalantly as he yawned. “But nothing in the part of the wall in the reflection.”

Snake Girl ran towards the mirror and started experimenting on it. She eagerly reached into the mirror as if it were another world, but quickly became angry when she realized the mirror behaved like an ordinary mirror except for the oddities in the reflected image.

*I swear I read a book with this scenario once…* thought Cyphina as he laid down on a futon on the basement.

“Whoa Cyphina. I think I solved this puzzle!”

“What happened this time…”

“This isn’t an ordinary mirror. It doesn’t reflect the area around us, but it reflects some area far away from us.”

“So what is it reflecting?”

“It looks like a kitchen… There’s food on the table, dishes, ohh and there’s the sink,” rambled Snake Girl as she swerved the mirror around in the air.

“Wait a second I think there’s somebody in this reflection… Yes… There’s somebody hiding in the closet! It must be another survivor!”

“Or a monster who’s looking for an easy ambush on somebody naked.”

“That’s even better. Hopefully he’s tasty.”

“Yea,” replied Cyphina as he got himself back up slowly before Snake Girl could drag him again and shred another piece of his sweater.

*I think in one of the book I read… there was a hole that some mentally ill girl traveled to reach another world just like the one in the mirror… Hopefully Mr. Swinac has read this book and this whole room is some kind of memorabilia.*

--

Cyphina and Snake Girl had traveled through the dark tunnel where more monsters roamed. A lot of the monsters were sunburned humans exhibiting amplified aggression.

Eventually they reached a gigantic demon wearing armor deep into the tunnel. The monster had an extremely deep and resonant voice which in tandem with the echoing of the tunnel caused the corrupted ground to vibrate.

“Hello my children <3,” says the demon, whose voice sounds like an attempt to be calm and affectionate, but came out like a monster performing an incantation.

“Hello,” replies Snake Girl nonchalantly. “We’re looking for something and are passing by here. What lies at the end of this tunnel?”

“We are all searching for something my dear. At the end of this tunnel is the great outside, but it’s dangerous to go. The sky is burning bright red.”

“What’s wrong the sky?” asked Cyphina.

“Satellites orbit the world when enough blood stains the sky. It marks purgatory, justice on behalf of mankind.”

*I guess Mr. Swinac has some strange desire for justice for his son, and if not, he has to have been thinking about it; possibly from reading books.*

“Beware of any monsters you may face onwards. Some of them might want to kill you.”

“What do you mean some? You’re the first monster who doesn’t want to kill us.”

“I am not a monster, but rather an angel of hope.”

“Well you don’t really look or sound angelic but you sure are hopeful.”

“What do you mean little one? Do I not look like an angel? Do you see something you’re not supposed to?”

Cyphina could feel the monster slowly becoming angry so he grabbed Snake Girl and tried to pull her past the monster.

“You look fine, we’ll just be on our way.”

“Fine to eat that is,” muttered Snake Girl.

“Wait a minute,” said the monster as it blocked Cyphina and Snake Girl from proceeding with its large hand.

“I see you quiver to the sound of my voice. You can see who I really am huh?”

“Alright get out of the way or die,” replied Cyphina angrily.

“That’s right Cyphina. Be aggressive!”

“It’s hard not to be mad when I can’t sleep…”

**Cyphina and Snake Girl vs Demonic Overfiend**

“What kind of humans are you…” muttered the demon as it was one blow away from turning into ashes.

“You said something about us seeing what you really are,” said Cyphina as he put UndeadM’s sword up to his throat. “What does that mean?”

The demon started to laugh maniacally until Snake Girl punched it.

“Keep hiding information and you’re going to face a fate worse than death.”

“There’s nothing to hide child,” replied the demon. “Humanity faces a choice when the sunburn casted upon makes the eyes able to see the monstrosity that are human beings.”

“So, the monsters we’ve been fighting, they’re humans that we see as evil?”

“No,” said the monster as it briefly paused.

“You guys are outsiders, aren’t you? That’s the only way you could see me, a worker set in place to carry out the purgatory.”

“Maybe,” said Snake Girl innocently.

“You’re not supposed to interrupt these games but… I guess that means that you were brought here for some reason. That means whatever you see may not be yours, but that of whoever brought you here…”

“I see,” replied Cyphina as he put away his weapon.

“Whatever you see the monsters as will tell you what you want to know.”

“Can’t you just tell us how the monsters are formed?” asked Snake Girl.

“If you think the crimson light reveals the truth, or if you think the sun peels layers off a mask, then it matters. How they come about, doesn’t mean anything.”

“Let’s go Snake Girl.”

“But I’m still confused…”

“I’ll tell you later... if you still care.”

“Alright, I guess. I’m ready to see the pretty colors outside!”

--

The rest of the tunnel was devoid of monsters and corruption.

“Perhaps that was the voice of reason inside Mr. Swinac.”

“But he was pretty unreasonable.”

“I think I know what he was talking about,” said Cyphina as a light from the end of the tunnel began to shine in their faces.

“Tell me!”

“The monster was trying to tell us how to reach a conclusion from this nightmare infused memory. If you think all the monsters were just people with evil hearts, then by killing them you become a seeker of justice. However, if you think the monsters were born from the darkness of sin, then hell is not a place of punishment, but rather a means to push humanity forward.”

“I killed the monsters because I got extreme pleasure out of it.”

“Well we’re outsiders apparently… so it doesn’t matter how we feel about it.”

When Cyphina and Snake Girl reached the outside, the sky was a pristine blue as if nothing had ever happened. The tunnel behind them had become a flight of steps leading out from the house’s side.

The two of them saw a bloody Mr. Swinac leaning against his car as if he were basking in the crimson satellite.

“Mr. Swinac!” yelled Cyphina as he ran up to Mr. Swinac alongside Snake Girl.

“Ahh, Cyphina… and…err… little girl” said Mr. Swinac casually. “What are you guys doing here?”

“My name’s Snake Girl. We’ve been looking for you,” said Snake Girl.

“Yea well… I’m here. I’m bloody here to save Anabelle.”

“What happened to you?”

“The monsters are everywhere. All the terrible people in this world… the sun…”

“How many have you killed?”

“Too many… I’ve been trying to help everybody I have left…”

“What if I told you that they’re still the same Mr. Swinac.”

“What do you mean?”

“The monsters. Maybe it’s you who wants to see them that way.”

“That’s impossible. Even if my senses were playing tricks on me, surely I can still feel normally.”

“What you’re feeling is right,” said Snake Girl. “But everybody else is like you. They think they’re seeing monsters, because of the crimson light.”

“But then why are they so hard to kill?”

“My guess is the red light gives them 20 times the amount of vitamin D than our sun…”

“But anyways,” interrupted Cyphina. “Mr. Swinac, we need your investigation notes because the you from the future needs them.”

“What the hell?”

“Can we just borrow your notes,” coaxed Snake Girl. “We’re trying to help you.”

“What did my wife hire you to get rid of them again?”

“No, but we noticed how busy you were getting so we wanted to help you out. And then we sort of figured out what happened to you, and we felt so bad that we wanted to help.”

“I’m only 12,” hollered Snake Girl. “But I got accepted to the school with a child prodigy scholarship. So please give us a copy, we’re not trying to ruin your investigation!”

Mr. Swinac looked at the two of them giving each other puzzled looks.

“I didn’t expect him to be here,” whispered Cyphina.

“Me neither…” said Snake Girl as she had a mouse-like smile on her face as she examined Mr. Swinac’s serious expression. I hope he doesn’t reject us for being weird.”

“If you guys were smart enough to believe that there’s more to what happened to my son then what meets the eye…” said Mr. Swinac as he took a brief pause to look over the two students.

“Then I guess I’m going to have to be the one to personally ask you for help.”

“It would be my honor sire,” replied Snake Girl.

#### Moujin Mall Underhall

***Main Plot: Cyphina and Snake Girl get into an argument due to their strong care for each other and split ways inside the dream, in parallel to Mr. Swinac. Cyphina figures out who the two killers are, helps Mr. Swinac strive for the road of reformation rather than justice, and finds some additional clues about a person named Kitty Hawk who is involved with the Ancients.***

***Section Plot: Now that time has progressed in the Blinking Lights dream,***

***Points:***

* *I know you’re worried about me Cyphina, but can’t I be worried about you too?*
* *Surround me and prevent me from feeling my feelings by forcing yourself upon me. This is the way life runs in circles.*

### Sleepless Night

*One day passes by without an answer. Cyphina decides to roam the streets at night to keep himself preoccupied, and he meets some strange monsters in his journey.*

“Thanks for your help again Snake Girl,” said Cyphina as the two of them stood next to Cyphina’s dad’s car. Surprisingly, the night wasn’t as cold as the morning and afternoon. Cyphina thought it was mostly due to the mass amounts of sweat released when the two of them woke up from the nightmare.

“Rest up, tomorrow’s going to be another long day.”

“But how are you going to stay awake?” asked Snake Girl as she filled up Cyphina’s gas for him.

“I’m going to get some very strong drugs. Hopefully they still work on me even if I’m a monster… And if not then I guess I’ll just stay in monster form all night and roam the streets or something.”

“Well… good luck with that,” replied Snake Girl as she held out the fuel dispensor’s pumping unit in the air carelessly. A few drops of oil flung from the nozzle and landed all over the floor.

“It’s unfortunately we took that long but… We’ll go after the two criminals tomorrow,” said Snake Girl assuredly. There was a confident smile in her face, somehow it let of the exact same energy as the one she flashed in the morning.

“And I’ll make sure to carve them up real slowly… Maybe I’ll feed them to some of my neighbors, I think they like human.”

“Yea…” replied Cyphina as he took another sip of his 3rd energy drink. Although his mind felt a little more awake, his body was still aching from all the wounds.

“Hey,” said Cyphina as a memory suddenly resurfaced itself. “I think I have one extra clue that I forgot all this time since I thought it was dumb…”

Cyphina remembered Zone had sketched the words Pepperoncino Candy on his wrists before knocking himself out. So far Cyphina hadn’t been able to find a link to this clue, but since they were at the station Cyphina thought of buying some.

“Want a snack?” asked Cyphina as Snake Girl stared at him eagerly.

“Yes.”

“Alright wait here,” replied Cyphina as he quickly went inside the station and grabbed a pack of the candies.

“What’s that?” asked Snake Girl curiously. “It doesn’t look like any other candy I’ve seen.”

“Yea it’s Pepperoncino candy. I’ve never eaten or heard of it personally but… The informant I got my clues from told me that this kind of candy has some relation to our case. Maybe we can find out by eating it?”

“Alright!” said Snake Girl as she grabbed a handful and swallowed all of them before Cyphina could grab a single.

“Is it good?” asked Cyphina as he held the candy up to his mouth.

*Look at her, she’s staring off into the distance like she’s on drugs or something. She must really like this…*

“I guess you don’t want to spoil it for me, right?” asked Cyphina as he put the candy in his mouth. Suddenly Snake Girl’s body went completely limp and she collapsed on his shoulder.

“Uhh…”

*UndeadM what just happened?*

“Hurry take her to a hospital. Her heart stopped beating.”

--

#### Assasination Beyond the Grave

**Main Plot (Overlying Story):** N/A

**Section Plot:** *Cyphina finally realizes the meaning behind the hint Zone left him. As Cyphina lets Snake Girl try to eat one of the Pepperoncino candies he bought due to Zone’s false clue, Snake Girl passes out due to some weird seemingly allergic interaction. Cyphina’s psychological state continues to break down as he’s torn between reviving her and dooming the both of them or finding Zone’s murderers so he doesn’t have to kill her.*

**Points:** N/A

Cyphina figured out what happened as he quickly drove through the hospital. Despite being one of the safest drivers in existence, Cyphina drove with a deadly aggression because there was nobody on the road this late at night.

*Fucking Zone… He must’ve known this would probably kill her. If she’s dead then you get another chance because you never met her huh? And you think I wouldn’t help her because I can’t…*

Cyphina suddenly let out an intense yawn as the lights of the few cars on the streets started to become blurry polka dots.

*Sleep… But I’ll sleep before she dies… I don’t care if Sylphia isn’t the same person… I’m not losing my only friend... at least the only friend I have that’s not online.*

#### Investigative Succubi

***Main Plot:*** *Cyphina decides he needs to wait for Snake Girl to get better, so he wanders the streets and some rumors amongst the monsters that the government has been hunting them.*

*Cyphina needs something to do to stay awake so he decides it would be a good idea to investigate the threat. He also thinks about keeping the streets safer for an active monster like Snake Girl.*

*Eventually the investigation leads him to a trail of clues which eventually ties in the government with his personal investigation about Rowell and Oleg. Cyphina also gains more knowledge on the origins of monsters.*

***Section Plot:*** *Cyphina decides to wander the streets to keep himself awake. His goal is to hunt down any monsters causing trouble, so when he tracks down a monstrous presence to find what seems like a woman being raped by monsters, he’s prepared to convene. Unexpectedly, Cyphina finds a girl exhibiting a monster aura who is being aroused by a group of guys around her. As Cyphina scares them all off using UndeadM’s power, he realizes that although they did screw with her plans to investigate a string of disappearances, she thoroughly enjoys getting screwed. Her monster aura can arouse people, however Cyphina is unaffected in UndeadM’s form since he has no feelings.*

*Kataya’s monster form makes her look a lot better than she is, and since she feels like she’s naturally not beautiful, she wants to take full advantage of being a monster. Cyphina is slightly disappointed because he was looking to help people at night, but the monster tells about the mysterious circumstances behind the dissaperance of some of her monster friends. Cyphina continues to contemplate about the morality of tjos woman, as he helps investigate about the disappearances of some of her monster friends, eventually realizing that the government is using monsters for something…*

***Points:***

* *Why do we go to such lengths to prove people wrong*

##### The Place where Monsters Go

***Main Plot (Overlying Story):*** *N/A*

***Section Plot:*** *Worried that Snake Girl could be a victim of the monster kidnappings, Cyphina investigates further into the incidents along with the succubi Kataya. Following the trail of Kataya’s monster friend leads them to a woman named Marie, a scientist who experiments with monsters to develop technology. However, the monsters aren’t being used like Cyphina’s expecting.*

*Cyphina also finds out a connection between the operation and a hospital that Oleg and Rowell are currently staying at. Apparntly sick people from that hospital are being experimented on.*

*Marie easily overwhelms Cyphina and Ayame. As Marie scans Cyphina to figure out who he is, she realizes that Cyphina is the son of a great scientist. Cyphina never really thought much of his dad, but Marie frees him because she liked his dad’s papers and wouldn’t want his work to be ruined because of family trauma. As Marie laughs off the laboratory being destroyed, she tells Cyphina to meet him again at her home because she has a job for him.*

***Points:***

### We can change people… but should we?

***Main Plot:*** *Cyphina ties up the loose ends to the investigation and can finally sleep, thus continuing Zone’s story.*

***Section Plot:*** *After Snake Girl wakes up from her coma, Cyphina and her set out to wrap up Mr. Swinac’s dilemma, and visit the two assailants at the hospital to prevent them from being taken for the experiments. They also visit Mieu (little girl Davin tried to help), to talk to her about Davin and find the last piece of evidence they need to convince Mr. Swinac’s wife that her whole family was lying to her. Finally, Cyphina is able to go to sleep knowing that he prevented the two assailants from becoming government experiments, and thus liberating Zone.*

***Points:***

* *Stop hurting yourself for a universal notion of justice and be willing to lose so you can bring happiness to others some other day.*
* *Although Cyphina can just kill Rowell and Oleg, he decides that after watching Snake Girl lose her happiness when she nearly die to an allergic reaction, and watching Rowell and Oleg attempt to make a fine lady out of Mieu that one truly dies when they lose what makes them themselves. Cyphina must continue to fill the sense of emptiness in his heart that has only widened from being a monster, by staying humane. He thinks he can send the two men on a different path so that Zone and thus himself won’t die.*

The sunlight which had used to mark the beginning a new chance of redeeming a meaningless day had now turned into a symbol of ticking death. Luckily from inside Snake Girl’s cave, there wasn’t much light peeking through the cloth banner covering the only entrance.

#### Stopping a Murder before the Murderer even Exists

Cyphina finished what he thought was a bad habit in remembering the past, and saw in the reflection inside the frozen mirror of a large glass building that Snake Girl was holding his hand. He thought of Sylphia, who like her younger self, was very curious.

“Why do you like holding hands Snake Girl,” asked Cyphina with a hint of discomfort in his voice. “I told you, kids only do that with their parents.”

“Yea well, adults are missing out!”  Her voice was always full of energy and expressions.

“Every time we walk together, and we hold hands,” explained Snake girl. “We get to know a little more about each other.”

Heh, you're not embarrassed at all thought Cyphina.

“It’s important to feel your aura when conversing.  That way… I know if you’re lying,” said Snake Girl menacingly as she tightened her grip.

“Yea?” replied Cyphina with a smirk on his face. Every time his face began to form a smile, he remembered the dreaded monster within himself.

“I picked up my dog’s poo and never washed my hands.”

“Hah, think that worries me?” replied Snake Girl as Cyphina felt a sudden surge of goo in his palms.  “Enjoy that snake liquid, it kills 99% of bacterias harmful to monsters.  It also attracts carnivorous plants so… I wouldn’t enter a jungle area if I were you.”

“I think we’re stuck together now,” said Cyphina as he felt the slime sucking their hands together like a vacuum. He stepped forcefully away from her and dragged his hand causing her to jut sideways rapidly. She landed heavily on her right leg and caught herself with her free hand on the fleece of Cyphina’s jacket.

“Weakling,” replied Snake Girl as the two of them walked out from an alleyway where pennants with the colors of the province, black and silver, hung from the windows above them. Stripes of gray light piercing the darkened winter sky brushed their faces.

“Jeez, look at how many there are gathered in one place,” Cyphina remarked as they entered a square full of people.

“Yea, it’s their last chance to eat before the moon glow,” replied Snake Girl staring into the sea of people before locking her eyes on a teenage girl walking into an alleyway.  “We should eat them all!”

“Killing people isn’t good Snake Girl. It’s not like most of the monsters are problematic to human society anyways.”

“They can be if they become power hungry… like lieutenant governor Sulliman Berchin.”

“How do you even know his full name?”

“Hellooo, I’m the newspaper delivery person. I read the news everyday.”

“Heh, I don’t even remember his name,” replied Cyphina. “It’s whatever though, his short stint as the new governor will be over very…”

“Hey I think I found our target,” interrupted Snake Girl.  “Lets go... Cyphina?”

Cyphina had his eyes closed and stood like a statue in the middle of the crowd.  As Sylphia continued to poke and prod at Cyphina’s meditation, people continuously bounced off him as they attempted to push him out of the way.

“Hey why’d you do that!” yelled Snake Girl as a guy walked casually into Cyphina before getting pushed back by the short but ironclad wall.  “Say you’re sorry!” yelled Snake Girl as the guy ignored her and fell into the crowd.

“Sorry,” said a voice as Snake Girl turned over to Cyphina whose head shook as if realizing something.

“I didn’t mean you dummy…”

“Snake girl…” said Cyphina calmly as he continued to stare blankly into the shifting crowd. “I thought I felt a familiar presence.”

“Divine Chaos???”

“Could be. Whatever it was, it was powerful…  Anyways, what’d you say?”

“Free food… in that alleyway!” said Snake Girl as she pointed down the road. There was a large grin on her face revealing a pair of curved fangs coated with a nearly transparent turquoise venom. Cyphina nodded and the two of them made their forceful trek through the crowd.

--

“We can’t eat her Snake Girl. We need her to setup a meeting for us.”

“Okay… but if we’re trying to do things the easy way, why couldn’t we walk into city hall like a normal person?”

“Because several reasons okie.”

“Well… ok.”

“First and foremost, this way can save someone’s life.”

“And risk your own.”

“Both ways we’re risking it against monsters.”

“What about your time limit or whatever.”

“It’s fine… I just need lots of energy drinks and we’ll be ok.”

“What’s with the smile.”

“It’s nice to have someone worry about you…”

“You’re sadder than me and my only experiences with other people started about 2 years ago.”

“Yea well people can leave scars on us. Let’s capture us a little monster… at least I hope it’s little.”

--

“A road full of toy and game stores huh? What’s our friend doing here?”

“Obviously she’s trying to get some of the best Orange Saturday deals at GameShop.”

“Heheh,” mumbled Cyphina as he thought nervously of Zone. “What about the Orange Friday deals at Toymart. Is 16 years too old for toys?”

“Perhaps… but you can buy other things like trading cards at Toymart… Everybody like trading cards.”

“Or maybe monsters that like to hoard like I don’t know… maybe a Sea Serpent.”

“Hey I’m not a sea serpent, I’m a flying star serpent and I’m not a hoarder, I collect things.”

“If you say so,” replied Cyphina. Who knew it would be so fun to tease a 12 year old.

Cyphina and Snake Girl follows the dark skinned lady into the GameStop and follow her around as she walked around the game store with a sense of pompousness. Cyphina observed a constant serious expression on her face and an aversion of eye contact with everyone she passed. It seemed there was no pattern to the items she stopped to look at.

*Is this sociopathic behavior* wondered Cyphina as he tried to recall his mindset as Zone. Zone was the closest lens to a sociopath he could wear.

“I think she seems kind of normal,” whispered Snake Girl. “Can’t we just go up and talk to her?”

“She’s dangerous Snake Girl,” whispered Cyphina. “Let’s get the jump while we…”

All of the sudden the girl walked up to Cyphina and Snake Girl.

“Hey, I think today might be my last day. Can you do me a favor?”

Cyphina was at a loss for words as Snake Girl responded in her atypical spunky voice. “What do you mean you look perfectly fine… and by fine I mean healthy and well groomed.”  
  
*Way to be encouraging…* thought Cyphina.

#### Double Separate Homicide Prevention

Despite investigating over the past two days, this would be the first time they would meet with Mr. Swinac in person to talk about their discovery. Cyphina thought it was necessary to do so before he slept. It would close one angle of existence in Zone’s murder, but also it felt human. Straying away from the notions of a monster was Cyphina’s greatest desire.

“What are you guys doing digging into my private life?”

“We’re private investigators sent to help you by an anonymous figure looking over your life,” said Snake Girl confidently.

“Looking over me?”

“Yes, somebody has acknowledged your lack of liveliness and asked us to help you out.”

“But you’re 12.”

“Yes and I am extremely thorough as well. We bring you some important news about your family. Would you like to explain partner?”

--

“Her whole family has been trying to separate the two of you, so they can extort her for the money left on the will.”

“Yea, even your ‘beloved’ daughter,” blurted Snake Girl.

“That’s impossible…” rambled Mr. Swinac.

“How are they extorting her? She’s not just going to give them money, she’s always been stingy despite having a lot.”

“It’s hard to make decisions when you’re a bit mentally unstable. That’s why her therapist has been overcharging her and grooming her to blame you for everything. Meanwhile her family has been using her insecurity to make her believe their helping her. She’s never had a good friend outside of you, but you wouldn’t know that would you Mr. I wanted to marry somebody to impress my father.”

Mr. Swinac stared in the distance like a man regretting his whole entire life. “I’m a terrible father and husband, but I tried to pursue this investigation to make myself believe that I was a better person. Make myself believe that my sense of justice made me right.

But that doesn’t matter now…”

“Should we tell him the truth Cyphina?” whispered Snake Girl as Mr. Swinac’s sniffling was hidden in the breeze.

“No,” replied Cyphina quietly into Snake Girl’s ears. Maybe later, but he needs to learn the lesson first.”

“What should I do…”

“Well you could go sit down and talk without the intention of winning…” said Snake Girl mockingly.

“I know that. I know. But what should I say. I want to make things right at least but… this is long gone. I already let things get to this point, and I don’t think they’ll ever return.”

“Say the truth, and then I will help you too.”

“What do you mean help me?”

“We did some investigating and found Davin’s last note. Although logically it clears you, I think she’s beyond brainwashed. But maybe the emotional impact of what he wrote combined with whatever you can provide will at least give you a chance.”

“His last note? Let me see it?”

“No, you don’t get to see anything until you go back and talk to your wife,” said Snake Girl firmly.

“But why? Are you scamming me?”

“Well if you want to know the truth you could always investigate into her finances and see our story matches up. We just want to see you do what’s right Mr. Swinac. Just as you expect from your students. You know the right path is the one forward, not the one on the right. I read your advice letters to other students. You care about other people, and if you had a little more courage, you wouldn’t hesitate to help your wife. So we have no choice but to compensate for that courage by withholding this note.”

--

“Who are they? You hired a gang to get your stuff back didn’t you.”

“That’s right… fear me human…” mumbled Snake Girl.

“I’m calling the police right now.”

“Wait what?! I mean… I’m a twelve-year-old girl I like to play with dolls,” said Snake Girl as she grabbed what she thought was a doll from her pocket but ended up picking out a bloody organ she was planning to snack on later.

“Uhh I mean I like to pretend to be a doctor…”

“Look, Mell, I came to talk. These guys are my students, and well, they’ve been a big help on the investigation.”

“I don’t want to talk to you anymore. Go or I’m calling the police.”

“I was planning on going, but I just wanted to tell you I’m sorry. We finished the investigation, and now I’m moving on with my life.”

“Good. I’m sure you did a great job working with a bunch of children.”

“These people aren’t just children, they’re some of the best students we have.”

“Did I mention I got a full scholarship and I’m only 12…”

“Shut up,” muttered Cyphina.

“I really stopped caring a long time ago Landen.”

“I know. But I just wanted to stop by and say I’m sorry, and I…”

Cyphina could hear Mr. Swinac gulp for air.

“And that’s all. Please take care of yourself Mell.”

“Don’t come back again, okay?”

“Yes…”

Snake Girl then nudged Mr. Swinac hard on the elbow. “Don’t be a scaredy-cat.”

“I think I’m about to throw up…”

“OKAY your indecision is making me mad,” yelled Snake Girl. “Mrs. Swinac, if that’s what you still go by, listen up you punk.”

“Mr. Swinac here has some important feelings he wants to share with you, but you are about as understanding as a rock so it’s hard for him to share it.”

Mrs. Swinac was silent as she flashed Snake Girl a disgusted look and Mr. Swinac quickly stepped in front of her before she could blow a raspberry back.

“She’s 101% right Mell. Look I don’t care if you hate me for all eternity for investigating, if you hate me because you think I corrupted our son, or if you call the cops on me.

“I don’t know what you found in me, because I think when I first saw you, the only reason I liked you was because I wanted to somebody to show my unappreciative father that I was a real man. And for our 24 years together I’ve kind of just accepted you being besides me, like the partner for life entitled with marriage.

And I think you enjoyed that because people always treated you differently with your mental illness. Did you Mell?”

Mr. Swinac looked at her but his wife was staring at the ground trying to hide her expression.

As complacent as our relationships sounds, this was always my idea of true love. I can’t imagine being with somebody else, because this is what I consider to be the zenith of all relationships. But it doesn’t matter what I feel, if you don’t like it, then you tell me.

The years we lived with each other I spent all my time helping other students because I was lost in my own outlet. Years of disrespect from my father pressured me to uphold my position as the dean of the school and made me addicted to the gratification of being a mentor. Despite my desire to help others, I couldn’t see the problems that grew within my own family. I am such a hypocrite, giving advice when I can’t even follow my own advice, yet alone my own ideals.

Despite being a complete and utter loser, right now I could care less about that. I could care less if you still hate me, or if you think I’m a pathetic man, which I don’t deny one bit. But I want to carry on the will of Davin as denoted by his final note… that is what’s on his final note, right?”

“Yes, all the digital evidence points to this being his final note,” said Cyphina. “But what do you believe he wanted?”

“I think he wanted to find purpose in his life. He was somebody different, and sometimes life makes people who are different feel like they are worthless. But from watching those people play games online, despite me yelling at him for wasting his time, he found a sense of self-confidence from a special video-game player “Kitty Hawk.”

“It’s called a streamer,” murmured Cyphina.

“And so he decided to do what was right, and try to be a big brother to the young girl Mieu whose family was abusing. But he got caught up in the family’s deadly game, but he didn’t stop trying to help her along with his two other great friends he met online, Oleg, and Powell.

Suddenly we saw a change in our son. We started to see him use his full potential in life. We thought we had done something right, but in reality, our son knew that he could no longer waste his time arguing against us, even though we were so wrong. He had to reach his full potential to protect young Mieu, but eventually the games being played by the family caught up with him and his friends. If Powell and Oleg ever recover again, then they could verify this story.

“Great stuff, but what did you want to tell Mrs. Swinac,” asked Snake Girl as if she were a defense attorney.

“Sometimes it doesn’t matter if we are morally right or wrong. We must do what moves forward, even if it goes against all our values. That’s why I need to tell you that you’re in trouble Mell. You’ve always cared deeply about your family. Maybe it’s because they used to push you away when you were younger. But ever since you got all the inheritance, they’ve tried to make you feel like you belong.

Is that what you want? To live under the same false pretense as when other people treat you differently because you’re different? Even if you don’t care, I’ll always be mad at your family for doing this to you. Of course, I’ll be mad at them for acting with such greed, but mostly I’ll be furious that they would hurt you.”

There was a brief pause as Mr. Swinac kept nodding his head back and forth.

“I don’t know what to say anymore…”

“Why don’t you tell her what you want?” asked Snake Girl.

“To be honest all I wanted for her was to know the truth and how I feel. Also, I want her to be happy. I want to start fresh. I don’t care if we leave everything we have behind, I enjoyed back when life was simpler. But of course what I want mostly is for Mell to get what she wants so.”

Mr. Swinac took a deep breath. “I guess it’s time to leave then,”

“Good job professor,” said Cyphina as the three of them prepared to walk out the door. Cyphina didn’t even glance over at Mrs. Swinac one bit.

*The conclusion doesn’t matter as long as the purpose was reached* thought Cyphina.

*---*

After dropping Snake Girl off in her cave, Cyphina drove back home as all the adrenaline of the past 3 days slowly left his body.

Cyphina entered the house to be greeted by a series of complaints from his parents about being out too much without their permissions, and his lack of chores. Cyphina’s fatigue acted as a shield, brushing all the comments aside until he collapsed on his own bed and smiled at the glowing star shaped stickers on the ceiling.

“Even if I somehow die in my sleep, I think now I’ll be okay going…”

--

## Sec 3: We’ll never be the same

***Main Plot (Overlying Story):*** *Zone meets the woman who will change Cyphina’s life despite them never actually meeting each other. Ari Shizuka is somebody who Zone thinks is ridiculously stupid, but her ability* ***Unbounded Perceptions*** *and* ***Perfect Memory*** *helps her constantly stay alive despite falling prey to people’s selfish desires.*

*By saving Zone’s life, Ari plants a seed in Zone’s mind causing him to strongly want to help her with what Zone sees as ridiculous ideas to help people.*

***Section Plot:*** *N/A*

***Points:***

* *I don’t have any friends because it’s hard to relate to other people.*
* *That’s a great way to make friends, expecting everyone to be like you that is…*
* *Shut up…*
* *This is the will of the heart vs the will of the emotion.*

### Opal eyes reminds us of why we live

***Main Plot (Overlying Story):***

***Section Plot:*** *Zone is given a second chance by Cyphina after Cyphina kills Zone’s assailants in the past. Zone swears his eternal vengeance against Sylphia before limping out of the orphanage which is set ablaze. Using Cyphina as his newfound motivation, Zone forces himself outside even without his arm and leg and begins to limp near a dumpster where he proceeds to give up on his life again after realizing he has absolutely nothing.*

*Finally, as he waits to bleed out to death, he meets a mysterious woman who brings him to her house to treat him, since she knows none of the hospitals will take him since he doesn’t have any money, nor will they know how to treat any possible mutations.*

***Points:***

In the background Zone hears the ballad that Cyphina was listening to begin to fade as Zone realizes his dream is ending. He hears the final high-pitched words of Cyphina as he lets out another yawn and drops onto his bed like a deflated balloon.

“It’s your turn.”

As soon as Zone wakes up, he’s instantly greeted by the stinging sensation of the crying nerves near the exposed lacerations throughout his limp body.

“Fuck you I’ll fucking kill you Sylphia!” yells Zone as he forcefully grabs his bloody arm which causes him to instantly fall to the floor as the onset of overwhelming pain implodes his face.

Zone lets out a reluctant sigh as his eyes hover over the pool of his own blood. “In my second life…” he mutters, his voice drained of all energy. As his eyes begin to close again, he thinks *Just like that onryo…*

Zone’s eyes close tightly for a few seconds until he a thought flashes in the darkness. His eyes instantly open wider than when he felt the knives running through his skin.

*If I die, thought Zone. Cyphina goes too right?*

He begins a slow, progressively maniacally laugh until he smells the scent of smoke lingering in the air.

“I have to get fucking out of here!”

Zone attempts to slowly limps himself out of the room, but a tremendous downpour of pain flows through the joints in his arms and legs. He falls back to the floor before he can get himself up successfully.

He can feel his eyes water from the pain as he again attempts again to stand up. As his eyes begin to blur from the frustrated tears, he sees a series of flashing images. He sees an image of Cyphina, with a large stack of bags over his eyes due to him staying up for three nights straight to save both of them,, all without killing Sylphia. He sees images from the people’s lives who Cyphina changed as he went through his day: Ellesi, Mr. Swinac, Asuka, Kairon, and Temeney.

Although Zone’s body felt trapped by the pain, somehow, the memories help his mind fight against the will to succumb. His unresponsive body starts moving to the wavelengths of the memories.

Zone manages pushes himself back up on his feet and lets out a series of deep breaths as the pain is quivering right on his threshold. His body is shaking violently and his eyes are closed as he keeps trying to remember.

*I can do this… you did everything for me.*

Zone lets out a loud scream as he pushes with everything he must get back up on his legs. The fight last for a few minutes, until he falls back onto the floor again with tears in his eyes.

Suddenly Zone hears a popping noise as his knee hits the ground, and all the pain vanishes as if it were an illusion. He starts to carefully move his legs, and stares at the leg in awe as it drips blood.

The feeling of disbelief is short as Zone stands up tall like a statue brimming over the landscape. He clenches his fist and instantly regrets it as he feels some of his cuts rubbing together, and then marches to the door where he notices a toxic fog slowly creeping from underneath. Zone nods his head as if he’s accepted his fate before walking through the cloud and wheezing uncontrollably. As he feels himself passing out again, he manages to extend his hands and fall onto the doorknob to the secret attic room. It was an all too familiar place where he’d sneak into to get in a few extra hours of gameplay.

Zone forces the door open with his little strength left. The room is clear of smoke, but he has to spend a moment gagging as he expels the rest of the toxins from his body.

Looking outside the window Zone sees the whole building is ablaze, but he sees no sign of help anywhere. It looks as if everyone had already left.

He throws down a very long blanket and ties one end of it to a wardrobe which he fills up with random objects found all around him. He then jumps out, and clings onto the blanket. He’s able to reduce his fall height, but he still falls on the gravel on his bad leg and arm.

Zone rolls around on the floor in pain until chunks of debris start landing on the ground nearby him before exploding. Zone forces himself to crawl to safety, but as he moves his arms he realizes they’ve become more than disfigured.

“What’s happening to me,” muttered Zone as he sees the blood around his arm and leg start to boil. “Don’t tell me… I’m becoming a monster?”

He starts crawling back towards the streets, hoping to reach the slums before he body mutates, but he falls flat on the floor due to exhaustion.

Zone finds a piece of glass nearby and he holds it up in front of his wide open eyes.

*Cyphina I’m alive. Aren’t you proud of me???*

Zone then proceeds to try and cut off his broken arm and leg which have already lost their senses. He fails to cleanly cut them off, but ends up repeatedly slashing off the loose flesh as he tries to laugh off the pain of evisceration, and the pain of regret as each chunk of bloody flesh causes him to wonder if he shouldn’t have tried this in the first place.

When his arms and legs fall off making a small puddle of blood beneath him, the bubbly blood pops, and Cyphina can no longer feel the pain from the pressure on his disfigured body, although the stinging sensation from his exposed flesh grows.

Zone then proceeds to crawl, leaving behind a trail of blood like a zombie, passing several people who stare the other way as if he doesn’t exist. However, Zone feels corners of eyes glancing over his disfigured body with unnecessary feelings and he wishes he never existed.

Zone crawled all the way towards an alleyway amongst a set of towering apartments, and a light drone followed him to shine on his sorry figure.

“Go,” said Zone, his voice dry and devoid of any energy.

The drone continued to follow him, and the spotlight felt like it was flames in pursuit.

*What do I do next Cyphina… I’m was a nobody, and soon I’ll have no body to exist in. And then your life which means something will follow suit against my choice. I’m so sorry…*

The snow once again piled up on him as he rested on a rock and forced himself to stare at the mass of blood dripping from his arms and legs.

Pressure… that’s what I need to stop the bleeding... But why won’t my body move any further… My mind’s fixated on dying while my heart is trying its best to remember the only good memory I have left…

The dreams…

The tears in his eyes blended amongst the snow piling up on his body once again.

I know if I fall asleep again, there’s no way to survive. But I don’t know what to do... Tell me…

Zone’s unable to prevent himself from closing his eyes, but before he can fall asleep he hears impending footsteps.

Zone opens his eyes, but the vision is so blurry that he can no longer tell the difference between the dust which had gathered around him and snow.

He imagines a criminal or monster prowling through the dark alleyway at night and seems content closing his eyes as they hack his brains apart.

“Excuse me… but can I help you?”

Zone slowly opens one eye as he sees a beautiful dark blue haired lady in front of him. She has a unique kind of look causing Zone to think she was somebody’s Life Node, but as she approaches slowly, he can’t see any flickering in her appearance. He then wonders what kind of monster or prostitute she could be.

“I know somebody who can fix you right up…” says the gentle voice. “That is, if you can get up. But don’t worry, I’ll help you...”

“Leave me be,” replies Zone quietly he stared her down with wild eyes. He secretly hopes that she’ll let him rot on the floor.

“Please, let me help you,” replies the woman with such desperation Zone can’t help but think she’s a monster. “Believe it or not,” said the woman with a warm smile on her face. “I’m sure there’s somebody out there for which your life brings meaning to.”

Zone starts to think about Cyphina. He thinks about a few of his clanmates Gkillzy, Tony, Kazuki, Clipper, and lastly Sylphia. As the image of her face appears in his mind it starts to distort into some kind of nightmare causing him to inadvertently cover his face with single good hand.

The woman slowly crept closer to Zone causing the bag around her shoulders to jingle. He stared into her eyes which sparkled like an opal galaxy, and she stared back into his eyes dripping blood.

*No human has eyes like those…*

The scene keeps shifting between their eyes, until Zone suddenly pulls out his developer console and points it straight at the woman.

“You’re… right,” replied Zone slowly as he fires a lightning bullet straight at her. The scene slows down as the bullet whizzes past her shoulder and electrifies a man stalking the woman from the shadows.

The woman pauses as if she’s frozen by the thought of death, and then looks behind her at the man holding a knife to her who slumps to the ground after getting electrocuted.

Zone leans back onto the dumpster as he expects her to run away in fear, but instead she looks at Zone in the eyes and nods towards him approvingly.

“Thank you.”

She waits for Zone to reply but Zone stares at her silently.

“I’m going to help you… ok?” asks the woman as she shows him her open hands as if to convince him that she was harmless.

Zone doesn’t reply and she resumes her small strides towards him. When she finally reaches him, she puts down her bag and kneels in Zone’s pool of blood.

She starts sifting through her back when all of the sudden she turns towards Zone and grabs him by the collar viciously and pulled him into her body.

*I wish I could die in my own terms…* thought Zone as he couldn’t see anything from his face being planted into her stomach.

Zone heard the noises of a few gunshots being repelled by a PPC.

*But how… my PPC is uncharged because I’m too weak…*

The woman lets go of Zone and performs the handseals to cast Memory’s Fragment on the assailant. A quick burst of purple energy launches towards the man, causing him to drop to the floor unconscious.

*The other guy must’ve had a partner* thought Zone as the woman released him. She was covered in the blood that soaked his body.

“Are you ok?” asked the woman as she took out bandages from her shoulder bag and started wrapping them around Zone’s missing arm and leg.

“I’m sorry, that’s a dumb question,” said the woman causing Zone to chuckle a bit causing more blood to be released from his mouth.

“I’m Ari Shizuka,” said the woman as she used the corner of her jacket to wipe the blood off his mouth. Her movements were methodic, and calm, as opposed to Zone whose frozen heart was racing by her presence.

“What’s your name?”

“Zone.”

“Mr. Zone, here’s a special ointment made of a combination of 20 different medicinal plants,” said Ari as she started to rub some lime-scented green slime on his wounds which left a sharp stinging sensation all over the exposed flesh. Ari blows on some of the small flies hovering around the dumpster that try to land on the green ooze.

“This bottle is from the alchemy shop nearby, where I ,” said Ari as Zone noticed her hands were unremarkably steady despite marks which resembled frostbite on her fingers.

“I was closing the shop when I noticed a trail of blood across the street. I’m lucky I couldn’t hold back my curiosity and found you minutes away from dying.”

*Curiosity? Luck? What kind of person are you?*

Ari finished her treatment by wrapping his arm which had been so brutally disfigured Zone felt uncomfortable staring at it with a long strip of medicinal tape. She bit off the end stuck to the roll before squeezing the the looseness out of her makeshift cast .

“You don’t have to talk to me right now, I know you’re probably going to pass out any moment now,” says Ari who positions her face so close to Zone that he can still see it as he looks down on the bloody ground.

“I’ll tell you what I’m going to do next; just blink once for yes and twice for no, ok?”

Ari stared at him intently as Zone nodded.

*I don’t think there exists somebody evil with a quirky smile*.

“Ok,” replies Zone reluctantly. He takes a deep breath as he still undecided on whether he wants to live bearing the shame of having given up on Cyphina and Nixie. He thought about his experience in the factory, and thought about how if he had never lived before, then now he doesn’t exist.

“I know somebody who can fix you up,” says Ari as she gently lays him down away from the dumpster and walks over to the two bodies near them. Zone watches as she walks out of vision and then hears her attempting to hide them in a nearby bush.

Suddenly Zone hears some other voices. He wonders if somebody had seen Ari while moving the bodies. It takes her a moment, but when she returnsshe sits down next to Zone with the same upbeat expression on her face and starts searching through her bag.

“They aren’t dead but…” says Ari as she takes out a large roll of paper towels and furiously wipes her bloody hands. “If we leave them out here, they may get their organs stolen or something horrible.”

“Alright,” said Ari as she stared at the bloody towel and took a deep breath. “We better get you that help you really need,” she muttered as she pocketed the piece of paper and slung the bag over her shoulder.

Ari knelt next to Zone and swung his remaining shoulder over her and grabbed around his good leg. Zone clenched onto his teeth vigorously as he felt an excruciating pain until she was able to somehow balance him on her body.

Jeez you’re still heavy missing an arm and leg…” said Ari as he felt her begin to move.

Zone closed his eyes and for a moment, the only things he could feel was the crunching of her footsteps in the snow and the warmth of her back.

--

This early in the morning, people can barely see each other and the streets of Ellestar are virtually desolate.

Any sort of people in the relatively wealthy town avert their gaze when they see something strange like the tall girl carrying an amputated and bloody man.

As they walk alongside a group of apartment buildings, something falls on top of Ari and Zone.

“Ew, I think this is leftover fast food,” said Ari as she stopped to wipe her and Zone.”

“I only got some in my hair, thanks to you shielding me. Looks like we’ll have a good symbiotic relationship.”

Ari puts Zone down to clean the food all over his jacket, and then promptly picks up the trash on the ground.

“Maybe somebody who is actually homeless will appreciate this,” said Ari as she packaged up the mess into a makeshift container out of the wrapper.”

All of the sudden Zone could hear laughter coming from a few floors of the apartment above them.

“Look at that girl so desperate for food,” laughed a man cynically from the window.

Ari was silent as a girl appeared nearby the man and started laughing as well.

“This is probably better than whatever you normally eat huh? If you thank us, I’ll drop more.”

“I’m just cleaning up your mess,” replied Ari innocently.

“Yea keep telling yourself that, you homeless bums,” said the man as the two of them shut the window and disappeared.

Zone felt his rage building up, though he knew without his arm and leg he didn’t have much of a shot of fighting, he had an uncontrollable desire to do so.

Ari placed the bag filled with the slightly destroyed food that she wrapped neatly somewhere along a nearby allyway, and then came back to pick him up.

“Let’s go,” muttered Ari, without a hint of discouragement in her voice. “They’re probably drunk. You can’t take anybody’s word seriously.”

Zone looked at Ari’s silver eyes. “How?”

“I can feel you get warmer when you’re mad. That’s good.

Ari reveled at the confusion in Zone’s face for a moment.

“It means you’re still alive.”

--

Though he was fighting to keep his eyes open, Zone’s heartbeat had been steady for the first time the whole night. His body and mind were so fatigued that despite the numerous questions lingering in the back of his mind, he was satisfied basking in feelings he didn’t understand.

There was only one question that kept irking him, one question that kept his eyes slightly open and kept his body shaking.

Zone watched as the psychedelic image of a blurry image of a forest of dead trees swirled all around him. The image reminded him of Alsatia.

“It’s so cold,” said Ari as she sat down for a moment on a tree stump and started breathing on her hands while rubbing them together.

“But the nice little town I live in just a little further.”

Ari sat down next to Zone. “How are you doing? You should try and get some rest, so you can heal faster. But I guess you’d want to stay awake since a stranger is taking you somewhere new huh?”

Ari was content talking to Zone even though he never responded the whole way to her apartment. Despite resting on her lifelessly, he managed to keep his eyes open the whole way to her apartment. Besides their one break, Ari never showed any signs of slowing down despite her having worked what Zone expected was a long shift.

Ari stopped in front of the slippery steps of an apartment complex like the one Zone lived in. She shined her gray pale eyes in front of the retina scanner causing a green laser to trace around her face. There was a brief click and the door promptly opened for Ari and Zone before locking itself after they passed.

Zone hears the noise of one of the apartment doors open as they walk up a few flights of stairs. A young woman comes out and yawns loudly.

“Good morning Ari. You’re hom…”

She stares at her bloody friend and the man she’s holding in awe, but Ari responds with an innocent smile.

“I found somebody hurt…”

Ari looked over at Zone whose face was still frozen with the same blank expression she found him with.

“Umm… I mean. This is my cousin. He just got an operation done due to his war injuries.”

“That’s crazy,” said the woman as her mouth still hung open while her shock transformed into sympathy. “Do you need any help Ari? I can take your bag, or maybe…”

“Oh no, no… I’m fine. If I change this configuration of how I’m carrying things, my cousin would be in real deep pain.”

“Let me open the door for you then.”

“I can assure you I’ll make it up just fine.”

“You sure?”

“Yes yes. Good luck in your day of work, I have to take my cousin to lay down somewhere.”

“Thanks Ari, and I hope you get better Ari’s cousin. Thanks for protecting our country!”

“He says he appreciates it,” replied Ari as she tripped over one of the stairs slightly causing Zone to let out a soft grunt. She was still steady enough to hold onto everything.

“Phew… that was close,” said Ari as they activated another retina scanner and entered her apartment. She slammed the door shut behind her and let out a deep sigh which was still visible in the apartment which wasn’t much warmer than the outside.

“You can stay here while I get changed and find the manual we need,” said Ari as she unloaded him onto a recycled sofa with several patches of stitched cloth covering what Zone assumed to be holes.”

Ari ran over all around her place trying to make the room more comfortable. She first headed to the thermostat and turned the heating knob two full circles, before pulling a metal chain on the ceiling which caused an energy saving light bulb to slowly brighten.

Ari then headed to her bedroom where picked up of four blankets lumped into a ball. She unrolled the ball which blocked all but her legs on the ground near Zone before spreading them all over him.

As run down as it looked, it felt good. It reminded him of the only home he could remember…

--

Ari came back with a bright smile on her face. “Like I said, I know somebody who can help you,” said Ari as she helped Zone get back up to his feet.

Zone felt an excruciating pain as he got up on his single leg.

“That person, being myself of course!”

#### Miss Understanding

But how does she know when I never even referred to that?

GOAL OF THIS SECTION IS TO GIVE US SOME ASMR VIBES

Ari helps replace Zone’s body with 3D printed prosthetics all from reading a manual. Zone tries to figure out why she would help people who tried to kill them.

Ari Shizuka – Perfect Memory

“Typically, I would be asleep right now,” said Ari as she put on her AR visor. Her mellow voice melted through Zone’s frozen face which had a hard time warming up since the heating unit had a long delay before it was effectively.

“But I have this burning desire to help you get back onto your feet.”

Zone took a sip of water from the glass on the platter with two pills that she handed him. He could instantly feel his body become numb, which felt a lot better than the excruciating pain and sloppy stickiness.

“The first pill was just your standard painkiller, but the second pill is a special immune system booster,” said Ari as she continued to navigate through the menus she could see displayed inside her visor. “We can’t have you getting sick from being out in the cold, and from your deep wounds.”

The moment Zone felt free of the pain that poisoned his mind to wanting him to die, he realized the reality of the situation he was in. He was going to have to move on. He was going to have to trust this woman. For once he would think about what’s next in his life, and for some reason it felt good.

Zone also felt a newfound sense of awe over what many would consider a basic bodily function. Moving his only remaining arm and leg without triggering pain on the other side was an angel’s blessing.

“Why are you helping me?” asked Zone as his mouth felt odd from having been frozen shut for the last few hours.

“Hmm…” murmured Ari as Zone watched her sparkling eyes go lost in her own thoughts. After a few minutes of contemplation Ari blurted “Do I need a good reason to help you?”

“No,” replied Zone as he thought of his time back in the factory. Ari continued to work on silence as she pulled down the visor over her eyes.

“I can learn a lot by helping people,” said Ari enthusiastically as she

*She was still thinking about that.*

“It makes me feel good inside. Sometimes I can make friends with the people I help, and even make friends with their friends. The world opens a little wider when you help others.”

Ari clenched her fists tightly. “But really I don’t think about that kind of stuff when I do what I do. I guess it’s just who I am.”

“What about helping those criminals?” asked Zone bluntly. There was a brief pause again where Zone wondered if Ari would be upset over, but she still wore the same innocent thinking expression.

*That’s all I want to know really.*

“Well…” enunciated Ari while she thought of an answer. “I wanted to see them again one day.”

Zone felt even more perplexed as she tried to explain her disposition.

“You and I are both Ancients,” said Ari as Zone felt his nerves shake as she mentioned the word.

*What’s with my luck with meeting Ancients. I’ve yet to see anything good related to these people… besides Bob T and even he pisses me off when he stalked me in ArcLight.*

“Well technically I’m not an Ancient,” said Ari causing Zone to breathe a sigh of relief. “…At least not anymore,” she mumbled.

“But we’re both magicians, I guess,” said Ari as Zone began to break out in a nervous sweat.

“One of my abilities lets me see things in a different way than normal,” said Ari as her finger, with finger nails painted dark blue and slightly worn off, pointed to her opal colored eyes.

“I saw things about them that’s like us. I could feel them hiding behind stories greater than we could possibly understand.”

“Why help somebody who doesn’t even exist?” asked Zone as he thought the headache he had when Sylphia yelled at him about wanting to be more than a spec of dust in the universe of stars.

“What do you mean doesn’t exist?” replied Ari with a shocked look on her face. “You’re living more than the people around you!”

“I’m dead to the people around me.”

“Yes, and that makes you more alive Zone,” said Ari as Zone stared at her with a perplexed expression.

“I think that the most important thing in life isn’t where you are… but rather the journey of how you got there.”

“I don’t know what you’re saying,” replied Zone as his head began to hurt from all the philosophical arising from their conversation.

*But is this what Sylphia was talking about? This feeling radiating from you… Even without the medicine, I felt something make me feel better.*

“Me neither,” replied Ari. “I’m the kind of person who just goes with the flow.”

*“*Same here,” replied Zone as he closed his eyes for a moment.

*I don’t think she’s a threat..*

“So what are you going to help me with exactly?”

“I’m going to help get you some prosthetic arms and legs!”

“Why are you excited…”

“Then you’ll be able to walk and shake hands again. You’ll be better than before.”

“I’ll be a cyborg.”

“Well… yeah.”

“Let’s do it,” said Cyphina fascinatedly. “But first...”

“What is it?”

“I’m not an Ancient either,” said Zone as he grabbed his console and Nixie’s memory unit from his backpack. He held onto the memory unit firmly as he felt Nixie’s determination flow through his veins.

“You’re not???” But then, how did you use magic?”

“I have a special application on my modded console that allows me to do so,” said Zone as he displayed the application on his console.

Ari leaned down close to him and he saw her peaceful silver eyes staring at the words “Virtual Ascendancy.”

“What about you?”

“I don’t use magic either, in the conventional sense that is… Do you know about the elements?”

“You mean the different types of magic?”

“Something like that. I use a special element known as the **Chaos** element. Unlike magic which uses Aurelius, it uses the psyche, which comes from the human mind.”

“So wait, is it like magic for humans?”

“Well it is exclusive to passionate beings, and I suppose most are humans. However, unlike typical magic which is stronger depending on your intellect, the power of chaos magic comes from human understanding.”

“Hmm… sounds like magic especially designed around your persona.”

*Which means I’ll never be good at that element...*

“Yea. It’s pretty convenient, although most of the chaos elemental spells are a bit unpredictable like us humans.”

Ari began to showcase some of her abilities by telekinetically lifting objects around her. She grabbed a towel from inside one of her bags and flew it over to Zone.

“You should take a shower before we begin the operation. Don’t want me messing up because of your stench!”

“Ok,” replied Zone as he attempted to stand up with his one good leg but fell back down.

“Oh yea you need something to stand on… Umm….”

Ari telekinetically grabbed a mop leaning against the kitchen wall and flew it over to Zone.

“Thanks,” said Zone as he tucked the mop underneath his shoulder like a crutch, and hobbled off towards the bathroom.

“Hey,” said Zone before he disappeared behind the corner of the wall.

“What’s up?” asked Ari with a concerned expression on her face hidden behind the AR visor.

When Zone realized she wasn’t able to see him behind the menus inside the glass he flashed a smile. “Thanks for everything,” said Zone solemnly.

“You’re very welcome!” said Ari as she gave him two thumbs up.

--

Every drop of the warm water melted on his body, causing memories and stress to flow out of him in a sweet release of steam. His frozen, bloody insides were able to thaw and expel the various rotten mixture of dead tissues and pus-like liquid clogging his veins.

Cyphina stared at the cloud of steam near the shower head as he mentally ran through Cyphina and his own ordeal. His thoughts eventually progressed him to questions about this woman, Ari. Zone wondered if his own disbelief towards humanity was due to the events of today, or if he was right in still having a strong distrust for her.

Zone walked out of the bathroom to the scent of some warm soup and milk laid out on a table that was made out of coffee table nearby the sofa.

“This is all I have to drink right now,” said Ari as Zone shook his head.

“You’ve already done more than anyone could ask for.”

“No way,” replied Ari as she sat on the carpet on the other side of the table. “We have to do our best to take care of each other, as human beings.”

“Yea…” replied Zone hesitantly.

As they sat around a small coffee table nearby the were eating Ari took measurements on Zone’s body as she prepared to print out temporary replacement parts for him. While she contemplated some parameters of the replacement arms and legs, Zone and Ari exchanged stories.

“So tell me, “ said Zone as Ari turned and looked at him with concerned eyes.

“Who are you Ari.”

“Who am I?...” muttered Ari slowly. “Hmm...”

Surprisingly Ari took a while to think of something to say. “I’m sorry I don’t really get asked that a lot.

What do you want me to do? Sing you a song about myself?”

“You said the journey is the most important thing to you. Tell me your story.”

“My story huh…”

##### Belong

“I am just a regular girl from Ellestar who likes to sing I guess.”

“

--

“So my past, and the fate that binds us has led me to kneeling in front of you.”

“But I also helped you because of my own selfish desires… But that makes me human right?”

“Uhh…” mumbled Zone.

“It’s better than being a monster.”

“Maybe,” replied Zone as he thought about Cyphina even though she was speaking figuratively.

“That’s why even though you don’t know much about me, I want to understand what you are Zone.

“That’s going to be tough, considering I don’t understand what I am now as well.”

Zone let out a deep breath as the two of them went silent to hear sounds of the vicarious winds blowing powder snow.

“I shouldn’t even be alive now… but then again, I think I’ve been dead for much longer than when I was dead of treason.”

“But look at you now,” said Ari as she snapped on the plastic hand to his bandaged arm. She grabbed the plastic hand, and Zone could feel something in his heart even if he could feel her hand.

If you call your past dead, then now you witness your own reincarnation. Your existence as an undead culminates to this day, because when you are reborn, you are more alive than everybody!”

“Thanks,” said Zone who felt appreciative for the positivity in her statement but didn’t quite understand the truthful message.

“You won’t be able to use your fingers and your toes,” said Ari as Zone watched her screw in place Zone’s perfectly sized replacement arms and legs.

“But at least you can move around. Just don’t put so much pressure on your body until it heals.”

“Were you engineer in the past?”

“No,” said Ari as she let out a chuckle at Zone’s look of astonishment.

“But i’ll tell you a secret.” Ari pointed her finger firmly against the side of her head.

“I can remember anything.”

“I’ve been so out of touch with technology except for the Cyberse over the past few years…”

“It’s easy to get lost when things are changing so fast. But the real problem is that there are a lot more people who are even more out of touch than you Zone.”

“Yea the old people running the world.”

“But also the young people who are finding themselves more isolated on the Cyberse. But the world will keep rapidly changing and the digital divide will keep growing.”

*That’s me* thought Zone as Ari stared at the ground in deep contemplation.

Zone attempted to stand up on his new leg which functioned as a more sophisticated looking peg.

Ari held out her fist to Zone who bumped it back and saw her with the happiest expression he’d seen on her. The smile on her face hid any signs of fatigue for the brief moment it lasted.

“Well,” said Ari abruptly as she let out a loud yawn. “I’m going to sleep. You’re welcome to stay over for as long as you need.”

“Thanks again.”

“No problem,” replied Ari with a goofy smile on her face. “Sweet dreams.”

“You too.”

“If you need more medication, there’s a lot neatly labeled in the kitchen table,” said Ari as she disappeared into the hallway.

--

Zone laid on the sofa with the blankets wrapped around him and took out his console. Slowly but surely he could feel the returning pain, but he felt a burning desire to analyze Nixie’s memory before searching for more painkillers.

*Let’s see what you remember of me,* thought Zone as he inserted Nixie’s memory chip into a slot inside the console. He waited for a special program to download before he was able to begin his analysis.

The program was able to format some of the data from Nixie’s ocular equipment into several video clips. Zone decides to take search for more pills on his way to turn off the lights. He searches through Ari’s medicine cabinet, and finds she stores lots of different drugs as well as magical toxins he recognizes from Cyphina’s expose to the monster laboratory.

*There’s no way if she wanted to kill me would I have even made it to this point*, thought Zone as he flushed down a few painkillers to last him for at least three more hours. He took a few pills and stored them inside his pocket.

Zone walked back and wrapped himself again as he tried to sleep to the recordings of Nixie’s memories. He realized most of his fatigue was from his body fighting to live, but he’d already slept for a few hours while he knocked himself unconscious.

While lying on his side, Zone saw images of Nixie working at a farm flashing on the screen.

*I guess this explains his magical abilities,* thought Zone as he watched his old friend using his spells to quickly sow a whole field with seeds..

Zone then saw another small movie where a young man finds a rusted Nixie in the forest. The man brings Nixie back to his small farmhouse where he juggles his time planting with fixing this robot. He seems to have no experience with robotics, yet he diligently attempts to figure out the contraption for weeks straight. One day the farmer walks a long way to town trudging the broken robot to ask a mechanic to look at it. The mechanic doesn't have any experience with anything besides farm tools, but the farmer and the mechanic have a long discussion about the possible fixtures that can be applied. Eventually by trying out a multitude of parts that the farmer could scavenge with the little money he made from his crops, he’s able to repair Nixie.

When Nixie was repaired, the farmer was able to teach the robot to perform menial tasks around the farmlands. Eventually the farmer witnessed Nixie develop some sort of magical ability which allowed him to perform the tasks at an alarming rate. Nixie’s ability helped the farm grow a lot bigger without the man having to spend all his money on extra tools. The man was able to become more successful.

Over the years the man became married, had children who played with Nixie, and expanded his farmlands past the competing local farms.

One rainy day, Nixie takes a stroll to the lake, and finds a spirit in the water. It looks like a spiky oyster, but when it opens up there’s a small animal that resembles a mixture between a mouse, a cat, and an anglerfish.

Nixie looks up at the monster and somehow says the words “Water God.” The monster nods and asks him for his help to sew the seeds of the underwater algae bed which had been destroyed by pollution. Nixie looks back at the farm which he knew would do fine without him before jumping in the water. Nixie’s circuitry doesn’t get destroyed right away, but he can see through the water the man wandering all around trying to search for his robot friend.

Nixie’s memory then flashes to the factory, where his memory unit was restored as one of the factory’s scientists personal projects. Zone assumed that somewhere along the unrecorded time, Nixie’s body was recovered from beneath the lake.

The scientist was making a robot to send to his children, but then the whole factory incident occurred and Nixie was set inactive.

As the scene of Zone turning on Nixie appeared, Zone shut down the movie and started to think about what was next for him. His mind started to hurt again, and all he could think about was relieving the pain with some ArcLight.

As He heard voices in his head talking about how he’s wasting his time doing something meaningless. He hears Sylphia, a more pragmatic yet emotional voice, telling him that she’s worried about his future.

“I don’t care what you do Zone, I just want you to be able to take care of yourself…”

Then he hears the voice of the woman he just met. “It’s not about where you are, but the journey you take that defines living…”

The smile he got from seeing the game’s startup screen made him think about doing what he truly loved. As he reached the login screen, Zone started to write down his username: Z\_1, but as he typed the first few letters of his password, he stopped.

“Maybe today I should start anew,” thought Zone as he erased the name from the textbox. As Zone contemplated a new account name, an idea formed in his head.

He remembered from his dream Cyphina’s login details. Cyphina was a legendary player 6 years ago. Zone wondered if his account would still be saved to him despite him having disappeared.

Zone typed in the details, and stared in awe as he saw the legendary clan tag the account was associated with. Up, Unbounded Perceptions. Zone had only heard rumors about this dominating clan since he hadn’t started playing till ArcLight became a virtual reality game, but once every few months Zone would see some wannabe new-gen professional players recreate tribute clans based upon Up.

Zone scrolled down the list of players and saw a few legendary names online. There were names of players regarded as the most knowledgeable people to have ever touched the game who still kept Cyphina as their friend. Zone also saw a bunch of unfamiliar names, but one name in particular which caught Zone’s eye was SnakeGirlOfficial.

*Sylphia must’ve played before she lost all her memories*, thought Zone as he saw the date next to her name representing her last login was set a month before she had appeared in the orphanage. *No wonder her sniper ability is absolutely phenomenal…*

Zone then scrolled through Cyphina’s old skins, which were considered as unmistakably rare since these old school items were only available to some of the first players to touch the game. Zone contemplated transferring them to himself, but he knew Cyphina was watching him and also didn’t want to become a skin hoarder.

A popup appeared with some people sending messages to the account. Zone quickly logged off the account as he knew that his old friends must’ve been in shock not having seen him for so long.

*This is who I am… Despite almost dying this all I can think about. At the same time this man gave up almost everything to save me.*

Zone saw another notification on his console, one that he hadn’t noticed since it appeared after he watched Nair’s memories. Zone quickly lowered the volume as interacting with the notification opened up his spell application. **LEARNED NEW SPELL, LAGUNASPHERE.**

*There must’ve been some kind of metadata alongside this video clip*, thought Zone as he started reading the description.

“This spell creates a large bubble that bursts after a few seconds leaving a pool of toxic water damaging people who walk into it. Mastery over this skill will increase the number of bubbles that can be created.”

*Seems like this is good technique for making the feasible battle area smaller* thought Zone.

Zone tried to close his eyes again but his mind was too active for him to pass out.

*There’s so much going on, I don’t think I can sleep. Even though my body’s in recovery mode, I’ve been used to staying up playing ArcLight for days straight.*

*I guess it makes sense that Nair’s memory holds spell data, but why did he never use this one? I what other kind of magic Ari knows.*

*She seems like a nice person, but I don’t think we’ll be traveling the same paths. She kind of reminds me of Sylphia, with her desire for adventure. Soon she’ll move on to the next adventure, but I think I’m going to go find my own. Being left behind feels worse than being sick, and leads me to go outside causing all these crazy things to happen. I could’ve just been at home…. doing my dailies.*

Zone decided he would go home and grab all his belongings before leaving Ayeru. He had a strong desire to play ArcLight after logging onto Cyphina’s account, but he needed his fingers to be functional, his trusty equipment, and a place to access the Cyberse.

He also decided that he’d help Cyphina figure out what happened to him 2 years down the road.

*The feeling of starting anew…. I haven’t felt such a good feeling since I found ArcLight 6 years ago. It’s all thanks to Cyphina that I’m still alive, and similarly I also need him to live so I can go on my journey. That means I have to help figure out what Mr. Swinac meant when he said Cyphina died 6 years ago.*

“I hope she doesn’t mind if I take the whole container,” thought Zone as he slipped the rest of the painkillers he could find in the cabinet into his backpack.

“Good luck,” muttered Zone as he stared back at the apartment as his hand reached for the freezing cold doorknob.

You’re a strong person and can survive this ordeal Ari. *I just hope you can continue to be survive being yourself when the world turns to shit if the Aurelius envelops it…*

Suddenly he heard the noise of footsteps as Ari walks out from behind the hallway in her pajamas. Zone mutters “Fuck,” as he sees the dark outline of her.

“You’re going to leave without saying goodbye?” asked Ari as Zone scratched the back of his hair.

“Goodbye. I have to go find my dream like you said Ari.”

“I understand.”

“Thanks for the help Ari.”

“Are you going to miss me?”

“Sure,” replied Zone in an unsure voice.

“Here, take something before you go,” said Ari as she went back into her room. Zone let out a deep sigh as he waited underneath a clock hanging on the wall nearby the door.

Ari ran back out with her wallet which was shaped like a crab.

“Here’s enough money for you to get an actual cybernetic hand. And here’s money if you need to go to the doctor… Ohh I have some food in the fridge if…”

*Why does this hurt just as much as being betrayed….*

“Ari that’s enough,” said Zone as he held all of her gifts with his hands and shoulders.

“I’m just going to my apartment, and then I’ll be back.”

“You’re going into the city?!” asked Ari asked Ari in disbelief. “With the Aurelius flowing through the city for that long, there’s bound to have several people and animals that have turned into monsters.”

*She figures out things way to fast. I guess that means she cares though.*

“Yea that’s why you should stay here and sleep. I’ll be back Ari, so hold onto everything for me alright?”

*God damn she’s making me say too much.*

“Zone... you shouldn’t be doing anything right now in your condition.”

“Yea well... the Aurelius filled city isn’t getting any less dangerous.”

“I can’t let you go Zone,” said Ari as she grabbed his plastic hand. “Not when you’re still recovering.”

“Look you’re a nice person,” replied Zone as he attempted to bend the hand to break her grip. “But you should stop caring about random people,” said Zone as he realized his hand was telekinetically attached to hers.

“I appreciate all you’ve done for me, and you’re existence is literally a blessing on my life. But like you said, we have things we need to live for. I’ve just thought of mine, and it’s orthogonal to your life goals.”

“Yeah... well... you’re not going to be able to live for anything if you die quickly.”

“I’m pretty much already dead of treason,” said Zone as he broke free from her loosened grip by pulling his hand to the floor.

“You’re not dead. You’re standing on your own two feet.”

Zone was silent as his mind continued to calculate how to say goodbye.

“Let me help you find what you’re searching for…”

“You can’t help me Ari,” replied Zone sternly.

“I just did right now…”

“...I mean what I’m going to do isn’t something you’d like to do.”

“How do you know?” asked Ari adamantly. “If you don’t say anything I’ll keep following you around anyways.”

Zone took a deep breath as he began thinking.

*Since when did I start caring about what other people thought of me? Since when did I care about the fate of others?*

“Just give up Ari, we don’t know each other. Let’s just… I mean…”

“I don’t know you Zone. But… look at me Zone. I know you’re worried about me.”

Ari clapped her hands together and Zone saw Ari transform into a wicked creature. A pair of wings that looked like red flowers grew out from the strings which looked like a combination of floating puppet strings and the umbels of a lycoris radiata sprouted from her back. Another larger and shaper tentacle resembling a rose vine sprouted from her back and coiled around her arms, binding them to a pair of spear hilts which had scythe blades protruding from a side; making her look like a praying mantis.

“But just as I barely know you and I’m worried about you, I know you barely know me yet you’re worried about me. However, you only know what I think about, but nothing about what I do.”

“Are you a monster?” asked Zone as she hovered gracefully off the ground barely high enough to prevent herself from bumping into the ceiling..

“No,” replied Ari as she transformed back into her original form. “But I must atone for the blood soaked on my wings.”

“I know you can fight Ari... but…”

“What is it?”

“Are you willing to stay up this late?” asked Zone jokingly.

“When I was trapped underground for those 74 hours, I stayed awake the whole time in hopes somebody could hear my voice.”

“That’s pretty close to my record of 75,” mumbled Zone. “Well, we’ll split everything you were going to give me. I’ll carry the food and you take the rest alright?”

“Oss,” replied Ari who let out a little bow. Zone opened the door of her apartment and felt the frozen wind bursting through the doorway.

“I’m going to wait outside,” yelled Zone as Ari quickly ran about the apartment preparing her bag.

The snow began to trickle onto Zone’s hat, but for some reason the slight freeze felt good.

*I’m still alive…* thought Zone as he savored the brief moment before the door busted open revealing a woman wearing a green raincoat with cartoon snails which barely covered her pajamas.

With her fancy basketball shoes on Ari was slightly taller than Zone when she stood up straight.

“I’m ready to go.”

*--*

#### My Beloved Puppet

***Main Plot:*** *A portal was opened between the two worlds to supply the Aurelius needed for the powerful spell “Fate Intertwined” which transports people between the two worlds. Ordinarily, the amount used would be precisely calculated so that there would be no excess spillage, but somehow something else besides Aurelius was transported in the portal. An ancient artifact known as the Last Dance* Immortal Sphere *e was somehow transported to the world simultaneously and caused part of its altar to merge with an underground cavern, where it radiates its desire driving magic all throughout the city, at least until a knight ranking Ancient is sent by the government to clear out the mess. The Ancient has no idea that Zone is wanted, so Zone and Ari end up helping her out until she finds out and then they ambush her before she’s ready so they can raise their odds against such a powerful being.*

***Section Plot:*** *This section is about falling victim to our emotions. We do things that make us feel good, or sometimes we must shield ourselves from our emotions to achieve our goals. How far should we let our emotions guide us?*

***Points:***

* *How can a good friend like Ari save us from our desiring selves?*
* *The desire blinds us, to see the world only in the way we want. It’s almost as if we’re asleep.*
* *Our emotions are tools to be abused. That is the way of UndeadM, the way of psychology, or so they say. Pity is just there to make others see a sympathy that never existed.*
* *Whereas human beings may be slaves to their emotions, thinking that things that lead to positive emotions are in the right, all Ari can feel is the beating of her heart.*
* *Stop looking for reasons to justify your hatred and look for reasons to look past it instead. I can be your reason, don’t hurt him, says Ari as she stands in the way. Think about just you and me. Don’t let your feelings about the rest of the world come between us.*
* *There are monsters forcing people to see what they want instead of reality. However, the images they see is not exactly what they want, but rather the interpretation by a vampire named Alchemillia*

*--*

Zone noticed the Aurelius had slowly been growing throughout the night, till it even reached the outskirts of the forest which they had once walked through. A thin layer blanketed the forest causing the trees exhibit a a turquoise sparkle, which warned Zone of taking the same path back.

Zone wondered if the barricade was still up. At first he thought it’s purpose was to prevent the Aurelius from spreading outside the city. Then he believed that the barricade was used to prevent the discovery of the operation undergone at the orphanage which involved a powerful spell that would use up all the Aurelius.

But since the Aurelius was still lingering in the air when it should have been normally dissipated due to the lack of a world tree, Zone had no idea what to expect.

“I think we’re carrying enough supplies to last at least 10 days if we use it sparingly,” said Ari who was carrying a large backpack as well as two bindles carried on the same shoulder.

“I’ll take one if you don’t mind,” said Zone as Ari nodded her head sideways.

“You need to give your shoulders a good rest until you heal up. Especially since I ran out of painkillers.”

“I’ll be ok,” replied Zone nonchalantly as he wondered if she could hear the container jingling inside his backpack.

“What do you think the city is going to look like now?” asked Ari as they walked back on the long road towards Ellestar. The sun had started to rise causing the sky to progressively turn dark blue blending in with Ari’s hair.

Zone and Ari’s tired eyes were both reluctant to see sunlight again, but the deeper they walked along the old concrete path leading to Ellestar, the deeper the fog became, and the darker the surroundings.

“I would’ve said it was going to look the same with how technologically advanced it is, but the Aurelius only got stronger.”

“Sometimes I wish I could feel the magic of the Aurelius. I’ve heard that when the magic flows through an Ancient, their body feels ageless.”

“I’ve heard that too. How much do you know about the Ancient World Ari?”

“Enough to understand how dangerous our situation is.”

Ari and Zone exchanged information but it seems both of them knew about the same general information regarding the Ancients. Zone kept some of the recent discoveries like the Zephracores hidden because he was still worried about betrayal in the back of his head.

“If that’s what you think a monster is, then maybe I’m a monster… The wings and tentacles binding the blades to my hands just kind of sprouted out of nowhere after I came back to life.”

“Well it’s not like you have another person inside you right?”

“Well no… wait a minute… do you see that?” blurted Ari as Zone and Ari suddenly stopped in the middle of the snowstorm.

Zone put on his visor and saw a few people walking around the streets of the rural towns.

“What?”

“You can’t tell because of your visor’s post processing, but we made it to Ellestar. However, the neon lights on the welcome sign is off.”

“I see. I gotta configure these settings…”

“You should watch out using anything from the Cyberse. I’ve seen people hide murders in broad daylight by hacking the Cyberse.”

“So that’s why you don’t use your visor.”

Ari nodded. “I wonder if the barricade’s been extended? But there’s no agents anywhere, so maybe something just happened to the satellites.”

“God damn it. Not again...”

“You must really be sad you haven’t been able to use Cynet this whole time huh?” said Ari jokingly.

*I should’ve done my dailies back when I was at her apartment… But then again I can’t really pull any triggers right now…*

“I hate Cynet,” replied Zone as he stuffed the visor back into his pocket. “But I’m a professional gamer so dealing with it is unavoidable.”

“Whoa, you’re a professional?” replied Ari. “That sounds amazing.”

“It’s ok,” replied Zone as the fog hid his confident smile. “It’s all about practicing everyday, being merciless, emotionally adept, and just having top form physique to play VR for at least 18 hours as day.”

“But you look pretty young Zone. Don’t you have to go to school?”

“What do you mean look young? I think I’ve slept like 10 hours the past week. My bags have bags.”

“Maybe it’s a combination of my bags and the fog but I can’t see your face clearly. From this blurry perspective you look young.”

“It’s true, at my age I would be in school. But I’m not going anymore,” he mumbled.

“Why?”

“Because...”

Zone began to think about Sylphia’s angry expressions when he asked her for help and she knew he was going to trick her into doing the whole thing.

“I want to try something different,” muttered Zone in a deeper voice filled with hints of sadness towards the nostalgic reminiscence.

“I never went back to school after I changed. I remember the letter I got at the hospital said something like ‘You can only see your own art when you stray off the lines.’ I wonder what kind of path you’ll draw Zone…”

“Hopefully it’ll be the path that ends at me becoming an Arclight world champion…”

--

Zone and Ari walked back towards the inner city through an old fashion road made for wheeled vehicles. Even though traffic through the Cyberse was still being filtered, there were no more barricades in sight. As they passed a checkpoint where they saw broken war machines scattered across the ground, they quickly found out why.

Ari laid down next to a pile of dead bodies swimming in their own blood.

“This has to be some kind of blood magic,” said Ari as she didn’t shy away from examining the grotesque wounds with her hands. There’s no way this much fresh blood would have spilled out from this position without drying, nor are any of the wounds mortal.”

“Taking out a whole barricade that’s setup for battle… This must’ve been one hell of a monster.”

“Well this is what we have to expect from the city. But there’s no turning back now is there…”

*I wonder if the government is trying to farm more Zefracores… Killing a whole city doesn’t seem like a good way to do so though…*

“Are you curious about what’s going on?”

“Yes. If there’s something this dangerous lurking around the city… we have to make sure nobody gets hurt.”

“Ari, if we’re going to work with each other, you have to promise that it’s us first and then everyone else.”

“I want to say yes for your sake…”

“Say it~”

“…but I don’t know if I can do that Zone. My heart just won’t let me…”

“What kind of defective heart are you using?”

“The one that’s forcing me to follow you in the first place.”

“…”

*Let’s see if you still have any heart left when we see the true darkness of human nature when they’re being devoured by monsters…*

“Just don’t put yourself at risk because you know I won’t hesitate to help you.”

“I know I know…”

Ari transformed into her alternate forme and started to use the blades wrapped around her arms to create an incision inside one of the dead bodies.

“It’s as I thought…” muttered Ari.

“What?” asked Zone as he continued to examine the surroundings cautiously for any signs of monsters.

“With how blood filled the lungs are, it seems as if they drowned in their own blood.”

“But most of their blood is still in their body.”

“Yup. But all it takes is a small sample and a blood magic user can turn that against you.”

“Is that so… Take this then Ari,” said Zone as he grabbed a small device off of one of the dead agents.

“Hmm? What’s this?”

“It’s a PPC. It’s a kind of forcefield that shields you.”

Ari stared at the pedometer shaped machine in awe. As soon as she turned it on, the shield began to charge.

“How does it charge like that?”

“I have no idea, but I think it charges more depending on the person using it. I’m not sure what traits generate a stronger charge… but you’re shield is very powerful.”

Ari started to fawn over how the shield glowed like a bioluminescent jellyfish, as Zone continued to explain to her the perks of the shield.

“Wait a second… Can you repeat the last part again?”

“I said,” said Zone slowly as he enunciated his words as if he had a southern accent. “The shield won’t block things that aren’t fast moving or very spread out. This is why close comb…”

Ari suddenly snapped her fingers so that they formed a pistol and sent a memory’s fragment bolt straight past Zone. Zone’s eyes widened as the projectile grazed his shield and blasted something behind him.

“What the hell,” yelled Zone as he quickly turned around and saw three monsters which resembled long slender human shadows. The only part of their body which had any color was their face, which was pale white, and their eyes, which were small blue beads.

“How didn’t I hear them?” asked Zone as he watched one of the monsters get directly blasted due to its negligence stemming from thinking Zone and Ari were distracted.

Zone saw Ari closing her eyes as and promptly heard voices from the monsters.

“Something is happening to me… I feel different,” said the monster in a voice that was gentle and relaxed.

“But you look the same. Are you okay about killing these guys; there’s no need to kill harmless humans.”

“Yes, and we mustn't leave a bad impression as visitors to this new world.”

“That one is definitely not a human. I’ve heard humans can’t use magic.”

“I’ve seen ones like her be tortured. She’s a human female.”

“Yes and it looks like she’s headed towards the inner reality.”

“I can’t imagine her ending up there. The suffering she’ll go through.”

“I pity her future. Maybe we should kill her here to prevent her suffering.”

“We should.”

“They were phasing in and out of this world to move places,” said Ari as the monsters started to encroach them.

“What’s with their dumb reasoning,” said Zone as Ari nodded. “Hey you guys, the only suffering you’ll be preventing is the suffering I get when I haven’t battled something in a while.”

“I pity the sadness the boy will feel when he loses his friend.”

“Yes he must die too. Else he will feel the gruesome pain of watching his friend scream for help, but being unable to do anything.”

“Yes he will certainly kill himself after.”

“Then we must kill them at the same time so their pain will be much less than if they had continued on.”

“Oh boy. My first battle without my arm and leg,” said Zone as the rush of adrenaline made him smile.

“If you have a plan tell me Zone, else I’ll try my best to stay out of trouble and protect you if you need it.”

“Yes, stay defensive until we figure out what they know,” replied Zone as the red wings sprouted from her back causing the ends of the tendril like puppet strings to tickle Zone.

“And then we’ll see what we can do…”

**Zone and Ari vs Devouring Pity(x3)**

Zone and Ari destroy the three monsters due to Zone’s mixture of strategy, bloodlust, lack of emotions, and Ari’s solid supporting, patient battling, and her powerful combination of chaos and poison magic.

“They said something about an inner reality. I wonder what they’re talking about?”

“They said we were heading towards it… Maybe it’s a place? An idea?”

“Well there’s no use fretting about it now. All we know is that something dangerous lies ahead. The Aurelius has gotten worse in the city, and the agents are probably dispersed in the city as well.”

“Yes, but the monsters said something about women being tortured too.”

“I’d tell you to be worried Ari,” said Zone optimistically. “But you just saw what we can do together…”

“Yes, as long as we work together it’s unlikely that we can be killed by monsters as basic as those.”

“Do you think those monsters were originally humans?”

“No, they seemed different. They said something about visiting our world, as if they were from the Ancient World.”

“Yea… Well, we best get going before the fog gets even worse.”

**--**

Ever since the implementation of the data pods and transportation nodes, vehicles had all but vanished off the street.

The new transportation network was implemented by using the recycled parts of people who traded in their cars to be registered into the system but with the cynet down Zone and Ari saw a decent number of cars strolling alongside the road whose sidewalks were covered in flowering ivy.

Eventually they reach the slums and Zone’s eyes to widen as he noticed a large mass of Aurelius flowing from the smokestacks of the factory.

“Are you ok Zone?” asked Ari after she took a few steps and heard his steps go out of sync.

Her voice triggered Zone to quickly escape his trance.

“Do you see the Aurelius flowing into the air?”

“I can’t see that far. Are you sure it isn’t your visor playing tricks on you?”

“Just follow me Ari,” said Zone as he ran past her.

*I thought the end of Death-Hime marked the destruction of Alethea* thought Zone as he tried to remember his tunnel escape. *The sewers were getting flooded as if the water system failed, and… I guess I couldn’t confirm the factory’s destruction after being lead through the large pipe network… Did I just kill thousands of people?*

A deep sense of dread built up inside Zone prompting him to take another pain-killer while Ari was too far away to see him.

When Zone reached the metal fence surrounding the factory, the fog was a bit thicker than normal, but the abandoned factory looked asleep like when he had first arrived.

“I swear I saw something coming out,” said Zone as he felt his body becoming more relaxed. He took off his visor and stared at his shivering hand. “I don’t think I’m that disoriented currently.”

“Let me see that,” said Ari as Zone handed her his visor.

“Hmm…” mumbled Ari as she stared at the city around them.

Ari’s gaze circled around the area until her eyes landed at Zone and he saw her flash an innocent yet devilishly naughty smile at him as she removed the visor.

“Zone… you look so good when there’s no fog blocking your face.”

“So, did you see anything or not?”

“Nothing. I think you might be feeling trauma from your repressed memories. How about we sit down on the bench and take a breather.”

*Maybe… but this feels nothing compared to the trauma of degrading near a dumpster.*

“I mean if you need one…”

“I want to try out that one game that you play.”

“Alright what the fuck is wrong with you,” said Zone violently as the red puppet wings sprouted on Ari’s back as she started to climb on top of him.

“I’ve always dreamed of playing these kinds of games,” said Ari as Zone scooted his butt away and stiff armed her.

“But I needed a partner to have fun.”

Zone watched closely as Ari took out her console. “What’s your favorite game called.”

“It’s called Arclight, but it takes a long time to install. Just sleep or something if you need it Ari, else we have to get going.”

“I’ll sleep while it’s installing,” said Ari as she leaned onto his shoulder.

*Something is wrong with her. Maybe she has bipolar disorder like her sister? No… if she did she’d probably have the same kind of pills, but I didn’t see that in the cupboard. I think…*

Zone took out the console from his backpack and prepares a lightning bullet spell.

“I suppose the only way to wake up from this illusion is to disrupt my nervous system,” mumbled Zone as Ari watched him point the console at himself with one of her eyes barely open.

Zone felt a sharp pain in his muscles as if they were being crushed and then his whole body went numb for a few seconds.

After he was able to open his eyes again, everything looked just as foggy causing Zone to doubt whether he was trapped in an illusion.

However, he soon realized when his nerves had calmed down that he was no longer sitting on the bench, but he was being dragged by Ari.

“Are you okay Zone? Ever since you wanted to sit down on the bench you’ve been staring into the abyss like there’s something there.”

“Sorry, I must be getting tired,” muttered Zone as he stared down at his hands covered in fog once again with his eyes wide open.

*There’s fog coming out of the factory again… And for a brief moment my eyes wanted to avoid seeing it. Maybe I have a cybernetic implant in my eye filtering it just like the visor? Or maybe there’s something wrong with the drugs Ari gave me but… If I ask her she’ll know I stole them.*

There are so many people who need help here since this place has turned into a monster breeding ground,” said Ari as her grip on him loosened as he sped up his pace to meet hers.

“Ari, I think there’s something wrong here,” replied Zone as he took another doubtful glance at the factory and realized the smoke coming out of it, surrounded the whole entire city except for a small hole in the sky near one of the highrises. The moon was shining brightly through the small hole.

*There’s so much Aurelius… So I am a mass-murderer…*

“What’s wrong?” asked Ari as Zone pulled hard on her arm causing her to stop. “Wait Ari.”

“Do you not see the Aurelius plumes from the factory? I think the factory is alive. That must be why the Aurelius isn’t gone…”

“Yes, and now everybody is in danger of becoming a monster,” as she let go of his hand and continued to march forward

“We have to help them!”

“No,” replied Zone firmly as he grabbed the back of her jacket.

“We have to get rid of the source first or we can’t help anybody.”

“But look at the trail coming from the smokestack,” retorted Ari as Zone glanced at the sky again more carefully. Hidden in the large amounts of Aurelius was a giant arc made of a darker colored fog.

“It looks like it’s leading somewhere. Maybe that place is important.”

“I guess,” replied Zone. “But it’s too risky to try and help others especially when you have some monsters who could gain control of their human.”

“Zone we have to at least try and help everybody we can. Image thousands of people going through what you did.”

“I’m trying to be realistic here Ari…”

Zone stared to the right of her adamant silver eyes for brief moment until he nodded. “You said you would escort me back home but… it looks like our roles have reversed.”

“Thank you Zone,” said Ari as she flashed a small smile behind the fog.

--

##### Welcome to the Dustbowl



***Main Plot:*** *A group of soldiers led by captain Skye, an Ancient with the powerful rank of Knight in the Divine Trial of Wings, were supposed to have carried out a rescue operation on the city, but Skye’s reinforcements had been killed by the Pities which Zone and Ari had just wiped out. Skye realizes the situation is dire when she starts feeling her innermost desire to eat a special fruit salad made with a forbidden fruit she had stolen long ago. Meanwhile the slums of Ayeru, the strong desires have formed a revolution amongst the adults of the city, and they angrily march towards the city broken by its desires, only to be caught up in its downfall.*

***Section Plot:*** *Zone and Ari traverse the Ayeru slums in attempt to help the people from the excess Aurelius, while trying to figure out its cause. Searching through the where they can’t find any adults anywhere. Instead they find a lot of monsters, and a few children who have been left behind to hide.*

*As they traverse deeper in to the city, they realize the children have been abandoned by their parents because the desires radiating from the* Immortal Sphere *caused them to form a march towards the mayor, despite abandoning their children to the monsters. So, the children have gathered up and while some have become monsters, the rest have been taken control of by a monster known as the Mother Harlot, a being that believes that human beings who are withheld from their desires turn sour. Ari tries to save the kids from falling to their desires to treat each other as savages, but the kids have become brainwashed to believe the Harlot is their true mother. As Ari’s words seem to look like they are having some kind of effect, the Harlot interferes, and thus Zone and Ari have to make a plan to kill her*.

***Points:***

* *How evil is the new generation?*
* *Complacent parents vs no parent Cyphina vs strict parent Ari.*

Sidequests Available

* **A hopeful beginning** – Since there’s no way to recollect everybody’s belongings, Ari decides that they should collect a bunch of resources and pile them up somewhere safe, so that the people will hopefully share them if they ever return
* **The next great artiste** –Zone and Ari come across several drawings with a peculiar style. They decide to try and find as many pages as they can so they can one day return or share the original artist’s works.
* **The holes are mouths** – Zone and Ari find inside one of the abandoned houses a set of holes acting as tunnels into what seems like an infested underground pit. Worried that monsters breeding here could create a self-sustaining monster environment, they decide to clean the place out.

The slums which had initially felt like a forest where eyes were watching from behind every tree had become near desolate. There were still barrels filled with burning trash and shoddy tents lined across the streets, but not a trace of anybody as they walked through the streets.

The only things the two of them saw were monsters, and there were quite a few different kinds. The most common mutation were variants of the rats which had been roaming the streets. They had become much larger, smarter, and became more fleshy like their child counterparts. However, their teeth had grown to the point where the razor sharp fangs hung out of their mouth like a pair of tusks.

So much trash and dust had built up on the streets such that whenever the storms started to cause small tornadoes of snow and trash to coalesce, Zone and Ari could witness the creation of highly aggressive dust golems. They had a deep growl and were as strong as a large ox, but Zone easily destroyed them by weakening them with Lagunasphere.

“This is what happens when the world advances so fast. There’s people left behind who might’ve been just like us, but their city and belongings were destroyed by the pollution and Aurelius.”

Ari watched Zone nod in agreement, but she couldn’t see his facial expression since she was taller than him and his hair blocked his face which was mostly pointed towards the ground despite him examining the area carefully as if he were playing Arclight.

Zone hid a stern expression in his face. Unlike the monsters they had just fought, Zone had no sense of pity. His mind was only focused on survival and winning.

“I wonder if there is anybody left?” asked Ari as her voice echoed in the blistering winds which carried the entirety of several people’s possessions across the entire area.

“I don’t know,” replied Zone. “But earlier today when you could barely call this a storm, this place was filled to the brim. But now there aren’t any bodies in sight...”

“It’s possible that the monsters ate all the bodies.”

*Monsters don’t eat humans though… But I guess there might exist some that could use the bodies for some other means. Or ones smart enough to hide bodies like the ones I saw in Alsatia.*

Zone and Ari traveled across the main road scouring the trash spread across the floor for all signs of life. Every few scraps they overturned, Ari would spray their hand with sanitizer.

“Hey the snow hasn’t piled up in front of this door,” said Ari hopefully as she skipped up to the shoddy door that looked as if it could break any day now.

“Hello, is anybody out there?” yelled Ari as she knocked on the door. The door felt as if it were already loose, but there were several objects barricading the door.

“We’re looking for survivors to give some delicious food to.~”

*Well I guess we’re going to starve then* thought Zone who stood back near the trash filled sidewalks as he kept a vigorous watch of the house and area.

As Ari tried to glance through a crack in the door, suddenly she saw a crazy eye on the other side, and then she heard the noise of boxes shuffling on the other side. .

“Hey there’s a person in here Zone!” said Ari excitedly as the person moved the barricade out of the way and opened the door slightly.

A small kid stood in front of the door and barely peeked his head outside.

“Are you one of them magical people?” asked the kid as Ari gave him a perplexed look.

“Umm… no? But are you guys living here doing okay? I know it’s really dangerous outside, and it may stay this way for a while so I brought you some gifts.”

“It’s just me,” replied the boy as he looked at Zone standing a few feet behind Ari and saw his dead cold eyes.

“All the adults left to go fix the town up. You guys cold outside? You can come on in if you want.”

“We should ask him more details about what happened here,” said Ari as she turned and looked at Zone’s unwavering expression.

As soon as the door creaked open a sliver Zone took out his console and blasted the door with a bullet spell as soon as he saw the goo covered hand reach for Ari’s neck. Ari instinctively jumped out of the way as another blast headed nearby her.

The broken down door revealed a giant monster that wore the little boy’s face on it’s gooey body. The monster’s real head, a creamy white face that was filled with bubbles of bloody boils reminded Zone of something partially melted. The rest of the body which resembled a malnourished human.

**Zone and Ari vs Necrotroph**

“Zone wait a second,” said Ari as they destroyed the monster.

Zone was about to send a bullet spell which he thought would finish off the monster but he quickly held is shot.

“Whatever your name is, if you let the child coexist with you then we won’t kill you.”

*Coexist? Like UndeadM* thought Zone.

“Hurry up,” said Zone in his usual unsympathetic deep voice.

The monster let out an evil laugh as its body started to implode, revealing the child’s wounded body which had seemed to be coated in the monster.

Ari started treating his wounds as Zone put away his console and started searching around the house for any other clues.

“How did you know he was a monster?” asked Ari as Zone returned back into the room.

“He seemed too cool for a kid in a monster infested town.”

“Yea but you shot him right as he was about to wrap his hand around me.”

“Yea I know; that’s not my best showcase of my reaction time. It’s harder to react fast than when you’re playing ArcLight, because VR is more immersive.”

Ari nodded her head and smiled at Zone’s lack of understanding.

--

“Unfortunately, I think this guy will be unconscious for a couple more hours.”

“Are we going to leave him here?” asked Zone.

“Well we don’t really have much of an option.”

“I could carry him.”

“Not with your injuries you can’t”

“The arm you installed on me feels great.”

“There’s no way it could feel great when the pain medication wears off.”

“Heh, yea…” sighed Zone.

“It’ll be alright. This guy should be okay since the monster is with him.”

“What do you mean? Won’t the monster just kill him when we’re gone?”

“I guess you don’t know this, but when a monster awakens inside you, you initially fight for control over your body. But if you beat it, then the monster only gains control if you allow it, unless you are in a critical state in which the monster can take control to protect you.”

“That means sense, I guess… I wonder what how the monster was talking about.”

“Maybe some Ancients were in the slums, although I would have no idea why.”

“I think I know,” muttered Zone as he thought back to the orphanage. “I think the government may have some kind of troop division comprising of Ancients.”

“They have a lot more than that Zone,” replied Ari. “The government is essentially controlled in the shadows by the Ancients. I guess it makes sense they sent a few powerful members to protect us.”

*It looks like you’ll get to help people out after all Sylphia…*

“But if the people here were evacuated, why was this child left behind?”

“I don’t know, but we should finish up our search of this place just in case there are more like him.”

“And then we can finally go back to my place…”

“Yes, and celebrate with a good nap,” said Ari as she let out a vigorous yawn.

--

Tyrant

Although danger was around every corner, Zone’s positioning left a window of mere milliseconds for something to appear in any corner without him noticing. Despite his unwavering patience, in the back of his mind Zone could feel a very disturbing boredom caused by a withdrawal of Arclight.

One moment Zone was watching the windows of the house and around the side as Ari walked up to a door and gave her spiel about helping any survivors and offering food. The next moment, as Ari turned around, she turned into Sylphia and asked him about playing ArcLight naked.

“Look you fucking betrayer, the clothes I wear helps me generate just enough sweat so my body becomes mobile enough to handle days of playing ArcLight at maximum efficiency. I’m not removing my clothes!”

“Zone… Zone you’re missing out~!” sang Ari

“Huh?” shouted Zone as Ari reappeared next to the house where she waved towards him.

“Fuck…”

“Are you paying attention? What if you get jumped looking all blank in the middle of the street?”

“I don’t know,” replied Zone as he attempted to shake his head back to reality.

“Anyways, I think I found traces of people that were here recently!” said Ari excitedly.

“Well there’s a lot of that around here…”

“But I saw a blood trail inside the house, and it looks fresh.”

“Let’s follow it then.”

Ari and Zone walked into the decrepit house and followed the trail to a school ravaged by the storms. There the two of them found a few children spread out around the courtyard like soldiers.

--

“Alright, maybe you think parents are ‘remnants of a prehistoric society.’ but what about games?

“Games are a necessity for childhood.”

“I like games.”

“Then how about we play the great game called ‘Dragon.’”

“Can I play it on my phone?”

*God damn these kids are stupid* thought Zone as he held his head low into the space between his cuffed arms and body.

“No the only controller is your voice.”

--

“If you don’t tell me what’s next I’ll kill you!”

“I’ll only tell you if you let us free.”

“I’m not repeating myself twice!!”

“But if you kill me you’ll never find out how the game ends~,” teased Ari to tell them

--

“Look if you’re going to give up your PPC for the kids, then I’ll do so as well.”

“Have you been inspired Zone?”

“No, but this doubles their chances of living.”

“You believe in our teamwork don’t cha.”

“Yes, but we’re avoiding all battles until we reach the exit. I think we’ve helped enough people.”

“Not like there’s anyone else out there, or so I think,” replied Ari. “The only ones left were the kids apparently…”

##### Angel of Salvation I

***Main Plot:*** *RevelationX corporation puts out a large advertisement while everybody is killing each other around the city square for their new product, the Developer Console application just like the one Zone has. The application’s spells are locked via a paywall, but Zone figures out a way to crack the spells that people are buying, granted he steals their console after subduing them.*

***Section Plot:*** *Zone and Ari arrive at the city where there’s a huge revolt going on. Amidst the chaos, Zone and Ari find lots of smaller cases of people falling for their desires, and completely ruining their lives and the lives of those around them.*

*It seems that whatever magic is cursing the area is causing people to have small dream-like visions of their desires being fulfilled, causing them to act upon them and sometimes forget what is real or not.*

*At the root of the problem are the corporate executives heading the division of RevelationX, arguably the most powerful corporation currently. Creatures resembling the devouring pities have taken control of them.*

*The pities pity the human’s inabilities to achieve what they want before they die, so they use the power of the console to enable the residents of the city to fulfill their inner most desires before the pities feast on them.*

*Meanwhile Zone and Ari help a group of government agents defend themselves against an angry mob. They then manage to get information out of the agents that the leader of their operation, Skye, has already begun an expedition to stop the excess flow of Aurelius.*

***Points:***

* *White Knight vs Zone*
* *Wherever Ari goes, kindness is sure to follow*
* *We all thought you were the stupidest one of us all, but in reality we can’t accept the fact you know something we don’t.*
* *Lesjes can manipulate the simplistic minds of the mass population, but somebody as random as Ari and somebody as focused as Zone are impossible to manipulate with the* Immortal Sphere*.*
* *Number one desire is happiness, but these short term desires make us less happy in the long run, and the effects will eventually wear away.*
* *Desire for good exists*
* *People who can escape the illusion are people who aren’t strongly linked to their desires (obsession), people who have doubts about their true desires, or those who get their desires crushed by somebody with a stronger desire.*
* *But these people can easily be dragged back*
* *A lot of boring people are unaffected, but Zone and Ari will need their help to do work.*
* *People with little understanding get demolished by Memory’s Fragment.*
* *The man with no desires is king in the desire drive.*

*“Don’t you agree Zone?” said the monster, her voice exhibiting a longing for his approval.*

*“It’s so sad. I can’t imagine somebody would live their life being so afraid to go after the objects of his or her desires?”*

*“Well nobody, not even yourself knows what you truly want. Maybe by blindly chasing after the things you think you want… you’ll miss the fact that everything you ever wanted is already in front of you.”*

*“Wow, how’d you think of that?” asked Ari*

*“Heh… I don’t know Ari,” replied Zone as he towards Ari and saw his flashbacks about Sylphia fade away besides Ari’s smile.*

*“All those losers saying that it’s not about what happens, but it’s about the journey are just lazy.”*

*“I think calling Ari lazy is a great testament to how shit the world is.”*

Sidequests Available

* **Who says being normal is bad?** – There’s a regular guy trying to get to work early in the morning, but everybody around him is picking on him to fulfill their desires. At first a woman picks him off the streets to use him to fulfill her desire of making another guy jealous, and then the guy uses him to fulfill his desire to maintain his status among all the onlookers and attempts to fight the man. Then he gets harassed by a group of people trying to start a cult on the subway that believes in skinning and eating cat tongues. Ari feels bad for him, so the two pals follow him around to save him from this day of desire.

Ari stared at the picture on her console, and then at the dust flowing in between her and the group of smiling children who were waving goodbye to her like the panoramic picture on her phone.

“Phew,” that was a close one said Ari, expressing ample emotion of relief in her voice and face.

“Yea,” replied Zone as he covered his yawning mouth. “But now we have to freaking walk through a revolution.”

“Yea… But hey, we got to see the smiles of so many cute little people.”

“More like a lot of evil little people,” responded Zone as they reached the cobblestone road dividing the city and the slums.

*Back to where we started…*

“They still need us to find a rift,” said Zone. “Or whatever is generating this much Aurelius if they don’t want to be continually swarmed by monsters.”

“I believe in them,” said Ari hopefully as she clasped her hands together as if she were praying for them. “They have each other, and after facing all of that their bonds with each other will become stronger.”

“Not to mention our equipment…”

“Are you afraid Zone? I can shield you with my wings.”

“I’m just being realistic.”

“It’ll be okay if we lay low until we get another one.”

“Yes, but the factory is the other way…”

“Wow I expected more of you Zone.”

“What?”

“You didn’t realize this whole time that I didn’t get mine from the factory. I know a guy around here…”

“Forgive me for being focused on making sure we didn’t get ambushed.”

“I know, I’m just joking around Zone,” said Ari. Zone’s stern expressions made Ari feel a bit of regret although she knew he barely took offense to anything.

“You’re the reason why we’re still alive. You’ve gotten us past all the little traps the monsters’ setup.”

*Yea but somehow you saved us and thousands of children without spilling a drop of human blood,* thought Zone ashe saw through his hair Ari look at him with content eyes.

“Here,” said Ari as he held out her glowing hand towards him.”

“Where’d you get that?” asked Zone before she could open them.

“I picked them off the dead soldiers we found earlier.”

“But why didn’t you tell me?”

“I wanted to know if you would give yours up.”

*What’s the point in testing me? It’s not like we’re going to be working together much longer.*

“Thanks,” replied Zone as she dropped the glimmering PPC into his cold hands.

--

*I want to know what it takes to murder. Not once, but repeatedly and repeatedly. What does it mean to have the complete apathy for human life, what does it mean to have complete apathy for those who accept others who do such things? Can you even imagine the suffering of people you kill? There are people to quiet to scream when being killed, and yet the silence tells us a story of a monster.*

*They are literally monsters walking among us, their disguises are thin strips of paper soaking the blood dripping from the open sores of their deformed personas. Their faces are blown back like the victims at the knife’s edge of a disfiguring sadist, and their claws reek of reduced mortal corpses turned upon empty souls. Souls that are dry cleaned of all what makes humankind mortal.*

*The bloodstains paint a story of death, but the trail all leads back to the silence of pressure.*

The first signs out of the dustbowl were plants being maintained by service robots. There were small lanterns and cameras embedded in the leaves that illuminated the early morning.

Zone and Ari had stopped at a bench in the middle of the cobblestone roads leading out of the slums and into the main city. As road sloped up the hillside, the buildings behind the neon lit fencing progressively grew

Zone stared at the ground as he leaned on his arm.

“Let’s get going, shall we?” asked Ari as she shook off all the fatigue in her body and sprung up like a blooming flower over the trashcan with a flame generated by the console.

“Alright,” replied Zone as Ari held out her frozen hand towards him.

“I’m alright,” said Zone as he swept her hand aside.

“But I’m cold.”

“That means you’re alive.”

“But I want some kinetic friction.”

“There’s a thriving fire right there.”

“Are you alright? You’ve been acting weird ever since we’ve reached the city.”

“You got that all because I didn’t want to rub hands…?”

“You’re also avoiding the warm fire like you’re some kind of moth.”

“So that’s why you decided to join me…”

“Someone has to keep you warm.”

Zone nodded as if to approve her gesture as her eyes were glued on his while she waited for his response.

Zone took a deep breath and fully soaked the speck of silence before speaking. “I feel like we’re entering the first circle of hell here…”

“The first circle? Then what was the Dustbowl?”

“It was literally the definition of emptiness.”

“And you dying from the flies nibbling on you at the dumpster?”

“It was painful, but something feels off about this place. Everybody here is under a curse. The pities told us that something bad would happen to you.”

“This is the first time I’ve seen you worried, albeit for me,” said Ari, her eyes glowing like fire opals. “You must really hate adults don’t cha?”

“Yes,” replied Zone instantly.

“It’ll be okay Zone,” said Ari as she let out a deep breath. “Just remember,” she whispered as she came in closer. “I will always have your back.”

Zone frowned as he thought to himself.

*That is what I thought about you Sylphia…*

--

“What the hell is going here…”

After a short calm relaxing walk out of the misty slums towards the city area, the sound of an incomprehensible blend of voices crescendo. The town, which had been relatively quiet the previous night except for the sounds of the large machines guarding the exits, resembled a holiday themed wonderland with the bustling crowds of people and snow accumulated on all the fancy decor.

But further into the city was a huge billow of smoke spreading through the air like the aftermath of an explosion.

“All the parents of the children are probably there. Let’s make sure they’re okay!... Zone?”

Zone saw a group of kids playing games on a portable VR console moving all over the park. He could recognize that they were playing ArcLight by the motions of their body.

“No way…” muttered Zone as Ari saw his face looked as if he had a drunken stupor.

“What’s going on? We have to get a move on it,” said Ari impatiently as Zone continued to stare as if he’d heard nothing.

“Their desires to improve is so high they’ve started their own LAN club in the middle of the street to get the best response time in the streets despite how embarrassing it must be because they never go outside and instead use LifeNodes… This spell is absolutely fucking crazy…”

“Are they good?” asked Ari with a concerned expression.

“I can only observe their strafing and their gun handling. From the way that guy moved around the grass it seems like he’s moving along the railing in Lonely Snow.”

“I don’t understand…”

“Holding the gun like that gives you a 2-millisecond delay if the enemy is on higher ground, unless you snap, but that’s dumb because with hypervision in this game you rely so less on your muscle memory.”

“I’d almost feel bad for making you come…” mumbled Ari.

“So, I’d say this group is about amateur try-hard in every game use the heavy assault rifle level,” replied Zone condescendingly.

“We can join them!” replied Ari as Zone looked over at her and saw her image replaced by Sylphia.

Zone quickly shook his head and squeezed his eyes close. When he opened his eyes, he saw her concerned expression clearly.

“Let’s go Ari,” said Zone as he swallowed the spit gathered on his tongue.

*I don’t care if they’re bad though, I’m almost getting tears in my eyes. The drive shown by these young men and women… It almost wants to make me join them just to show them how bad they are…”*

*But then again, they’re still trash tier. I’d get no experience*

--

*I want to go home so badly. You see, nobody wants to wait, even if the machines are designed not to kill, there’s something calling us… amplifying our trivial desires. And all I want is to go home, so die.*

Thoughts flooded Zone’s mind as he saw the remains of the torn-up energy plated roadways.

Ari crouched down and grabbed a piece of the sharp glass that encased a dimly lit LED. It was blinking to the same rhythm of the sounds, now recognizable as chanting in the distance.

“They were all here at one point, crossing into the city, but something happened here.”

*I wonder if I should tell her now* thought Zone as he envisioned people getting trounced, and then saw them start crowding the car like a horde of zombies and killing the people inside.

“I’m sure they desired it,” muttered Zone.

“What?”

You could see it from their tattered clothes and the dust on their eyelashes. They were people who never had much to begin with, so asking for just enough to get by was all that mattered. But as freezing hours passed, people started to realize that the demands would only be met by utter silence.

Zone was lost. He had been following Ari as she ran towards the fire as if the flames were the mark of death, but from what Zone could see the fire was something else.

Zone had slipped through the swarm of people trying to find any signs of Ari but ended up getting pushed near the warmth of the fire pit. Zone realized that the movement of the crowd was such that people from the cold outside would be able to find themselves a tranquil moment near the burning pit.

Darker stories came around the large burning pit acting as a campfire. The smoke, fueled by the meager belongings of the people in the crowd looked like the vapors of a mystical potion, but only violence was brewing.

“You gonna drop anything in?” asked a ragged man who was probably in his thirties yet the thick, dry, crumb-filled hair on his face made him like a wise old NPC from an RPG game.

Zone stared at him with a confused expression as he continued to hold his hands over the pit as if he were trying to perfectly sear both sides of his steak hands.

Zone could barely hear his own thoughts with all the sounds of thousands of conversations coming from all directions, so when the man pointed to Zone’s backpack Zone thought he wanted something until the man then yelled “You gonna fuel the fire?”

“Why not,” replied Zone as he slung the backpack off his shoulders and started rummaging through it.

*There’s nothing here that is going to burn…*

“On second thought, I don’t have anything that’ll make good fuel besides my clothes.”

“You ain’t livin in the slums are ya?” blurted the man loudly.

“No.”

“You look like you could,” said the man as he observed Zone’s slightly bloodied clothes. “But you got yerself a nice robot there.”

“It’s a console,” said Zone.

“Console eh? You know I used to see crazy machines back when I fought in the war. They never let me touch em though because I was too dumb.”

“It’s different now,” replied Zone as he remembered the times back when he was first at the orphanage. “These machines are easy to use, you could probably use it.”

“Ya think so. Let me see yours.”

“Sorry but I can’t let anybody touch this thing. I can’t afford to get sick now. I have something to do.”

“Yer raight. I’ve been sick the last few weeks. But today everybody was goin to the big rally, and I had this un-stopper-able urge to go so I put on meh clothes and I just went.

Zone discussed with the man about the rally, and so he learned that this rally consisted of the residents of the Dustbowl as well as a few other humanitarian groups in the city. He also learned about more about how the local government has become pawns of the large corporations of the areas. The government were forced to adapt the corporation’s idea in supporting people with potential, and thus they spent all their funds on improving the affluent areas of the city while leaving the people in the slums in a cycle of poverty.

*Sounds a lot like myself,* thought Zone as a few people around him joined in on his conversation and tried to explain to Zone the situation in a clearer sense.

“They say that just cause we’re poor, we’re lazy. But the problem is we got some people like that. My cousin used to sit at home back when he got government aid and never looked for any work. But now all he does is sit at home and starve.”

“Yea people like him are ruining it for the rest of us. We just want people to see that we’re trying.”

*I wonder how much you are really trying or is it all just part of the illusion.*

“It was nice talking to you guys, but I need to go find somebody,” said Zone earnestly. “Tell me if you see a blue haired girl alright?”

“I think I saw her thataway,” said one of the women, a chainsmoker with the voice of an angel being strangled who had joined in the conversation.

“Alright, thanks,” said Zone and smiled slightly as he turned around and got a glimpse of her rotten teeth.

--

“It’s so vile,” muttered Zone as he started to walk towards the capital building where a large police force armed to the teeth stood between the angry mob and the politicians.

*I can’t tell what’s worse* thought Zone as the men and women on who looked to embody the spirit of affluence were shamelessly taunting the mass of people who

Zone kept the corner of his eyes pinned on the soldiers, the majority of which he determined to be AIs by the faint glow of red in their helmets, organized along the verdant . who were hiding behind a crystalline shield of energy which covered the building like a dome.

Thousands of hands spread across the blue forcefield causing ripples to form over the surface of the energy bubble, but the wall could not block the cries, begs, and screams of the blood of the

*Submachine guns with customized barrels to maximize killing potential at the cost of reduced accuracy. Red pin grenades that release clouds of a gas which burns the heart from the inside out. They could be used to deny the exits when people try to escape the max explosion grenades…*

Zone closed his eyes for a second as he imagined the image in his mind. *It really looks like we’re seconds away from mass slaughter.*

He quickly expulsed the thoughts from his mind by shaking his head, which felt a sharp pain due to his lack of sleep. The feeling of being misplaced quickly numbed the pain as he gazed around the sea of people looking for any trace of Ari. Somewhere in the distance he could barely hear the quiet murmurs of a voice that didn’t belong.

“And one day everybody who needs to have their voice heard will remember me when everything is dust…”

Zone got a small glimpse of a person praying in the crowd before a swarm of people obstructed his view. Then it began.

Zone had gotten use to the noise of gunfire, but a severe anguish spread through his brain when he stood amongst the crowd that was spreading around him like he was cliff hanging off a waterfall.

The words from that furious voice that pierced the screams reverberating in his head. It was voice so brutal, insane, maniacal, sadistic, yet fearful.

“HANDS ON YOUR FUCKING HEAD. STAY DOWN. MOVE AWAY MOVE AWAY!”

Zone heard a click as an impulse in his body clearing his memories except for one single nightmare. He closed his eyes and remembered being tortured before he clenched his fists and felt his muscles tightening up.

Zone continued to march forward towards the screams as blood began to ooze from the floors. The force of a barrage of hands, people using his body as a lever to A wide smile formed on his face.

“I will liberate all my hatred,” mumbled Zone as the bullets bounced off his fully charged PPC and launched onto nearby civilians. He saw people’s brains blown from within his arms reach, and he felt the pinching of his skin with every ripple propagating from the bullet’s impact on his shield.

Zone sent a barrage of every spell he could muster onto the agents, and savored the scene of their armor melting to the

“To the beings above, please answer my call for the radiant ray to guide my love…”

A barrier of purple light appeared in front of Zone causing him to briefly remember Ari’s face before he pressed the button in his console. That is all he could remember, as the elemental bullet exploded in contact with the barrier, knocking him a few feet backwards onto the ground where his limp prosthetics violently shook on the floor as if they were dying.

Then there was a soft whisper in his ears as he fell into the pool of blood.

*Find the Immortal Sphere and save them all before it’s too late…*

In the last moments before the darkness, he felt Ari grab his hand.

--

Cyphina woke up to the shrill sounds of obnoxious beeping ending his 7-hour slumber. He was surprised of how refreshed he felt despite being awake for over 70 hours the previous night, but the last image of the shield protecting Zone before he unfortunately self-destructed himself due to firing off a spell in his console resonated within Cyphina’s head.

*I guess Zone wasn’t that injured*, thought Cyphina as he stood up and felt a sharp pain in his joints.

“C’mon shadow servants,” muttered Cyphina as he looked at the alarm clock and saw himself a few minutes late for school. The creatures made of balls of shadows started to formulate from the darkness under his bed and climb around his legs.

“I think that’s enough,” said Cyphina as he kicked the balls as soon as the pain slightly died down.

Cyphina began to brush his teeth and remember the last moments before Zone passed out.

*What an interesting woman,* thought Cyphina as he remembered the long blue hair and opal eyes. *She saved Zone’s life once, but that last feeling makes me think she helped him out, because I sure as hell cannot with all the shit I have to do at school today.*

*I’m still tired from the last little mishap, which is why I don’t feel like going out of my way to ensure that we aren’t dead. All I can do is stay healthy so Zone can benefit from our shared state.*

Cyphina performs his normal day at school, exercises, and does his homework when he goes home. He talks to Snake Girl a little bit over the phone, but shoots her down when she requests to go on another dangerous expedition for food.

--

Zone woke up to the noise of a drill scraping against his metal arm and soon found sparks flying across his field of vision.

As the images of Cyphina falling asleep fades like a chalk drawing washed away, the visions transitioned into a single ray of light brightening the otherwise pitch-black room. Zone slowly sees the progressively sharp image of Ari wearing her visor.

“Thank god you’re awake.”

Zone stared at her blankly for a long while in complete silence.

“What happened?” muttered Zone lethargically. “Where am I?” asked Zone as he smelled the scent of fresh lime mixed with dried blood in his nose.

“We’re in a Blue Breeze in the general ally.”

“We are? But where’s everybody?”

“I guess most people closed their stores because of the riots, but the owner forgot to lock this building.”

*I don’t think anybody would care about working with this aura lingering over the city.*

“You blew our cover Zone...”

“What?”

“Do you really not remember?”

“No.”

“You just tried to single-handedly mass murder a group of government agents.”

“I did?” mumbled Zone in a groggy voice full of fatigue.

*Zone grabbed his forehead tightly and started remembering the scene before he knocked himself out.*

“They started to try and kill everybody…” replied Zone defensively. Can’t you remember Ari? Don’t you have perfect memory?”

“Are you okay Zone? You’ve almost died twice in one day...”

Zone moved his non-robotic hand towards his face and started violently rubbing his eyes.

“Something about this place is making me have crazy visions Ari.”

“Is that why you were acting odd this whole time?” asked Ari as she unscrewed the head on her drill.

“Yea,” said Zone as he looked around and saw he was lying down in the bench they had been sitting a few hours earlier.

“But this is the worst one by far…”

“Hey,” said Ari sternly. Zone was silent as a fear of her reprisal overwhelmed his body.

“Don’t doubt yourself,” said Ari. “I didn’t see what happened; I was only able to catch up with you after you stood in the bullet rain for a few seconds.”

*I don’t know if I can believe myself after all I’ve witnessed today.*

“What were the other visions like?” asked Ari innocently.

“Umm…” enunciated Zone as he remembered the vaguely lewd illusions.

*All illusions I have had were dangling my desires in front of me, but this is the first time I have actually fallen for it. But this time I heard a voice. Everybody else outside seems more driven as usual, as if this is affecting them as well. The air cause the children to desire a sense of independence, but Ari seems okay. I don’t know if its wise to trust her, but… no… I should trust her as if she trusts me.*

“I think there’s something like the Aurelius if it is not the Aurelius that is calling to people.”

“Calling to people?”

“Yes, but I think you’re oblivious to it… but… maybe…”

Ari looked at Zone with a strong sense of intrigue, causing him to let out a deep sigh.

“I thought when we talked at your apartment you were just saying random bullshit, but now I see the kind of person you are Ari.”

“What kind of person am I Zone?”

“The kind that understands the things you can’t see. That’s why I want to tell you what I think is happening.”

“I see what’s happening Zone… But what, are your visions a part of it?”

“I think so. I think there is some kind of curse, or something in the air like the Aurelius that is calling to people. It is preying on our desires, but since you are stubborn on helping others Ari… I think it’s not affecting you.”

“That explains why everybody has been acting so weird but… how do we stop it?”

“Well…you should run. You should’ve just let me die here so you can get out Ari and let this cesspool of humanity destroy itself so that nobody remembers you’re a magician.”

“I told you Zone. I have your back… bro. Besides, our cover is still intact.”

“Maybe mine is, but they know you’re special now right? I haven’t seen anybody like you who can use magic, except for the monsters.”

“Well you’re about to see a lot of people, because after you got knocked out… let’s just say somebody important fell under the curse of greed, although there is no greed for human life in this person’s actions.”

“Who is this person?”

“I believe her name is… Divine Chaos.”

--

*Ari channeled her energy into several massive barriers covering crowds of people as she used the remnants of her strength to carry Zone through the crowd of people.*

*Ari ran as fast as she could from the scene, all she could feel was the anguish of being branded a magician. However before the feelings could sink in any deeper there was a light that shined down upon humanity like the morning star which lit the descent into insanity. From behind the purple wall of psychic energy blanketing the revolution like the arms of a goddess, the TV screens on buildings, floors, and flying drones all signaled the same program of desperation.*

*There was the symbol of the X and the backwards star that initially lit up the screen until the program transitioned into a studio with two people dressed in suits worth more than what had turned into the firepit’s ashes.*

*“I like seeing people murdered, do you Lacrive?”*

*“Yes, but only if it’s a fair fight Eblee. I don’t think we’re seeing a fair fight.”*

*“Oh Lacrive, I think we’re witnessing an instance of bullying.”*

*“I think so too I think so too. But hey maybe these bullies would stop if everybody got our new app, Equilibrium.”*

“Wait a second Ari… you’re saying they’re selling things like the application on my developer console?”

“Yes and then everybody downloaded it and started fighting back against the agents…”

Zone could hear the crippling disappointment in Ari’s voice. “I couldn’t stop anybody anymore so I just took you back here. I’ve been repairing you ever since.”

“I guess everything leading up to this is what those pitiful monsters were talking about,” said Zone grimly.

“We need to get the hell out of here and hope that whatever people have turned into monsters cleans up this mess…

Better yet, we can restore power to the factory and let the killer robots massacre monsters and the cursed humans in this place. That’s what they were created for in the first place...”

“What is the object of your desires calling you to do? Is it really telling you to run away?”

“I don’t know… I haven’t had any visions but… even if I did following this curse would be a dumb thing… right?”

“What if everybody is being called somewhere Zone? What if whatever is calling you is calling everybody else?”

“Then we need to get the freak away from it Ari.”

“Or if we find out what it is… maybe we can free everybody.”

“Look I just wanted to go home Ari… This is not our job. This is a job for the shitty agents.”

“I bet everybody is trying to find it, but they can’t because they can’t get over the curse.”

“I’m done Ari. I want to go home.”

“Let’s just do this last thing Zone,” said Ari as Zone looked at her with extreme discontent.

“We have to help everybody. What about all those innocent people who died of hatred just so they wouldn’t die of starvation?”

“I wish I could say I had any compassion Ari, but I think I lost that long ago.”

“Only we can do this Zone. Only I’m not affected, and I need somebody who I can trust.”

“You can’t trust me because I am turning mentally insane from this curse… or whatever it is.”

“I bet I know how to trigger your curse.”

“How?”

“Give me your console,” said Ari.

Zone handed her the machine and Ari fidgeted with it for a few seconds and then faced the screen towards him.

“…You’re insane.”

“I bet you want to play it don’t cha?”

Zone closed his eyes and suddenly he saw the image of Sylphia appear in front of him.

“Let’s play Zone... I’ll cover you with the bolty…”

“Ari stop playing games with me.”

“Why would you go home and play when we can play right… here…”

*Come find nobody and me will ever tell you what to do again...*

--

It was always dark outside, but the illumination of the Cyberse provided an artificial light that made the darkness less haunting. The government had quickly shut down access to the network and main power lines after the public release of the Developer Consoles, bringing us back to an age within short reach, but so far gone.

Despite attempts at controlling distribution of the weapon, the city was under the impression that the whole town armed. The was nowhere to be seen in the crossroads, but a curtain of ash lingered in the backdrop, hidden in the turquoise shadows summoning monsters. Crunchy footsteps were faint amongst the sound of distant screaming and mobile titans.

“So do you hear the whispers louder over here or over here?” whispered Ari as each step they took in the snow made sounds resembling chewing a handful of crispy rice cakes.

“Fuck you Ari I want to go home,” replied Zone angrily.

“So we’re getting warmer…”

Zone knew Ari would not hesitate to drag him along in the mess of the human cesspool, but it still surprised him how quickly she figured out to abuse his console, and his feelings against him.

And every time the illusions got worse, Zone felt as if he were repeatedly trying to stay awake during class, until he’d succumb to the illusionary reality.

When fully immersed, Zone would hear the voices tempting him with sweet ideas of freedom, and then Ari would blast him with a Memory’s Fragment spell, causing his thoughts to reset.

“There has to be a better way to do this…” mumbled Ari as she stopped for a moment and started tapping on her fingernails.

“There is,” said Zone underneath his series of warm, deep breaths.

“Why don’t we follow somebody who is deeply immersed in their curse? Then we play this hot and cold game after we’re closer!”

Ari was silent for a moment as she contemplated the idea.

“I’m so sorry… I forgot we could do that,” said Ari innocently as she started to follow Zone who was walking away from her.

“I hope you’re not too mad at me…”

“However I feel doesn’t matter as you are the reason I’m alive.”

“Well it matters to me,” replied Ari as Zone went into reflective state.

“Unfortunately this city is packed with people doing all sorts of crazy things...” said Ari. “Especially on this snowy night.”

“Then we’ll find people going from progressively entrenched in their own delusions, to people who are basically slaves of the voice.”

“I think that will be easy once people start murdering each other with the COMPs.”

“Just the thought of that makes me see why you were afraid to come here now…”

*You have yet to see the worst of it Ari. I know you are going to try and show mercy even when humans prove themselves worse than monsters.*

“Well at least we have our PPCs and they don’t.”

“Umm… about that…”

Zone instantly looked towards his pocket and felt reprieved as he saw his PPC pulsating.

“I gave mine away when I was escaping with you… But it’ll be fine,” muttered Ari impulsively as Zone looked at her with a big frown on his face. “I’ll be really careful I swear.”

“It is what it is,” replied Zone in his generic emotionless voice. “Just focus on shielding yourself and I’ll cover any open angles.

Ari nodded as the two of them reached the town square and found a group of agents on a concert platform shooing back a large crowd of dust covered protestors swarming the area like zombies.

“They’re going to get mowed down if we don’t do anything!” whispered Ari with a voice full of panic as Zone grabbed her hand before she could form any seals.

“What do you mean Ari? Why the agents would be backing away so passively against a group of people without developer consoles”

“Umm… maybe some of them do have them, but we can’t see them amongst the crowd.”

“You saw their homes. They can’t afford hardware to run the developer console. But it is possible there are middle class people amongst them.”

Ari closed her eyes for a brief moment as she tried to remember. “I remember there being a lot of regular people in support of the revolt,” said Ari as suddenly a large fireball coming from the crowd blasted an agent who held a large shield.

*I want to kill the agents and get their PPCs but I do not know Ari would react to that* thought Zone as he watched another agent spray the burning armor with a water element spell.

“I bet if we stop the fight, we could ask the agents for some equipment,” said Ari excitedly.

“There’s no point when people are affected by this curse Ari…”

“Watch me,” said Ari confidently as she ran towards the crowd...

“Ari! Remember that you don’t have…”

In a brief moment, Ari disappeared in the mass of people. “Any fucking protection…” grumbled Zone as the loud barbaric chants of the crowd deafened his thoughts.

--

Zone furiously pushed his way deeper into the crowd, but he found himself blocked by the different flows of people running around like mosh pit.

Eventually Zone found a spot where he could see the stage, and he saw a woman wearing a raincoat with snails printed all over climbing on the stage.

Several laser dots appeared on Ari’s body as she pulled herself up and the agents turned their guns towards her.

“I said get back!” yelled an extremely loud, angry, and fearful voice.

“If you kill me, then you know everybody will come after you.”

The agents all looked towards a masked agent who seemed to be the leader. The leader adjusted his visor a slight but when suddenly one of the agents pressed his trigger in a panic.

The violent crack of the bullet firing signaled the other agents started shooting, causing a hail of bullets to fly at Ari as the barbaric crowd charged towards the stage like a legion of ancient soldiers.

Ari had already pre-conjured her radiant shift barrier, which dissolved the hail bullets as they attempted to pass through the shield made of psychic energy.

Ari felt the force of the bullets pinching her skin as they dissolved in the barrier, but she forced herself forward far enough to pick up the microphone which made a deafening screech as Ari turned the power knob to its highest setting.

“LAaAaAaAaAa!” sung Ari as she held out a perfectly pitched vibrato sound causing everybody around her to stop.

Everybody stared at Ari as her voice died down and the sound of her taking a deep breath filled the stage.

“Today is a strange day,” said Ari as she spoke with a graceful voice that seemed to linger even in the brief moment of silence between her words.

“For some of us, today is the day we finally come as one to express our discontent with the way things are. There is so much pain and suffering in the lives of those who have trouble to meet their basic needs, yet

And that’s why today should have never happened. We have accepted that the world is changing faster than we can understand. That is why nobody questions why something like this,” said Ari as she held out her phone. “Can kill others in the press of a single button.”

“But we can’t accept people

*--*

*I cannot believe she did it, and she still remembered to get the PPC…* thought Zone as he watched people revere Ari who was shining on the stage.

Suddenly there was a sound in one of the communication devices on the agent platoon leader.

“This is agent Roger, roger that. Backup has arrived, roger.”

Within a few seconds, Zone could hear a machine marching through the ground, which rumbled like small earthquakes.

“We have the situation under control Roger, turn off the machine,” said the squad leader frantically in the phone as the shadow of a large machine protruded from behind the corners of the Highrise.”

“Alpha9, we’ve been watching you handle the situation. We understand your concern over the people, but the government has deemed the development console a threat of the highest order.

The ArcSuit will only target those that it has seen using the console, so evacuate everybody else unless you

**Zone and Ari Shizuka vs Titanium Nuclear-Powered Metallord.**

“I appreciate your help guys, but if anybody is going to stop the machine it’s going to be me and Zone.”

“Even if this console is as powerful as you say, it’s barely going to chip that… thing. You should take your own advice and run away.”

“Me and Zone have been using this program for a long time now. It is more powerful than you think, but we need you to tell everybody else to get away. If anybody else tries to help me, I know they are going to get hurt.”

*Especially with the curse running through them they’ll feel an overwhelming desire to save me.*

“Look I know your willing to die to help me, but I know me, and Zone are the only ones who can stop this machine without others getting hurt. And if I care just as much about all of you. You need to get out of the way so we can do our jobs.”

“I can’t just stand by…”

“Then help others in the city. The agents are not completely in the wrong. There are more people out there who are abusing the power of this program.”

Ari put her hand on the man’s shoulder. “I promise you we’ll make it, but you have to promise me you’ll do your best to help others who need it more than us.”

The man nodded and looked at Ari’s determined expression. “After seeing what you did on the stage, I know you’re a better hero than I am, so I’ll leave it to you.”

“Thank you,” said Ari as the man skirted to the door. “Good luck.”

“Well we still need someone else to disable the

“And I know just the hero we need. Remember the guy in Super Juice?”

“Yea he seemed pretty bearable compared to all the people acting like tools around their peers.”

“He said his only desire was to take a day off and relax… His lack of desires makes him the perfect candidate which we can ask for help, but also one who won’t let their desires overwhelm their decision making.”

“If he doesn’t do anything when affected by a nasty curse, how do you expect him to want to help us

**--**

“I’m so glad the agents helped the people escape. I don’t agree with what the government was doing… but they put aside that hatred and saw that this whole fiasco was a moment between people, not between entities.”

“Yea…”-replied Zone. “That wasn’t even your full power wasn’t it? Your wings weren’t showing.”

“It wasn’t, but it was me giving it my all.”

“I guess we both have a big target on our backs by the agency.”

“It’s my fault for trying to do something so ambitious,” said Ari apologetically.

“Yes, but I think witnessing it helped me more than you know.”

“How so?”

“One of the things my friend told me before she left was that I have yet to figure out what it means to live.

Before I met you, I had no identity in this reality we call society. I only knew Sylphia and some people online.

But those feelings that were born when you stood up to everybody, I think feelings like those are associated with living, am I right?”

“Maybe,” replied Ari. “There’s so much to living, which is why I am so afraid to die.

But I know the most important feelings are those you form yourself. That’s why despite my fears, I knew I had to go up there Zone.”

--

“I’ll probably go with you guys anyways.”

“Don’t you mean you’re going to ask us if you can come?” asked Zone.

“I mean even if you don’t let me I want to watch you guys. I don’t have anything to do today since we got the day off and the internet is gone.”

“I think he’s an interesting person,” said Ari as she smiled at Fetuccini. “He’s also completely stable despite the curse, unlike someone I know…”

“Are you talking about Zone?”

“If you say so.”

“If you’re mad I’ll try and stay far away from you.”

“Do I sound mad?”

“Yes.”

“But I’m not mad at you,” said Zone calmly.

“Alright I’m glad we confirmed I can stay in close proximity. Now what are you guys planning on doing next?”

Ari explained to Fetuccini about the curse, and their methodology of searching for the root.

“I think I know somebody who fits that description. It’s the person who caused that whole riot that was on the news.”

##### Angel of Salvation II

*Whereas others in this world think their lives mean something because they have some illusion of grandeur, I know my life truly means something for I have met the goddess reincarnated.*

*How can the life of somebody who has nothing be worth more than everybody around him who think they have it all?*



The Jetski stream cuts through district 31 of the inner city, where the lamps hanging from trees along the bank paint chalky orange pillars in the slightly chilled but rippling watercolor reflection. Small boats take shade under the trees, still green in the cold, living in the fullness of the aura, and send out millions of vibrating red digital waves into the sky. The wind blows them away from the bank, but they start to reposition themselves like a person waiting for a falling opportunity.

One rubber duck soap bottle is drifting across the river facing sideways. As Zone digs his favorite bloody hand further into his pack, he watches the creature bob back and forth along the axis of its handle, until it bounces off the sides of hollow walls of concrete holding several white flowers blooming in the snow. The momentum bounces it enough off its axis such that the container starts to fill up with water and starts sinking, until a purple light surrounds the bottle and drags it to the inside of one of the boats.

Zone catches the tail end of Ari waving her fingers at the duck bottle before she hides her hand back into the coat pocket.

“So… have you guys ever been to 31 before?” asks Fettuccini, the man who had helped Zone and Ari rescue people from the Mettallord, in his nasally voice.

“I have only passed by this district on my way to the city transfer. What about you Zone?”

Zone had found a couple of bloody PPCs off the dead bodies of agents, which had been lost inside the mess of equipment inside his backpack. Zone had managed to pull out the last unit from inside the wad of cloth, food, and sharp objects.

Zone let out a small chuckle as Ari looked at him. *Try to lose your PPC this time Ari…*

“Nope,” said Zone bluntly.

“Okay, I guess that means none of us know where we’re going then…”

“Then why are we following you?”

“I was under the impression that Fetuccini knew where he was going,” said Ari.

“All I heard was that the guy who started firing at the crowd was in district 31,” replied Alfredo, his voice filled with a sarcastic repentance.

Fetuccini glanced at Zone’s naturally angry expression and grimaced.

“You know what, I also heard he was tackled before the whole police started… you know… beating up peoples.”

“So this person felt strongly enough to murder protestors,” mumbled Ari as she looked over her shoulder at Zone who had finished sorting his items and now focused on examining the surrounding area. Their gaze met for a split second before Zone’s eyes focused on various groups of people around them.

“He must have had some strongly repressed feelings, huh Zone?”

“Maybe,” replied Zone quietly as the snow fell on his maroon hair.

“But I would understand if he felt that way in reaction to seeing other innocent people get murdered,” replied Zone sarcastically as Ari smiled.

“I heard he was just somebody who got bullied,” said Fetuccini in his slightly nasal voice.

“But then why would he target protestors?”

“Because he hates people trying to make things better,” said Alfredo in between a blatant snicker.

“That can’t be the only reason…”

“I know you must care a lot about people to risk death by firing squad,” said Fettuccini jestingly.

“But most people out there are very salty.”

“I can confirm from my 50000+ hours of playing ArcLight,” concurred Zone as he nodded with an uncontrollable smile on his face.

“I know that,” replied Ari with a mellow compliancy.

“But not all people are a product of their genetic tendencies.”

“Yes, they are; have you guys seen Taruto?” asked Fettuccini.

“Ta-ru-to?” said Ari, with a botched pronunciation.

“I dunno,” said Zone.

“Do you guys live under a rock or something…? It’s the number show in the far east!” said Fettuccini as he looked at Zone’s uninterested expression nervously.

“According to Taruto, it’s impossible to change a person who doesn’t want to change themselves.”

Fetuccini noticed his comments caused Ari to go into a deep thought.

If you’re trying to pull another miracle, I would…”

“You’d what?” interrupted Zone firmly.

“I would probably watch Taruto.”

“If it’s an anime about the psychology of human beings, I would be very interested in watching,” said Ari.

“Yea it’s about that,” replied Fetuccini hesitantly. “But it takes place in the ninja world.”

“That’s a good idea to draw a wider audience,” mumbled Ari.

“If you do watch it, I would say you should skip episodes 1000-1020, because the animation company was on strike so those episodes were all flashbacks to earlier episodes.”

“Thanks for the advice, let me just use one whole year of my life watching episodes 1-1000,” replied Zone.

“Anything for you, Zone.”

“I don’t know what Taruto’s message is, but I would never want to change what makes a person truly unique. However, I want to know if this person really feels this way,” said Ari.”

--

#### The Betrayal of Ari Shizuka

##### The Same Mistakes

*Ari seems to be okay now that we have other people who joined our party. I think my duty is done so it’s time to go follow my dreams…*

*However while I continue alone, I start to remember how much I miss, how much I hate Sylphia. It’s starting to invade my mind, and it’s becoming hard to get anything done.*

*But later that day she’s calling you… and even though you don’t want to pretend you’re dead, you remember what happened, when last time you stepped outside that door…*

“So this is where your feelings lead you Isiah?”

“Yes my dearest Ari, all my negative feelings you so elegantly relinquished from my soul was leading me to this cave where the black trees are growing underneath the cavern like teeth.”

*So there’s some kind of barrier that only allows the two chosen by the Dark Shrine* thought Zone as Ari, Fetuccini, and Isiah lead the way in front of him.

*I guess my role here is done… I wish you the best of Luck Ari with this dude. He may be a psychopath, but he is a weakling and you saved his life, so I am not worried at all.*

*I think the real issues lies with whatever is in this shrine. Its power was strong enough to radiate across the city, but if there is a powerful Ancient in there perhaps that person will also help.*

While the three of them were conversing, Zone silently turned around and started to head for his house. He stared at the ground but occasionally glanced back at the three of them laughing.

“Good luck,” whispered Zone as he closed his eyes for a brief moment.

*Forget everything, your duty is over. It’s time to fulfill what you’ve decided is your purpose; you’re going to start living.*

--

“Well I mean at least he’s not killing you,” said Zone in an unnervingly calm manner.

“Don’t do it Isiah…”

“I can imagine how warm and delicious its going to be. This is all I know of the love you asked me to think about.”

“But you’re still a moron for listening to your body over your heart,” said Zone who wasn’t even paying attention to the man encroaching Ari. He was staring at Lacrive as the blood streamed down his face, blurring his eyesight.

“Heart? Psychopath’s have no heart,” said the laughing maniac with a large smile on his face as his eyes were transfixed on the scene.

“I’ll never get this chance before I die… Human beings that pollute this world get things they desire, yet I am always the one who has to suffer for us all…”

*Just like how I’ll never reach rank one you motherfucker…* thought Zone as an angrily expression came across his face.

Zone grimaced as he brought himself back up to his shoulder.

“You’ve lasted too long for your own good Isiah. So have I but you don’t deserve what you want, not that I deserve better but...

Zone grabbed his shoulder as he got up on his two feet.

“Surely… all you deserve is death.”

“So, you are together huh? This will feel even better then. You don’t deserve Ari you scum staining this hell,” mumbled Isiah as the monster awakening inside him started to manifest through his body’s metamorphosis.

“I don’t care if Ari is wrong Lacrive.”

Zone raised his shaking finger towards Isiah.

“Keep lying to yourself to fucking justify your actions, but remember Ari gave her all to protect you and you betrayed her.”

Zone closed his eyes and started to remember Sylphia in his mind.

“Killing you will be the pleasure that makes up for all I’ll never do after I die today,” said Zone as he let out a blood-filled smile.

“Zone,” said Ari as he walked in front of the pool of blood she was leaking.

Zone never turned around, but Ari formed a few hand seals and suddenly Zone felt a little surge of power as colored lines started to flow around him.

“Don’t die.”

**Zone vs Isiah**

“Your life, all your feelings are fucking meaningless.”

“Shut the hell up you have no idea how it feels to be rejected by everything.”

“You always lie to yourself to pretend like you know pain…”

*And everything in my body is aching.*

“...But you don’t know how it feels to give your all for somebody else…”

Zone clashed his energy sword against the edge of the monster’s razor blade arm.

“Just for a chance to see a person’s face one more time…”

Zone and Isiah struggled to overwhelm the other’s weapon and they both hopped backwards.

“Only to be blown away!” yelled Zone as he rushed down Isiah who paused for a moment.

*Why do you like gazing at the stars?*

*What do you mean why? You like it right?*

*Yes, but what makes it fun for you.*

*If you think it’s fun, then it’s fun.*

*That doesn’t mean you think it’s fun.*

*Why does it matter? Do you want to do something else?*

*It matters a lot. Because now I know deep inside you, there exists a capacity to care about others…*

*Of course, I care about you…*

*As do I. But sometimes it’s important to care about ourselves the most. If you truly care for someone else, you must make sure you can do what it takes to help them…*

Isiah started to remember about the time he used all his money he earned in the boring shop where he would constantly look down upon by the kids hanging outside to buy a girl, he knew in high school an exquisite gift.

*I am the greatest man a woman could ever desire. Today is the day I quit working for this irresponsible disgrace of a man and say goodbye to the stupid kids coming here to show off their undeserving assets.*

And then the woman ran away from Isiah as he tried to give her his gift, and a group of kids started to laugh at him until he ran out the door.

Zone knocked Isiah down and put his sword near his throat.

“I give up,” said Isiah as he saw Zone’s bloodlust filled eyes.

“It’s too late for that,” said Zone under his maniacal laughs.

“No, please, kill me. I understand how Ari must feel and I think I should die for what I did.”

“Let’s hope whoever oversees the border of life accepts that kind of apology,” said Zone as he mercilessly pushed his sword down onto Isiah.

“Ari… stop,” said Zone as he noticed pressing his sword down had become noticeably harder until he couldn’t move it at all. He turned around and saw Ari telekinetically grabbing it.

“This is pathetic,” said Lacrive as he started forming hand seals. “I want to see Ari begging for mercy.”

Lacrive casted a spell which transferred some of his energy into Isiah.

“Go get them you pathetic creature.”

Zone managed to pry his sword from Ari’s psychic grip and quickly brandished it at Isiah.

There was a large mark left on Isiah’s body, but he managed to grab the blade before it could reach his heart.

*Just a little more* thought Zone as he fought with Isiah to push the blade further into his vitals.

Zone let out a loud grown as he suddenly felt something wet on his hands.

“Why do we always make the same mistakes?” cried Isiah as Zone froze for a second and stared at his eyes in disbelief. Isiah then pushed him off in the moment and Zone tumbled backwards a few feet.

Zone and Ari watched as the grown man who was half transformed into a monster was just tearing up in the center of the room.

“This is pathetic,” mumbled Lacrive. “Alright shows over.”

Lacrive charged up a blast of energy and sent it towards Zone who breathing heavily on the ground.

*Maybe every choice I made in my life was the wrong one, but this one I make now triumphs them all.*

Zone stared at the beam of light with a mortified expression as the moment seemed to slow down in time. He closed his eyes, and the next moment he opened them he saw Isiah dead in front of him.

--

“How stupid do you have to be to think your philosophy is anything but an excuse for the pathetic, lazy life you live?”

“Heh… heh…”

“Shut the hell up,” yelled the man as he shot Zone right on his shoulder causing him to spit out more blood and fall from his hunched over position to the floor.

“You’re the delusional one thinking you work harder than Ari you fucking scum.”

“Dedicate your whole life away to some idealist philosophy, just to taste a little reality before you die. You’re even worse for sacrificing your whole worthless life away for this girl.”

Zone closed his eyes for a moment as blood started to pour out of the iris.

“Do you really think she’s all I have?” asked Zone as he started to remember Cyphina and UndeadM.

Zone pressed his broken arm on the ground and let out a berserk cry of anger as he managed to once again get back onto his knees.

“You have nothing because she is…”

Lacrive shot Zone again causing him to pause with a large smile on his face.

*Cyphina… I’ll be okay. But Lacrive… you’re fucking dead before you even know it… Just please help me this one more time Cyphina.*

Zone inadvertently fell to the floor before he noticed the bullet trapped in the large barrier that had formed in front of him. He instantly turned towards Ari who had transformed to her transcended state.

“I want to become stronger so even if…” said Ari as she looked at the dead body of Isiah.

“Even if people try to betray me when I help them, I can get back up to try again…”

“Hmm? I’ve never seen this before.” muttered Lacrive as Ari’s glowing wings of Lycoris traversed in waves across the empty space.

“But I thought you were a pure human Ari, as the tentacles of the plant bound her hands to the scythe with infinite blades.”

The scythe had once been imbued with such power that a strange matter hovered around the largest blade near the end of the scythe which was a sharp spear.

“Yes,” replied Ari as she pointed the weapon towards Lacrive. But imbued in my mechanical heart was the pain of the suffering of an infinite number of innocents. To use this power means to go against my purpose of eternal repent.

“That’s unlike you Ari,” said Lacrive as his laughs became increasingly assured. “Going against everything you believed in to beat me… You’ve lost.”

Ari shrugged before teleporting towards Lacrive.

“We are bound by our purpose, but others can lift our chains to let us move.”

**Ari vs Lacrive**

**--**

“Zone…” muttered Ari as she landed on the ground after beheading Lacrive. Zone was barely still awake, his eyes were quivering, and his senses were barely active, but he refused to shut them completely.

Even though he was unable to think properly, he knew that if he fell asleep Cyphina would have to finish the job for Ari since he’d be unsure if Ari could’ve done it herself.

Zone then closed his eyes in contempt as Ari fell to the floor and breathed heavily. Her wounds had only become worse, but she found the strength to walk over to her unconscious friend.

“You did well,” mumbled Cyphina as he stretched himself out of his bed before instantly grimacing due to the several wounds on his body.

He looked at the reflection from drops of blood he collected on his hand and turned into UndeadM. The shadow servants instantly started going to work as he prepared the bathroom to brush his teeth and take a shower.

##### Subway 0515

*They then head out to the subway tunnels, where giant machines have dug out a hole connecting the underground transport to the underground shrine Immanent Anacanthous. Along the way they meet a soldier who people know as Colonel Buskin. Renowned in the agent ranks as an abusive partner, Zone and Ari find out that the desirous aura shows his true nature as somebody who really wants to be respected but is has a hard time being nice when everybody around him treats him like he’s an abrasive person.*

“Why did you choose me?” asked Zone, standing at the barrier alongside his heavily wounded party.

“I asked for the being with the darkest desires,” replied a trembling voice echoing from deeper inside the cave.

“But you made it sound like I had to look for someone else…”

“Come find me…” said the fading voice. “If you truly desire the answers…”

“Are you okay Zone?” asked Ari as Zone stepped through the translucent field unscathed.

“Yes.”

“But what could you desire that the shrine thinks of as evil?”

“Don’t tell me you’re thinking of making Ari your slave.”

“I’m not gonna let you,” replied Ari playfully. “But you told me the thing you want the most is to go back to being a professional gamer?”

“Can I be your team’s mascot?” asked Fetuccini.

Zone watched the three of them stare into his dark eyes peeking through his hair. Zone then closed his eyes and let out an evil smile.

“I see why the shrine chose me. It’s true Ari. That was my dream… until you found me when I had lost everything.”

*And it’s the dream I still long for, but this hatred inside is pestering me nonstop.*

“But I don’t know anymore. Let’s get this over with.”

“Did you watch underage hentai or something?”

“I think Zone doesn’t feel comfortable telling us yet, so I think it’s time to move on,” said Ari to Fetuccini.

“We may never come back, but I want to tell you something Isiah; and you too Fetuccini…”

“Please don’t tell me something sad my love.”

“It’s not going to be sad Isiah,” replied Ari disappointedly.

“The sound of your voice makes it sound like it’s sad,” said Fetuccini jokingly.

“I’m giving you guys encouragement,” replied Ari.

“I want to tell you that no matter what people say, your lives, as meaningless as you may think of them, represent one of the most overlooked and most important beauties of life.

People forget as their lives become more complex, that life itself pushes us forwards. People think that there is no inherent meaning in life or feel like their lives are trapped in an endless cycle.

However, they forget for some of us, living is our purpose. One meaning of life is appreciating the beauty of pushing forward to live another day, despite all the things pushing you back.

So, if you guys ever feel lost, remember to fulfill your purpose to stay here for as long as you can. Maybe you’ll find a bigger or better meaning to search or satisfy, but don’t forget your main purpose: staying alive to bring your unique presence upon this world. And stay alive for me as selfish as that is on my part.”

“I’m staying alive just to stay alive,” said Alfredo”

“That’s what I was talking about my spheal…”

“This world is filled with such pitiful, deranged creatures who decay the surrounding flowers from blooming with their perversion of happiness.

Keep pretending to be happy, but I am the one who knows true happiness for I know the true goddess they speak of…”

“Maybe…” muttered Zone quietly.

“Your happiness should come from inside Isiah,” replied Ari as she poked him in his chest. “You are unique petal in this world, with your own dance, and for that you should enjoy the good times only you can make.”

“Well I don’t know about that Ari,” said Fetuccini suggestively.

“Shut up you slob,” said Isiah condescendingly. “I don’t care about them anymore. They’re horrible people, but I can find my own resolve without them. There’s no reason to get involved with the unevolved species.”

“Hey, don’t keep your curtains closed. Maybe you’re right Isiah, but if you don’t keep your heart slightly open, you’ll miss out on shining stars… like Zone.”

“Yes yes… I despise people but I wonder if others like you exist.”

“Probably not,” said Zone firmly. “We have to go now, so take care you guys.”

“Keep each other safe alright?”

“I can’t stand this man’s sense of humor, but your word is sacred so…”

“I’m honestly scared to take him home.”

“Send me a message when you get home safely okay?”

“I don’t know if I’ll remember.”

“You better Fetuccini, or I’ll give you something nice to remember me by,” said Ari as she menacingly smashed her fist into her hand.

“I will message you frequently because I miss your kind words.”

“Okay,” said Ari as Zone glanced at her. He expecting to laugh at the twisted expression that should’ve been on her face, so he covered up his expression by rubbing his nose, but all he could see was an earnest smile as she tilted her head and looked at Isiah.

“But remember I could be in a pinch so… I may not respond right away but I can guarantee you I’ll send you something nice at least once per day.”

--

There was a deep humming resonating throughout the walls which never seemed to get louder. The noise provided an artificial feeling of pressure on Zone’s mind, causing him to feel as if something was leaning against his shoulders.

“I wonder what kind of monsters we’ll fight,” said Ari who was holding an oil lamp that glowed purple due to her amplifying the flames with her psychic energy.

“I don’t know,” replied Zone who was scouting out the area by holding his own lantern which was lit by the fire bullet spell.

“

“Are you okay soldiers? Do you feel the extremely oppressive aura that makes you feel like you’re morbidly obese?”

“Yes,” replied Zone and Ari simultaneously in an expression filled with discomfort.

“Now if you don’t wear a battle suit, then the feeling will get progressively worse until you witness a feeling similar to giving birth. Luckily, I have two spares.” said the Colonel as he laid two small cubes in each of their hands.

“Thank the lord for vacuum technology,” mumbled Zone as he applied a slight pressure on the cube causing it to expand rapidly.

“Now back in the day if you were too scared to change in front of your teammates you would never survive a fight against a terrorist, but nowadays even if you aren’t scared of a terrorist the 30 foot monsters that are popping up will make you pee your pants.”

“Well it’s not like we’re not wearing anything underneath our jackets…”

“Private remove your clothes right now so the monsters can be witness to your rippling muscles.”

“I don’t have…”

Zone looked at himself for a moment and realized ever since he had been sharing experiences with Zone his body had become a lot stronger, in addition to his ability to endure extraordinary levels of pain .

“I’ll pass,” said Zone as him and Ari snapped on their magic-proof vests.

--

**Zone, Ari, and Skye vs Slipping Divide**

“My time was short but I things must more interesting in this world. I cannot say how much I would’ve liked to stay to observe the journey of these two,” echoed the ominous voice of the creature as its body turned into obsidian before shattering.

“Hmm, you guys aren’t too strong,” said Skye as she spun around the sword before gracefully sheathing her blade along her pocket guard.

She flipped her silver hair back and her glowing turquoise eyes, facing Zone’s intense stare and Ari’s face filled with relief, pierced the dissipating darkness.

“I have no idea why the spirit of this ancient artifact would have any interest in you…”

“Gee thanks,” replied Zone as he walked over to Ari who extended her hand towards him.

“Thank you,” said Ari appreciatively as Zone pulled her up with his robotic arm.

“But you guys played an immaculate supporting role. One of the best I’ve seen, for what you’ve got.”

“You did all the work,” replied Ari whose spectacular smile was lost in the darkness.

“

And when the Immortal Sphere was destroyed, all returned to as it was before the events of the day. All those affected by the curse, had no recollection of this day, but like a graceful dream, the only feeling left was a desire to carry out the rest of the day in honor of the forgotten feelings. Yet all that was lost was forever still forever gone.

“Will anybody remember what we did?”

“Let’s hope not. Even if they did, it’s not like they matter.”

“They matter Zone… But the most important thing is I remember you and you remember me.”

Zone paused a moment to reflect on her statement. “Yes, that is the most important thing.”

--

“I wish you the best of luck on your journey to become the number one um… Arc-Light player?”

“Thanks. I wish you the best of luck on your journey to help others.”

“Thank you too,” said Ari happily.

“And also thank you for the last few days. I’m alive, and I don’t feel like shit about myself.”

“It was always inside you Zone… but sometimes we forget.”

Zone and Ari stared at each other until Zone took a final nod and started walking back to the apartment that he could stay at till the end of the month.

“Hey, wait a second,” said Ari as Zone stopped mid step.

“I have something for you before you go.”

“Thanks again,” said Zone as Ari held out a box wrapped inside a blanket.

“This is to help you survive a few more days on your own,” said Ari as Zone opened the box and saw a surprisingly large number of sandwiches compacted together.

*These are packed with good ingredients. You put too much effort into this Ari…*

“Why did you cut the crust?”

“I didn’t know if you would like it or not… I should’ve asked you, but I didn’t want to wake you up.”

“It’ll probably taste better… But after the last few days if its edible I’ll eat it.”

“If it makes you feel better, I ate it without you.”

“It does.”

Zone felt a bit of sadness as he held the box to his chest. “Let’s eat together this final time… at least for the moment.”

*If you ever need my help Ari I hope I can be there for you.*

“I’m sure it won’t be the last time.”

Ari looked at Zone with her brilliant opal eyes. “Besides, if you ever need me,” said Ari as firmly thumped her fist against her heart.

“I’ll be there.”

“Same goes for you,” replied Zone as they sat on the cement tops of the nearby brick walls which were high enough so their feet could barely not reach the floors.

### The Moon Shines Brightly for Ari Shizuka

*After Ari stays to help the city’s recovery process, Zone finds a quiet place to rest as he goes back on ArcLight and deletes all the message he has from Sylphia and removes her as his friend. He then messages his other friends, asking them how they are and if anything, strange happened to them. As he talks to them, the owner of the café in which he’s sitting, Madame Moon Fumamu, kicks him out because she’s in a predicament. One of her sons got lost while trying to find a way to the inner city, and Zone then offers to help him out, granted he can get some living supplies in return.*

*Sometimes I wish that I never knew Ari. As things get back to normal all I want to do is spend my last days in this apartment in peace. I want to put on my headset, and enter the world in which I was born and the world I will hopefully die in. But somewhere in the back of my head I am still thinking about you, hoping you’re okay. Somewhere in the back of my mind I am thinking of Sylphia, but all I can think of is an immense hatred.*

*The strength of one does not lie within the height of our victories, but it comes from ones ability to keep going day in and out, and finding the time to do the small things that need to be done but also to do them with all our effort.*

*In happiness or sadness the moon still shines brightly for Ari Shizuka.*

*It’s hard to say everybody is a star, but when you’re with Ari Shizuka you realize that we are all stars in the eternal nighttime, and Ari is the moon that reflects the light of the sun upon us which we would have never have known existed.*

*--*

The first sleep in a warm bed since 2 days, or 5 days counting his vivid dreams of Cyphina. Unlike Cyphina, it only lasted 7 hours before Zone’s bodily clock woke him up for the excitement of playing ArcLight.

*Early in the morning, the servers are almost lag free. I have two gallons of water, enough sandwiches to last 3*

Zone is navigating through menus in the virtual space by scrolling through them with his finger, while brushing his teeth.

On the top right corner of his screen is his new username,

*This can’t be possible…* thought Zone as he navigated from his computer back to the bathroom without taking off his headset.

*I haven’t played for 3 days, but my K/D/R has increased by .5. I would think that this mechanical arm would hinder my gameplay but…*

*It’s possible the variety in physical activity has opened my mind a bit. I’m playing more cautious and enjoying every moment just a little bit more. It feels like taking that hot shower at Ari’s place after freezing to death.*

*Sure my physical ability is a bit hindered because of my injuries, but UndeadM’s regenerative properties must’ve passed onto me or something because I’ve already forgotten where my injuries are.*

--

### Seiren Genen Line

*The barricade disappears as the Aurelius begins to spread past the city…*

*Zone decides he will find a purpose in his life like Cyphina by continuing his dream to be the number one ArcLight player. To do so, he needs to reuine his ArcLight friends to take them along with him, because the Aurelius spreading over the city prevents him from playing on his main machine. Zone convinces Moon and Jboy (Moon’s son) to come with him to help him find his other friends Manny and Fuchuzz before leaving.*

*Zone tells the party to leave for New Pork without him where they can meet up with Zone’s friend as he stays behind to find Ari Shizuka who is deep in the Aurelius. He finds her in a forest filled with monsters, and they traverse the forest to find an old cabin with a man who worked for the company RevelationX. Zone is able to get some data about his comp upgrade and learn new spells here. Eventually, after searching through his records, Ari finds information on the company she was looking for. When they are finished, both of them walk to the train station, and Zone tries to convince Ari to go with them.*

#### Splitting Up

#### A familiar face in an unfamiliar setting

#### The journey begins…

“Ari, you helped me achieve the first step in my goals.”

“I did? What’s your goals Zone?”

“Proving Sylphia wrong…”

“So learning be a caring person? I’m trying to think what I did to help you with that…”

“You just being yourself helped me… so why do you have to fucking go? What purpose in life does a puppet even have?”

“Zone… is this the first time I’ve seen you so openly show your feelings?”

“If it is… I don’t care,” replied Zone coldly. “What is your purpose Ari?”

“My purpose is what I was programmed to do. I was programmed to do many different things, all in the goal of ascertaining knowledge about human beings.”

“So then what are you going to do next?”

“Well… first I have to tell my boss I want to quit working. Then I’ll try to find a way to stop this person opening all the gateways.”

“You know… I want to go with you Ari, because I want to keep learning. But they need me.”

“It’s not your responsibility to fix the world Zone.”

“Life is meaningless. But I will go find meaning in my life by finding my friends so Unbounded Perceptions can reunite once again!”

*And of course I’ll help you out Cyphina. Perhaps what you’ve done for me, even though I don’t feel its warmth constantly, is more than what Ari Shizuka has done..*

“That sounds like a great goal Zone. Don’t forget to help yourself too!”

*She sounds like the opposite of Sylphia.*

“What do you mean?”

“You need to find a place to rest, maybe get some new robotic arms and legs, or maybe replacement cell therapy.”

“Yea… I’m going to need to make some sacrifices first…”

Zone sighed.

“It’s not about the end Zone, it’s about the journey there. We fought so hard for our ideals, and despite the scars…”

Ari unraveled her sleeve and let out a surprised expression as the scar across her entire forearm was missing from its place.

“Perhaps the Aurelius can do us good… if we have the blood of the Ancients.”

“I don’t think I have that though,” replied Ari perplexed. “But we proved to all those who doubted us despite all the odds stacked against us…”

“Yea...”

Remember me if you’re feeling down Zone, you know I’ll be cheering for you especially when nobody else is!”

“Thanks Ari. Will you at least take the train with me?”

“Sure.”

--

There were a few guys that Zone felt a sense of indecency from as he sat next to Ari on the train. Outside of the train, they had warned Zone and Ari condescendingly about walking too close to the road since the train has been known to veer outside of the magnetic track.

One of the guys talked to Ari, and he sounded very strange, almost childish. He kept mentioning how he needed help, and Ari seemed captivated in his cries.

Zone wanted to tell Ari to watch out for herself since he didn’t trust the 3 random strangers who kept talking to her, but he knew she was strong enough to take care of herself, more so than he could. She had the Decode Encoder Blade and was an acute chaos magician.

*She’s safer from harm than I am*, thought Zone as he began to pass out on the train. *Go do your thing Cyphina*, thought Zone as he saw through the slit of his eyes her walking out with one of the guys.

“Ari?” said Zone as his eyes opened. The train stopped for a brief moment as her and the weird sounding man left the train and then continued on.

Zone waited for the bus to stop again before charging out the doors. He then ran through the rough asphalt roads towards the last stop, where he saw Ari walking with the childish man.

“Ari! Are you ok?”

“Huh? Oh it’s you Zone. This man needed help changing his cybernetic respirator.”

## Sec 4: Preconceived Notions Even From the Best of Us

*The Virizi Minamis… I made that as a precursor to the DreamSol.*

*Bob T learned to always stay quiet because of the horrible things they did to him for helping Zone.*

*Don’t let him pay for your stuff, he only pays for it to guilt trip you later*

*It’s easy to have Unbounded Perceptions, if you’re as pretty as Ari. –Angry Cyphina*

### Ancients in the Shadows

***Main Plot (Overlying Story):*** *Cyphina can resume his daily life, since he and Zone are now free for the time being. Cyphina visits Snake Girl a couple of times to see that she’s doing okay on her own, but mostly he’s isolated during this period as he works towards making up lots of school work and practicing his hobbies. Meanwhile Zone is getting accustomed to his new living quarters at Maple Towers and trying to accrue some new teammates for their clans. From this point forth, the story heads in two directions, and there’s some time pressure to achieve the two different goals of Cyphina and Zone (but mostly Ari).*

***Section Plot:*** *Cyphina has mostly been focusing on finishing the school year, but some of the revelations still linger in his mind. He wants to figure more about the Zefracores, and he knows to do so he must meet up with Marie again, despite his unwillingness.*

*Cyphina asks Snake Girl to go along with him on another adventure, although it seems like there won’t be much action. Since Snake Girl misses hanging out Cyphina, and wishes he wasn’t so busy, she gladly accepts.*

*The two of them head to Marie’s house, and fight her guard robots. Marie then cordially invites them to her house and gives them an assignment. She promises to tell them all she knows about the bigger situation at hand, if the two of them will help her little sister Kitty Hawk. Apparently, Kitty Hawk has been suffering from poor mental health for the past year, but Marie can’t help her sister because she’s too disconnected with human issues since she spends all her days working on scientific matters.*

*Marie introduces them to her legendary Dream Machine to help them out, but Cyphina tells her that he has his own methodology of entering the subconsciousness using the Mark of Kokytos. Thus begins a new memory mapping adventure…*

***Points:***

As things started to slow down, Cyphina began to resume his daily routine. Although studying and exercising felt quite boring, Cyphina would put his all into his work to uphold his promise to Pupii, but also so Zone could benefit from his work since it seemed that the work Cyphina put in somehow transferred to his partner across time. Zone was somehow able to use Cyphina’s grappling and musical abilities as if he had been the one training himself, and Cyphina in return felt a bit sharper intuitively.

Cyphina also had a great affection for Ari despite her existence across time, despite Cyphina having doubts about Zone’s existence. They were bound by fate, but Cyphina had yet to discover the extents of this boundary.

Cyphina kept thinking about the true meaning behind the link, and what magic or phenomena could have caused it.

A theory lingering in his head involved everything that happened being one long dream or neurosis. As unreal as things felt at times, Cyphina knew that the reality of the situation no longer mattered. The journey was worth more, which is why he hesitated to ask Zone to dig deeper into his future.

Cyphina really appreciated Ari’s description of chaos magic and attempted to learn it. He found himself easily able to make a contract with the goddess of chaos, known as the Virtual Image of Decay. UndeadM helped him figure out the contract procedure, and soon Cyphina found himself practicing his new hobby. A short period into practicing, he found himself reaching Ari’s level of competence with telekinesis, and Memory’s Fragment.

*Does this mean I understand people?* wondered Cyphina. *Perhaps Zone and UndeadM’s proficiency with magic has trickled in my ink veins. Either way, I’m glad I don’t have to completely rely on Black Mirror Ritual for safety, although it is always the safest option until I get my hands on a PPC… if it’s even invented now.*

--

“I’m glad you’re finally awake enough to go on another adventure!”

“I’ve been awake; I just don’t enjoy hunting for monsters…”

“Yea but then you’re going to get rusty at fighting.”

“I practiced some technique when I was alone,” said Cyphina proudly.

*Plus I gained a huge amount of experience feeling Zone fight in my dreams...*

“Besides, the task I invited you on today shouldn’t necessarily involve fighting…”

“You said there was going to be epic battles you bold-faced liar.”

“And here it is,” replied Cyphina as he held out an egg shaped toy with the words Pokipetchi at the top.

“So you remembered huh… I’ll accept it.”

“It’s also possible we’ll get into a real battle but there are no guarantees so stay on your toes.”

“Yes yes,” replied Snake Girl as Cyphina looked at her with contempt as her eyes were glued on the game.

--

“So this place is 11498 Paper Cut Road?” asked Cyphina as Snake Girl was watching a monster pop out of an egg on the digital screen of her egg shaped toy.

“I think so…”

“Don’t you deliver the newspapers everyday?”

“Well not on Sundays…” mumbled Snake Girl. “But if you see a robot pruning the lawn then this is definitely the building.”

A humanoid robot appeared from behind the side of the large house with scissor shaped hands and started to trim the wall of hedges surrounding the fence.

### One day they’ll see you for who you are…

#### Introducing FunkyCat

#### Just a Girl Dancing in the Wind

* *Everybody’s on PEDs… you don’t have to be an athlete to study for 24 hours.*
* *10 year old mom btw*
* *How am I supposed to know Kitty is a wiggin master?*
* *If you wanna deal with stalkers you gotta be their friend. Just send them one message a day.*

##### Distant Star

*Snake Girl Narrarator: “The next story is about love. The truest nature is revealed when things get bad. So what if from that we can find true love?”*

There was a message within the starry skies that Cyphina couldn’t see. Somewhere the calm days drew the story of a world unbeknownst; one strand of wire connecting you and I was asphyxiating within the lonely rain.

Cyphina could see looking into the dimmed reflection of the raindrops slithering down the windows like tears the reflections of his expressionless face, the lamp on the small round wooden table and a single waitress glancing at him. When you look into the mirror, the image, albeit distorted, is the reflection of a single image. The face of Cyphina is not a single reflection, but a lenticular image face reflecting light and darkness, another light to the eyes of the dead. The dark eyes filled with blood are dead, the tongue hangs out of the sharp teeth like a bloody intestine. This is the face of a man disguised as a monster.

What caught the attention of the lady who stood behind the counters with mysterious herbs and potions lined up underneath the crystal balls that emanated a glowing light wasn’t Cyphina’s flickering face, but his sweater with the single picture covering the body. It was a picture of a smiling anime girl made out of blots of black ink shaped like clockworks.

Her voice broke the ambient sound of the rain and a distant clock ticking which filled the empty lounge. “Hey, I’m going to need you to leave” she asked confidently as Cyphina turned towards her. “I mean with the glass moon beginning…”

“Sorry, I’m going right now,” he responded. She saw the reflection of the monster on the window but when he turned around his face was unconvincingly human, and she was surprised by how gentle he sounded.

“Are you going to make it back safely? If you don’t think you can…”

“I think I’ll be good… thanks though,” replied Cyphina as he grabbed the 8-ball from within the table and walked towards the door.

“Want to wait inside till the world passes by?”

“If you don’t mind.”

“I don’t.”

“You’re not scared at all by the glass moon?”

“Me, scared?” sneered the girl. “It’s always depressing… dying that is.”

“I’m not from around here. Can you enlighten me?”

“Hmm? Where are you from then?”

“I’m an outsider, journeying to the center.”

“An outsider? “

“It means I’m not part of any memory.”

“So… you’re a nightmare?”

“No, I’m an outsider. A virtual being. I’ve never actually met Kitty.”

“That’s good an all, but what’s your real name?”

“I can’t tell you that if I don’t want her to know me.”

“What should I call you then?”

“Hmm… I supposed UndeadM would be fine.”

“UndeadM… sounds like one of those hacker names. You from the val?”

“Hell no, I’m living in a plain old town.”

“What town, I’ll be the judge of that.”

“I have to go soon. I’d love to chat but… duty.”

Kitty looked over him silently as he quickly checked over his belongings. “So… you’re going to the center you said?”

“It’s my job unfortunately,” replied Cyphina. She seems to be taking the whole convoluted idea quite well for a teenager, thought Cyphina. I could’ve been a nightmare for all she knows, although I guess I don’t sound like it.

“Well since I let you stay, you owe me.”

“What do you want,” replied Cyphina as he finished double checking his belongings. He stared at her blankly.

“Take me with you.”

Cyphina laughed a bit. “That’s a bold request coming from someone who doesn’t even know about me.”

Kitty started at him intently. “Do you know what it’s like, to be a memory in the deep subconscious?”

“Well obviously not…”

“I’m stuck here, unless I decide to leave but leaving is almost impossible with how crazy the nightmares have gotten. From here, I watch as the skies bleed time as the reoccurring nightmares wander around.”

“What exactly does that have to do with you?”

“I believe I’m the fragment that holds the answers to our Goddess’ distress. That’s why you must take me with you!”

“What even is this moment?”

“Can’t you tell? I’m the younger Kitty who worked at a restaurant. If you bring me to her, I’ll remind her of the times she had to work 10 hour days!”

“That’s actually doesn’t sound that bad, but I don’t think I’m what you’re looking for. I’m not here to change anything, I’m looking for information.”

“I mean I’m fine with that, anything beats staying here.”

“You’re that desperate, what if I told you I hunted nightmares.”

“It doesn’t matter. Every day is about living in the past when you’re a memory. Why do we spend so much time trying to remember, when the future is right there?”

Cyphina could only detect genuine feelings from her. “I wish I think like that...”

“Why don’t you go on your own?”

For a moment there was silence as Cyphina averted her eyes full of disdain. Then her face suddenly lit up. “Wait a minute, since you don’t know anything, I can show you how this universe works.”

“I guess…”

“You need me more than you think Cyphina. I would go on my own, but it’s dangerous, and things are constantly changing out there. I can help you though, realize what’s happening.”

“Fine. You can tell me more on the way.”

“You’re a freaking businessman huh? Why couldn’t you just be nice enough to help a little girl?”

“Well I’m nice enough to try and reject you so you wouldn’t get yourself killed when I’m preoccupied.”

“I’m fine, I’m down to show you that I’m not completely helpless. I am surprised though Cyphina. So you do care… but why?”

“What do you mean?”

“We live in different worlds… This is just a brief momentary meeting and then our lives separate.”

“I don’t live for people; I live for values. Let’s go Kitty.”

“Ok wannabe hero,” replied Kitty with a large grin on her face. Cyphina noticed her teeth… they were rather crooked compared to the picture he had.

“You better keep up though, things can get rough… and then where will your values go?”

“I don’t know. But maybe we can remind each other to mind ourselves.”

“Huh?”

“You’ll see.”

--

“Yea well, at least I don’t have fucking scuffed teeth dawg.”

“Aye, I may have scuffed teeth, but my scuffed teeth got more pussy then you.”

“I highly doubt that considering most women are straight… and so are you.”

“Yea well I know for a fact you’re a fuckin virgin.”

“How would you even know?”

“Cause you no game Cyphina. The only reason you can talk to me is because I ain’t you’re typical girl. Tell me, how many people have you fucked.”

Cyphina had developed an ability to ignore people’s false opinions on himself, but he felt a deep urge to get that respect he deserved after saving her. However, he respected her even more than the urge, so he decided to take the conversation in a new direction.

“I just realized… how come you have braces now but you didn’t before?”

“Hey, I asked you a question first. You trying to avoid it cause you still a virgin?”

“Yea now answer mine.”

“Hah I knew it. That’s sexy though, knowing I’ll be you’re first right baby.” “Yea sure, now answer my question fucker.”

“What’s with the hate, you think I can’t sound sexy. I can sound very feminine,” replied Kitty as she began making moaning noises before doing her tongue thing.

“Cmon bruh, I don’t need you to constantly remind me of the all the STDs I’m gonna have to deal with.”

“Haha yea that’s right you know you’re mine…” replied Kitty happily.

“You really want to know why I got braces huh? Well I got punched so much, that my teeth turned crooked.”

“How do you even have teeth then…”

“Shiet I don’t know. They regrew though, kinda strange if you ask me. That’s why when my freaking braces popped in my mouth after getting brutally mauled trying to save you’re ass, it hurt like fuck, but I’m not too sad cause I know by the time I go out and get laid, imma have them back.”

##### Welcome to Ancient School

*Kitty Hawk was a legendary student, one of the magicians who was prospected to become a lord in a short amount of time. Kitty Hawk trained with Epic Kid, a kid 5 years her junior but one who is a very strong magician except he’s not of royal blood and he performs badly at school so nobody sees his potential except Kitty who he follows around since they both enjoy doing dumb things.*

#### Protractor Girl vs Compass Monster

*Punch the angles off your face or draw a circle around the hole in your heart*

*So, do you play any kind of sports?*

*Does fisting my asshole count? -- KH*

### The Message Was Lost

*There once was a brilliant man who dedicated his life to helping others. After an accident when clearing up a minefield, the man was permanently disfigured. Despite everything he still manages to keep a smile, until he receives a letter from somebody who had undergone a similar scenario to him, asking how he was able to stay positive. As he sends messages back to this mysterious person who turns out to be DivineChaos, he realizes that most of the sympathy he’s gotten was due to the fact that people cared about the fact that he was seen as an object filled with potential, as opposed to the person who wrote the letters who’s story was lost because he/she was seen as ordinary.*

#### Snake Girl’s Collection

“What the hell?” muttered Cyphina as he opened the crudely made stone drawer and saw stacks upon stacks of multicolored soaps.

“Hey don’t ruin my soap collection,” replied Snake Girl angrily.

“A soap collection? What made you start that?”

“Well, my monster friend told me that a common hobby around these parts is collecting objects. He likes to collect the corpses of dead human beings.”

“Did you ever ask him how he gets them?”

“Nope.”

#### My Evil Older Sister

*Cyphina meets Minerva and asks her about the sudden progression in technology. She explains several of her devices, including the Dream Machine which functions like Cyphina’s memory mapping technique, and her modification to the game Afterlife. Using AI’s to handle player generated data can speed up processing since data doesn’t need to fit strict security requirements. It also allows various formats of data, including the data harvested from the mind when under the illusionary spell of the visor prototype.*

Well it’s time once again to fall asleep. I wish one day I could meet my own Ari Shizuka… I suppose.

They’re a good team, Zone is a very fast learner, and Ari has trouble understanding things but when she gets them, they’re in her memory forever. I wonder just what they can do together, if they live a while longer, I think me and Zone will be unstoppable. Ari will feed off Zone and she will accomplish her dream of always being in a position to help others. We’ll see… we’ll see…

## Sec 5: Eternal Vengeance

*Hatred is the best cure for hatred, it takes so much energy to hate someone for long*

### The Tower on Top of our Steps

*Cyphina and Ari reach New Pork City and find a cozy apartment in on top of a set of steps where several people sit with each other.*

”There’s so many places we can go to… What are you craving right now?”

“I don’t know, you pick Ari.”

### Who is Ari Shizuka?

Ari was leaning on the table, stirring her water with her straw as Zone, seated on the other side, was staring at her hand - the green sleeve of the raincoat with cartoon snails covering like polka dots was rolled halfway to her arm - lost in a faraway realm of thoughts.

Her eyes, typically wandering in an endless curiosity were so relaxed, fixed on the menu in front of Zone.

It felt like there was nothing to say. Everything that had happened over the past week, felt like a lifetime of experiences grown from a harvest of cotton candy iris.

The envious silence continued, as they both seemed to absorb each other’s presence, though in reality they were resting their still aching bodies.

Suddenly Zone noticed sparks of prismatic light start to shine as Ari fingers lingered over her menu. Zone watched as he saw the shapes of glowing plants start to grow out of the pages being neatly flipped.

A voice broke what seemed like a trance, but Ari simultaneously closed the book causing the shapes to fade to oblivion.

“Are you ready to order?” asked the waiter who had been hesitating to interrupt a perceived tenseness.

“Are you ready Zone?” asked Ari as she noticed the waiter let out a sign of relief.

Zone brushed his tired eyes with his fingers.

“No, you go first.”

“Alright I’ll get this… what is it exactly?”

“That’s one of my favorites,” replied the waiter as Ari’s expression filled with interest once again ignited memories of ambition.

“The evening special is an intricate sandwich made by melting several different robust and mild flavored cheeses and crushed pinto beans served with a sauce made with freshly picked wild berries and roasted chilis.”

“That sounds good,” replied Zone blatantly. “Can I get the one slot below it.”

“So, you mean the…”

The man eyed Ari’s menu for a second. “Can you tell me what you are referring to?”

“The one below it,” said Zone as he handed the waiter the menu.

“It’s the last item on the page,” whispered Ari.

“I must’ve been holding my menu backwards,” said Zone with no remorse.

“So, you want the sunset special?”

“Yes, thanks,” said Zone as the man walked away with a mixture of confusion and disgust on his face.

“I hope you get something you like.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“It does when you remember this moment forever,” said Ari as she slowly stirred the ice which rung like chimes blowing in the wind.

“Well that’s unfortunate for you. You’re the one who said to keep one’s self open.”

“Well if you take it like that...”

*It’s so easy to falter in the moment… If only I had feelings Ari, maybe I would be paralyzed. There is nothing to it. To carry on is all I’ve known.*

“What you once told me by accident has been bothering me.”

“It has?” responded Ari as she turned her tilted her face slightly. “I didn’t think you were bothered by the details.”

*You asked for it Cyphina.*

“Who is the Angel of Salvation,” said Zone solemnly as he felt a little unease when he saw Ari’s unwaveringly bright expression flicker for a moment.

“It’s my other form,” replied Ari nonchalantly.

“Are you still conscious when you become an angel?”

“Yes.”

There was a brief pause as Zone saw her gaze averting his for what seemed like the first time.

“Since when did you not overexplain yourself.”

“I mean, there’s nothing much more to it… Why are you curious?”

“Apparently duality between mankind and monster can exist within one body.”

“I’ve never heard of that before,” replied Ari in a voice which caused Zone’s eyebrow to raise slightly. “I mean I suppose there would be people who could get control over their Zefracores, but the Spirityus would be gone.

*It seemed too genuine. Perhaps there’s something I’m missing.*

“Is that how you are with the angel?”

Ari started to grab her head as if she were suffering from a hemiplegic migraine.

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing,” said Ari. “Just a few bad memories… that’s all.”

Zone looked at her pained expression with a sense of content.

“I don’t care who you are Ari, or who you were. I felt bad about being silent.”

“You… felt bad?

Zone saw a smile form underneath the hand on her face.

“I knew you did all along but I was waiting for you to admit it.”

“It’s the last time you’ll ever hear it.”

“Thankfully I will never forget it, ahahaha.”

Ari began to laugh maniacally, her hand still on her face, as the waiter came back and planted a bowl of bread in between them.

When she stopped laughing she sighed and put her hand down which left a pink mark across her skin with how firmly she had been grasping her forehead.

“We’re so lucky to be here.”

“We fought well there was barely any luck involved… besides me meeting you.”

“I’m not talking about that… I mean we’re lucky to have the resources to eat at a nice place.”

*You’re the one with all the resources,* thought Zone as he nodded faintly.

“The company which owns my hotline doesn’t have too much to offer, but I can’t imagine myself doing anything else. That’s why I understood you when you said you didn’t want to go back to school.”

*But you have so much junk in your house…*

Ari took a deep breath and stared around at the mass of people around them.

“I wouldn’t even have enough money to live in an apartment, but sometimes if I can’t save somebody… they send me all their belongings when they die.”

*This is getting nowhere, I have to do something.*

“Ari, would you like to talk about our pasts.”

“Umm… sure why not?”

“Alright I’ll go first,” said Zone as he took a sip of water.

“I lost all my memories when I was around 12, then I lived in an Orphanage and played Arclight all day. Then I lived in an apartment with my friend who betrayed me.

Your turn.”

“What an interesting storytelling technique,” said Ari as Zone nodded in approval. “Letting the reader fill in the void with their own creativity can be quite effective.

You asked me about the seraph that presides me, and perhaps if I told you what happened to me you would understand the duality between us.”

*I wonder how fucked up her past is for her to be so hesitant.*

Ari started to tap her nails on the wooden table methodically. “But the past is no longer, until I speak of it again. But maybe you’ll find some use of that which should have gone away.”

--

“This a story of two people,” said Ari as she raised her fingers across her face like a hand model.

“Obviously one of those women was myself, Ari Shizuka. But the other woman who lived in the Ancient world was a splitting image of myself.

“Her name… was…”

Ari looked into the backdrop with blank eyes as the sounds of the café which had once been drowned out by Ari’s captivating voice slowly appeared.

Zone stared at her hands on the table for a moment until he decided to check on her face to see if she had somehow died.

He saw her eyes gazing behind him, prompting him to turn. As soon as he noticed nothing out of the ordinary, he heard Ari’s voice.

“Aria Everlett,” said Ari as if the name had some sacred meaning. She let out the smile formed when remembering good memories.

“Did you guys copy each other or something?”

“No.” said Ari defensively as she chuckled. “Aria looked just like me, but she had long gray opal colored hair and eyes which were sapphire blue.

“So you swapped hair and eye colors or something?”

“No, well, not intentionally,” replied Ari.

“Anyways, Aria was a young Ancient being. Being as she was an ancient without a special bloodline, she went to a university to study magic.

She quickly worked herself up as one of the top magicians of the school due to her ability to remember.

“Is this person you?”

“Why do you have to ruin the story Zone!!!” yelled Ari as she smashed her fist onto the table causing eyes to drift upon the two friends.

*But you’re no longer an Ancient, or so I thought.*

“I don’t know,” said Zone.

“It’s alright. I can remember the details of the past, down to the taste of my saliva, and this story gets real dark. I’m tasting so much yucky-ness, but at least your helping me keep my mind off it.”

“I haven’t done shit but apparently it was enough to make you imagine that I’m helping.”

“That’s exactly it… Anyways,” said Ari as she clasped her hands together. “Once again I’ll continue.”

“Ahem.

There are several wars spanning thousands of years in the Ancient World. In such times, the cities under rule of a Kingdom were vulnerable to internal strife. I remember a time I was attacked by members of a cult, but I managed to barely avoid getting sacrificed by using my blood clone spell right before getting stabbed right on the altar.”

“Sounds like an awful place.”

“Yea but the wildlife is so beautifully diverse in the Ancient World,” replied Ari as she took a sip of water.

“Because of my skills, the university would pay me a nice stipend granted I signed a contract where I would would serve the kingdom for the next 25 years after I graduate.”

*Sounds like forever, and even though Ancients live a long time I have an idea that most of them don’t make it that long.*

“My parents who weren’t very wealthy were so proud when I made enough to handle paying housing fees. They had high hopes for me. They thought I had the potential to be the shining star which could save the suffering city plagued by internal strife.

Even though I made a decent paycheck being a student, I always wandered across people who were suffering and I soon realized if I wanted to help them, I would have to make more.

I decided to use my free time to take various jobs around the town where I could help people using my magical prowess.

“Sounds like you haven’t changed much.”

“What do you mean? I’m trying to save our money so you can get your really fast cybernet.”

“It’s fine Ari. Playing with a shit connection will only bolster me once I make it to the arenas done day.”

“I can’t wait for that day so I can hold a funny sign in the audience.”

“Me too… So when does Aria become Ari?”

“Soon. One day a famous inventor in the Ancient world created a device which could play and record music in response to certain magical triggers. It was basically something akin to a CD player…”

“That’s real old.”

“Yea but there’s no technology in the Ancient world. Plus the contraption was shaped like a little cute dragon made out of glass infused with jade. It has a short curly tail with orange spikes, which wrapped around its own curled up body as it slept on the base which was a small circle podium.

When you’d squeeze it, its mouth would opened like a music box and it would play whatever melody you imbued in it. You could then change the tone by using spells of different wavelengths~”

“Could it be the world’s most complex instrument?” asked Zone.

“Maybe it wasn’t as practical as I thought,” said Ari as she scratched the back of her hair. “But I really loved how it looked”

“However this inventor would only sell the device to those who could find her a special metal that forms inside a dangerous corruption known as the Abyss.

The Abyss is a dangerous place. Gods of the Ancient world fear to tread on the lands because there is a beautiful but deadly effect akin to radioactivity which is prevalent in those lands.

When I saw the invention, I thought of my little brother. He was always feeling so unhappy because my parents hated him for doing badly in school and not wanting to join the war. But I knew he loved music and I thought this instrument would help him understand that magic doesn’t have to be about fighting others.

I spent several days preparing and used up all my money but I managed to complete the quest. The abyss is such a dangerous place

When her parents saw the gift she purchased for him they were outraged that she spent all her money buying her brother something. She tried to explain to them that he would only grow out of his despair if they invested more into them, but they didn’t seem interested in hearing her out.

Her parents forced her to return it. Ari was heartbroken but lied to them and gave him the gift anyways.

A few days later, the men with the dark robes came to their house and took her brother. Ari realized her parents had sold her brother off and she left that day to chase him down.

She went on a long journey where she honed her skills and became a renegade, helping various people in the lands to reach her goals. She was able to track her brother down and see him one last time before she was captured and killed.

When she died a being known as the Virtual Image of Decay appeared before her deathbed. It told her she didn’t belong in this world, and that her services would be needed in the next.

Ari was then placed in the body of another woman who was named Seri Shizuka. Seri was a person living in the human world who was renowned for giving it her all to help others.

One day somebody kidnapped Seri when they asked for help and they did unspeakable bad things to her. Seri wanted to kill herself but she kept thinking about living so she could help out her disabled older sister.

The Virtual Image of Decay promised Seri that she could replace the soul in her body with Ari to fulfill her wishes.

The image talked to Seri telling her that her heart was in the right place but to do good one must become much stronger.

Seri agreed, and the image would let Seri rest for all eternity as she asked.

Soon Ari found herself in the body of Seri where freed herself from her captors, but did not kill them. She turned them into the police, and started to continue off Seri’s will, and took in Seri’s last name.

Ari then found Seri’s family and started to take care of them until Seri’s mother remarried and they found their lives turning for the better. Ari still looks over Seri’s old sister, since her sister is taking drugs which unlocks the full potential of her brain but it seems like the drug is erasing part of the freedom and love she expressed when in her disabled state.

--

## Sec 6: A Reverse in the Space Time Continuum (Sec 2 Extras)

*Thus begins our long journey, a journey of several steps to solve bigger questions that we all have.*

*Everybody always blamed me for making the dog violent. I used to play with him when he was a child and we would battle each other, of course, through our friendly sprawls we would become better friends. Finally, after a long time living away he finally returns since his owner couldn’t handle him. Though they think of him lowly, his unwavering sacrifice for me speaks otherwise.*

*Kitty Hawk was one of the most promising upcoming magicians back when she lived in the ancient world. Many people looked up to her, although like Zone, she wasn't sure of her future. She enjoyed playing a game console her sister developed when not practicing magic, and she shared her game with another kid who was much younger than her, Ebee. When the fated day arrived causing the winds corrupted by the abyss to flow into town, she was distracted by her one of a kind game as it blew from her hands, and instead of activating the warning system, she chased after her game. Eventually many people in the town started to become crazy due to the spectral winds, and since Minerva was out, Kitty had to try and save the town herself. Kitty found Ebee and tried to protect him from a villager who turned into a gigantic monster, but after her arm got cut off, she ran away in fear, leaving Ebee to die. Ebee manages to escape, and he convinces her to be brave enough to go back in. During the rematch, Ebee dies, but before he dies he uses his final spell to transform into a special arm for Kitty. Kitty punches the monster like mad to no avail, then the monster slowly strangles her to death. However, before she dies, the arm vessel still possessed by his spirit manages to manipulate itself into a weird spectral ball which shoots a laser to free Kitty. Realizing how many times she was supposed to die that die, she decides to finally fight strategically, and finishes off the monster using a combination spell with Ebee’s spirit. The vessel then returns to her mechanical arm, her special cherished arm.*

### One Sapphire for Sale!

### Afraid to make a point:

*There was a man who believed that bullying, an evil that apparently only existed during his times, was a necessary evil. He said people from his generation were less of pansies because bullying wasn’t as infamous. However, when he went home, and his kids argued with him, he wasn’t able to make his point across, and would always take out the belt.*

That is, until UndeadM appeared in his dreams…

The pink sky could be seen through the trees where the leaves were missing, and for some reason though everything seemed unmistakably still, Cyphina noticed shadows moving in the corner of his eyes.

### Your Lie Your Crime:

Kitty Hawk looked drained, told lies, had no apparently feelings whatsoever, and complained about being sad. But she made a year’s worth of salary every month, of donations. She was a shining star in the lives of the outcasts. These are the people who are considered the cesspool of life, however Cyphina, remembering his faults and all the time bled, feels closer to them then the others. Cyphina has never felt such disgust in his life, watching those already down fall into an endless spiral, one all to familiar. But in the back of his head, he knew there was more to this story. There was no way someone with those qualities, could build such a self-sustaining empire.

### Between Love and Hate:

And watching everybody who barely knew Kitty defame her for being herself, albeit she sounded like somewhat of a rude and sociopathic person, Cyphina learned of a feeling more disgusting than that of which Kitty became, that is, those without any understanding. These are the people who can hate others without meeting them.

Old Kitty was about living in her own world.

And the Kitty 5 years in the future, was a sort of monster. However, it was a monster born out of grief. Born out of the sadness that occurred 4 years ago, when her best friend Cyphina Lyena died. The one she loved who loved her back for her scuffed self. She’s been on her own journey to cover that hole in her heart. And the only medicine she could find were leeches, sucking her dry for their own benefits. Her only good friends had left her, because they want to move on. And that’s why Cyphina realizes he mustn’t fail to reverse the fateful day.

Sometimes Cyphina could still see flashes of Old Kitty in her adulthood. Every once in a while, during certain interactions that reminding him of a time in the past, he would see Adult Kitty enjoying herself, and her smile and laughter was still the same.

--

# Chapter 3: You be you, I’ll be me

*You know me, I can see people for who they really are with my special eyes. If I don’t like you, then it’s not because of who you pretend to be, but because there’s something you forgot to resolve in the old you.*

*Stop trying to please other people so much.*

*Look Cyphina, some people don’t want to be selfish like you.*

*It’s not about being selfish. It’s quite the opposite. We must first better ourselves so we can help other people further. If you spend your time worrying about what others think, you’ll never be able to help people to the fullest.*

*Hey Droddd, before Hibee killed himself, he said he found the only happiness in life in jerking off to the hentai you made.*

*You know, I was thinking about ending it all, but after seeing that, I’ll rethink.*

*You be you, and I’ll just be the best me for myself.*

*If a person reacts so negatively towards an awkward scenario, I don’t think they’d be a good friend… or at least I couldn’t be friends with them considering how many social blunders I make…*

*You may think of yourself differently, but you’re courteous and open, and those are traits I’d never associate with somebody evil.*

*--Max from tamingmind*

*The world I live in is just you and me…*

***Cyphina to Zone****: Even if you have such high achievements, nobody really cares about* ***you****… that is, the story of you. Even if they do, nobody cares about them. Not many people matter. But one of the few people in this world that means something, is Ari Shizuka. She cares about* ***you*** *Zone, and that’s all that matters in the end.*

*--*

*There’s a lady whose fusion with a demon acting as hell’s sentinel whose ego was split in half. One half of herself, was the young, manipulative, spoiled woman who would no longer have to use her charms to obtain her desires. She had black hair and red eyes.*

*And the other form, the reserved, studious, and spiteful being came out as a blond haired woman with olive colored eyes. Her grandfather entrusted her with the duty to kill the man who created her. The company was founded on values, that’s why it could grow. Because there was a reason to always do our best.*

*And now the corrupted remnants of the original ideal are left in Emelyene’s hands to clean. Slowly working her way towards her goal, every day she works nonstop to build her way to this revenge.*

*The rich and powerful, are near immortal… from the law. And now from other humans, as the gods start to form alliances to further their goals with the Zephracores. However, the closest resemblance to Satan, living in 20 year old Emelyene Svobata, has come to invoke penitence.*

## Sec 1: Fixed Perception

*Cyphina decides to memory map Droddd to help him over his sadness and so he will join team Unbounded Perceptions on their quest to make the world a more accepting place, so one day Ancients can coexist with humans openly.*

*In a world where everything can be magically fixed with a simple spell, Cyphina is running away from everything because for some reason, to him, the spell is turning things more hideous.*

Cyphina watched in fear as DivineChaos turned to him with her blood red shining keyhole eye revealing itself from her peach colored bangs which had been blown to the side by the wind. The hole locked onto soul, as her other icy cerulean eye was staring into space unnervingly.

“Respect comes on three parts. The ability to be respectful around others, the ability to be respectful during a feeling of uneasiness, and…”

DivineChaos closed her eyes. “The ability to respect oneself during times of complacency. Don’t bleed time, or else you will be unable to be yourself when the moment starts to turn red.”

A cascade of blood then surrounded her and when it folded open like graceful origami she was long gone.

## Sec 2: Special only when the light reflects to your eyes

### Alive and Blooming

*As Ari and Zone prepare during the short peacetime for the oncoming Aurelius, they deal with an increasing number of doomsday cults/groups who are gathering members to prepare for the end of the world. group known as Sequoia lead by a very mysterious lady Emelyene Svobata are also preparing for the end of the world,*

*There’s a small gap in the crowd where a homeless man lies waiting near a lamppost with a sign: “Lost my dog.” As Zone walks by the homeless man leaning against the lamppost, he holds out his lunch bag, and tosses it at the homeless man when he looks over at Zone.*

*How was my sandwich Zone?*

*“It was great.”*

*“Do you have any criticisms? Did I put too much tomato…? Was the sauce a tad too sour?”*

*“No, it was the most meaningful lunch I’ve ever had.”*

### Judgment of Zone

“If you spare me I will help you I promise. With me by your side you will finally get the acknowledgement you deserve. All your friends will be jealous of you, and rightfully so because you are more skilled than you look.”

“Hmm… you drive a hard bargain,” said Zone. His voice was always sounded the same, lacking any empathy, despite his colorful words.

“There’s pleasures beyond your wildest dreams which I can help with.”

“Should I betray the one who saved my life when everybody else looked away, the one who is the cause of all my suffering because her soul is too kind, and the one who spared your life.”

“We must move on from the past. The world waits for no one Zone.”

“I’m joking Jelze. The only logic behind your persuasion relies on this shit world. I could less about everybody except Ari.”

Zone

“Wait please don’t kill me… I’ll do anything you want! NO!”

“Your unlucky Ari isn’t here else you may have had a third chance…”

All the sudden Zone hears a notification appear on his comp. There’s a picture of Ari on the message.

Zone looks down as his comp for a brief second and frowned.

**You better not do anything you regret without me here!**

“I’m not going to regret anything,” muttered Zone as he charged up a blast at the injured woman who was lying on the floor wailing.

“Except maybe if you found you would pester me for a while… possibly distract me causing me to get… maybe 500 less kills if you’re pretty persistent…”

Zone ended up deciding to blast her with an electric bullet so she would get knocked out but didn’t finish her off.

### Hell is Alive and Well

*The past is just a shadow of the future*

*Cyphina meets a group of people lead by DivineChaos who have the goal of invoking justice upon this world. Most of the people in the group are themselves corrupt, however, all of them are very powerful. Cyphina, Kitty, and Droddd have a first confrontation with a member of the group, and realize they are no match for even an single member at their current state.*

*One of the members of this group is Emelyene, the person Zone met in the future.*

*Emelyene is targeted by a vengeful spirit that is jealous of how beautiful she is, but also angry because the spirit believes she doesn’t showcase it. Emelyene eventually kills the spirit and its assistant, but beforehand she stands over the assistant’s dead body who she’s about to crush to death with her claws and tells him, “you’re about to see me at in my most beautiful form,” before smiling at him revealing her fangs of the abyss warden and crushing his skull to a pulp. Before she can finish him over Cyphina lands on him and battles her instead.*

### The Covenant of Darkness Withdrawn

aka Lampshade Squad

**DISCO BATTLE Emelyene vs Cyphina**

Although Emelyene was much stronger than Cyphina at the beginning of the chapter, Cyphina’s skills thanks to him and Zone both working hard quickly catch up. Emelyene opens up by showing off her brute strength. She crushes the ground causing the area around them to crack, and the computer screen to break. He ends up nearly finishing Emelyene off, and as he’s about to use As Darkness Falls to obliterate her, Kitty freezes him to stop him from killing her.

# Chapter 4: To Live Means I Must Die

*Remember Elaine = Memory Lane*

*They stand upon what they believe is the moral highground. Watching us make mistakes, mistakes that seem stupid, seem dirty, but some people don’t intend to hurt anybody. Punishment is for sure, but you are in no position to judge, you who falls prey to his/her evil intentions everyday, as small or unknown your actions may be (LiveStreamFails reddit thread Arab Andy). You will never understand, how much these moments mean, even if these are the moments which everyone sees as our downfall, they were the moments where we could truly be ourselves. You will never understand because you only live within your own bubble, that is, the bubble cast upon you by the world around you. The one you’re too afraid to question.*

*We face people who make mistakes without evil intentions, and yet day after day, there’s an evil in us that makes us feel no sympathy, feels apathy to the rest of the world outside the one we know. . That’s true evil, and yet we judge others in our shadow of doubt , and on our moral high horse.*

*Why change the world when no single man understands if such a world can exist?*

*This is not an answer, but rather, a reminder.*

*We all hate monsters, until the day we become monsters. Then we realize the monsters are the only ones who truly understood us…*

*Look at you Cyphina, you’re such a shitty son. Everyday I go out I represent my family, which is why I’m always looking swell.*

*The day you made up your mind, is the day we we’re fated to kill each other.*

*They always argue but they’re so afraid to when you walk in young one…*

*Why try and save my life, if you can’t save the ones around you…*

*As he grew older, he imitated what he thought was a man. He treated the words of his parents, especially his mothers, as a joke. She always said things he didn’t want to hear, and he didn’t think of those words greatly because he thought he was much smarter. He also thought as the man of the family, he should act like the head of a household, and thus he always corrected her words when talking to others.*

*Cyphina is one of the nicest people in the world. His reputation for such isn’t due to his lack of negative feelings, but rather, he always sees things through the eyes of other people thanks to watching Ari in his dreams. He doesn’t hide his emotions, and his feelings are logical ones. However, even though he feels as according to the situation, he knows that sometimes he misinterprets the situation, and always reminds himself of such possibilities.*

*He’s always respectful because he’s selfish. He believes in doing the right thing as according to his heart mind and soul. He believes that one’s self is the most important thing to live for, which is why he constantly stays true to his own word. Though his parents are old, Cyphina believes they should always be looking forward to something bigger. He takes everything his parents tell him seriously, even the words that seem to have no outside consideration because he can find meaning within those words. The words link him and them together, even if they are cold.*

*Though his mother spent most of her time playing the role of a housewife, he thinks if she finds some sort of goal, her life will feel much more fulfilling. This is one of the main reasons why he does his chores, because he wants her to have time to find her own way.*

## Sec 2: Nasty Fucking Dream

*I will forever be known as the ultimate soyboy, but I will carry that weight on my shoulders if it will lead to the ultimate good for sacrifice is all I know.*

Zone has a dream where all seems normal at first. He dreams he goes to school once again, but because he cheated on his homework and got caught in front of the whole class, he feels embarrassed and rejected.

Zone then ends up in some form of a special classroom upstairs. The school seems to also resemble a living quarters. He begins to work until he spots Sylphia who looks slightly different. He tries his best to avoid her, but she wanders around talking to everybody and eventually they end up briefly talking.

Zone finds himself having to use the restroom badly, so he goes out into the classroom into the darkness till he reaches the other bathroom since the one nearby is being used.

On his way back he sees Sylphia so he sneaks behind some furniture and listens to her flirt with some guy she used too know. Zone then enters the classroom.

They talk a brief moment again because of the situation, but eventually time passes and he leaves the classroom. Before he leaves he goes back to the room and sees it completely transformed into a bedroom.

Zone sees Sylphia talking to an older man. She asks him for a favor and in return the older man wants her in return. Sylphia accepts and enters the room but before the man can enter Zone enters and holds the door back while he viciously tries to open it.

When he wakes up he reflects on how much of a soyboy he was in his dream. He thinks if he were in the dream now, he’d just kill everybody. He also wonders why he can’t dream of Ari.

--

## Sec 3: Reverse Torture

*Persistence and courage to continuously pester evil until those who cannot feel pain starts to feel their hearts crack wide open comprises the woman known as Miss Ari Shizuka.*

There was a celebration for the successful liberation of the beautiful town Sunlit Open Hand Valley. After Emelyene had excused Zone he searched through the mass of soldiers conversing in search of Ari.

“Hey congratulations Zone, we heard you beat one of the bosses of New Zelia.”

“Thanks,” replied Zone with a single nod as he walked by the soldiers who continuously gave him praise.

*Where the hell are you?*

Eventually Zone took out his phone and messaged Ari.

A few seconds later, Zone got a message: ~ I’m back at the studio ~

--

Zone walked back to Ellestar and walked 15 floors up the highrise and through numerous hallways to reach Ari’s small studio.

Inside the room was unusually warm since Ari was cooking some food.

Zone saw Ari dressed casually while she was on the phone.

*Back to work huh?* thought Zone as she covered the receiver and said hi to Zone.

Zone nodded and sat down in one of the wooden chairs across the room and took out his headset.

*Guess I should follow suit.*

## Sec 4: SideQuest Time

### Lying Dead

*Zone finds an old man who is lost when trying to go back to his hometown to see his parents before they pass away. As Zone helps the man, he realizes the man has forgotten the specific details of his life, but he continues to help him despite clues pointing to him being senile. When they finally reach their goal, Zone realizes the man’s parents had died four years prior.*

### How Are You Doing Betrayer?

*Zone is playing ArcLight on his new account, but he sees Bob-T in a game. To make sure it’s the real Bob-T, Zone lets the player kill him in an embarrassing way and just as Bob-T would, the player calls him a noob. Zone then reveals to Bob-T that it’s him and asks him how he’s able to play from the Ancient World. Bob-T explains that their training facility has modern technology as well as magi-tek allowing him to access the Cyberse. Zone asks him about Sylphia and tells him to keep his exitence a secret from her.*

### Gamer Girl needs Advice

*Cyphina sets up an investigation service to use his memory mapping abilities to make him some money. One of the first clients he has sets him up to investigate her boyfriend’s mother, who she things influenced him to destroy their relationship. At first the boyfriend looks to be a dick since he threatened his girlfriend since she “played too many games,” but eventually he finds out the boy was working hard on trying to find a new job, only to be met with a series of rejections. Eventually he snapped at his girlfriend who was playing games, but recently he had been trying to apologize, but his girlfriend had blocked him. Eventually their breakup leads to their bond becoming stronger.*

*Based off of* [*https://www.reddit.com/r/relationship\_advice/comments/9va7ra/update\_bf\_broke\_up\_with\_me\_because\_i\_played\_a\_pc/*](https://www.reddit.com/r/relationship_advice/comments/9va7ra/update_bf_broke_up_with_me_because_i_played_a_pc/)

### Jealousy 1616

*The episode starts with Cyphina watching Kitty’s livestream from her living room. As she does her reddit recap, she finds a post about how guys should be more tender and kind to women but manly in the sense of having a strong brotherhood and being protectors like how knights are portrayed.*

*Kitty makes a troll counter post where she pretends to be a guy and says women should try to be like Greek goddesses: less abrupt, shy, and reserved (kind of like how anime women are). Kitty writes that women should exhibit these qualities while being exceptionally talented in several aspects of life.*

*She instantly gets a lot of bad reputation from random people, although most people in her stream are dying of laughter. After Cyphina has a good laugh, Cyphina sees Emelyene who enters the house.*

*Emelyene tells Cyphina of a lawyer who needs help since she’s being threatened while working on the case. Cyphina and Emelyene take her case. The women is a very shy but seductive lady who keeps acting very kind to Cyphina. Cyphina helps her, and at the end Emelyene asks him what she thinks of him.*

*Throughout the episode Cyphina and Emelyene talk about perverted thoughts and how Cyphina isn’t loyal to Kitty, but Cyphina thinks that as long as he knows where his limits are in real life, he doesn’t feel any guilt. At the end Cyphina realizes he doesn’t feel anything except for somebody like Kitty since he relived the memories with her. Emelyene asks him if he would feel that way for her, and Cyphina replies telling her “I mean maybe… but you’re fucking gay dude.”*

### Older Sister Lookin Out

*Minerva doesn’t know how she feels about Emelyene trying to become close with her sister so she tries to get Cyphina to make some moves on her. Cyphina thinks this may be Minerva’s stupidest idea yet, but he plays along with her. At the end, he doesn’t complete Minerva’s master plan, but instead said he wanted to tag along to spend some enjoyable time with her and thank her for supervising the mission.*

### Victim of Deception

*Cyphina sees on the news the rate of solved cases pertaining to pedophilia has gone up, but the incidents have the city on edge since the news anchor talks about how the projected number of hidden pedophiles is greater than ever predicted.*

*Eventually Snake Girl comes to Cyphina and tells her the police are trying to track her down for pedophilia even though she’s only 12. Snake Girl explains that when she was playing a game online, she pretended to be a 50 year old general of the universe, but then she met another little girl. Since Snake Girl is actually a little girl herself she was able to befriend the girl with all her usual crazy talk.*

*One day that girl asked Snake Girl for some in game currency and Snake Girl said no and then the girl threatened to report Snake Girl with some screenshots she saved as evidence. The screenshots sound a little weird but if you look at the perspective of Snake Girl it makes sense.*

*Online Girl: Here’s my picture do you think I look pretty?*

*Snake Girl: Uhh… what do I say. I guess since I’m trying to make friends online I should say yes. Yes you look great.*

*Online Girl: We should meet up in real life sometimes. I would love to see you face to face.*

*Snake Girl: Okay.*

*Online Girl: So where do you live? I want to know how far you’d have to come so I can make you something to eat.”*

*Snake Girl: I live in a place called Darkwood Swamp. My house has a dead alligator as the doormat, you can’t miss it.*

*Online Girl: Oh you’re so funny*

*Eventually Cyphina tracks down this lecherous online girl and using clues from Zone and his own timeline, he finds out she’s one year older than Snake Girl and she tries to find predators online to exploit them before threatening to report them.*

### Symbiosis

A boy pushes a girl on a wheelchair everywhere with him so she can protect him with her magic.

### Never Grow Up

*Some people just never learn from their mistakes. Some people don’t know when to act mature, because they fall to the invisible pressure of others. Some people will always look down upon those that they climbed out with.*

### All That’s Left Is You

*In one of the endless nightmare realms, Cyphina is all grown up and the only thing he has is his child Snake Girl. He tells her the story of why they are alone, and why he is so proud of her.*

### The Heart vs the Mouth

*How can one beat a corrupt master wordsmith.*

### The Great Leader Mepetaiscyx

*Zone reads some posts online talking about how despite the countries in Afrique new breakthrough in Cyber technology, the country was still a third world mess due to the numerous diseases thriving in the climate. At first Zone thinks that all these derogatory posts are part of the government propaganda to encourage people, but later on Zone finds out that these messages are left by Afrique bots to disguise the fact that their Ancient overlord, a marquis of a kingdom in the Ancient World named Mepetaiscyx, has caused the countries of the continent to become immensely more powerful.*

### Kitty Hawk Master Mathematician

*Cyphina and Kitty are trying to find ways to make money, and then Marie suggests Kitty enter a prestigious mathematics competition. Marie and Kitty then go on a math training spree. Eventually Kitty competes and faces off against people who seem like galaxy brains since they understand things instantly when seeing things, including two really obnoxious girls who are bragadacious since they’ve been smart and beautiful out of the womb, but Marie keeps reminding Kitty to use her fundamental skills, and she is able to remember all the things necessary due to the crazy pneumonics that Marie teaches. Eventually some of the people are mad that Kitty won since they don’t like how she’s not a true genius, but Kitty obviously doesn’t care and she taunts them.*

## Sec 4: Another Master Gone…

*Desath betrayal*

--

# Chapter 5: Tying Together These Special Days

If you’re really wanting to be happy, you better be ready to die for it.

Happiness is not about feeling happy.

Sadness is relative. You should never act like your problems are more important than others.

Jerry: Why did nobody help me during my time of need? I didn’t leave you, you left me…

Cyphina: You think you’re the only one who needs help? Everyday I need to remind myself why I shouldn’t just end myself. We’re all dying to sadness, but sometimes, if we take a good look at the world through a rainy lens, we can see just how beautiful it is.

Tony: Just because you quit doesn’t mean your dreams are over. Failing is when the dream leaves your heart… as long as you keep it close, you haven’t failed yet.

Sometimes I’m stuck in a world of my own sadness, and it’s only when I remember everybody around me, that I can find the strength to move forward and accept reality as the world in which I must progress.

--

## The 3 Amigos:

*One depressed as fuck gay dude, some guy who might as well believe in alt right lefty slaying ideologies ideologies, and Zonewho wants to help the world… Who cares who the hell you are. We’ll still die for each other.*

*Crazy Guy: That blood coming from your eyes… I’ll fuck you in the eyes*

*Divine Chaos: \*Uses summoning Eye of Despair\*. Here have a go at it. Her red eye turns into an eyeball monster with sawblade teeth.*

### Sec 1: We can’t change people

*Some people don’t want to change… but they need to. And we want to. What do we do?*

#### That’s my Big Bro

*Tony gets a new little sister… but this one is a bit more dangerous than the rest since she’s one of the children of the Arbitrator (Phenomena).*

#### Got Nothing Better to Do

*After spending most of his time doing nothing, one day Gkillzy wakes up and thinks about donating some of his body parts*

#### Growing Beyond our Reach

*Zone helps a person who everyone sees as a complete failure. He’s a lucky kid who is more fortunate than most people due to his overly desperate antics which helped him gain sympathy from some other big names, although most people support him as a laughingstock. One day Zone takes him to a special farm where he meets some old people who talk about how the farm’s produce is the symbol of growing oneself. As the kid eats the delicious fresh fruits while just enjoying the moment with ZOne, he realizes how special moments without worrying about anybody else can be. Zone sees him a few days later, having found his own drive, he no longer cares to speak with him.*

### Sec 2: Running Forever

### A Fool I Am

# Chapter 6: Bleeding Time

*This is a chapter about falling alone. When making the same mistakes… how fast can you smile?*

*"Time is money." Or that's what they say. "Sweet as honey." There's something I'm craving. See the world as a place for mistakes. Outside, looking in. -- Felt*

*It’s impossible to try your best… and it’s impossible to have no regrets, but that’s why redemption exists…*

*I don’t want to live in the fear of pain. To live in the fear of regret. To live for the hatred of others. I want only to do my best for you.*

*Sitting around complacently as the world around me continues to desecrate.*

## Sec 1:

### Cyphina vs Meslieness

Guanyin

## Sec 2: The Empty Trail

*Cyphina to Kitty: Yea I used to like this one girl… I kind of hope she’s getting fucked real hard.*

*Kitty: That’s pretty mean coming from you.*

*Cyphina: No I mean the other meaning. The worst feeling I can think of is experiencing this loneliness. It takes everything I know, and some of the mental insanity I’ve accrued over the years to get over being lonely. If she experiences that… it would make me feel bad for waiting…*

--

# Chapter 7: This is Our Real Beginning

*Those who love and cannot wait, need to learn to wait before learning to love*

*When the decision time comes… can you be proud of your walking path?*

*A game is just one giant sacrifice, of things that couldn’t be there*

*Look, I love you a lot, but you need to learn to be more selfish… From now on, it’s just you, me and everybody else alright?*

## Sec 1: The Hatred of Ari Shizuka

*When you kill a god, you gain their powers*

*After Ari’s death, Zone takes Ari’s mechanical eyes as her last gift towards him. He gains the power of Unbounded Perceptions and control over the six pendulumgraphs. Or so Ari thinks that’s what happens, in reality, her death was just an illusion put by Zone as he sacrifices himself to protect her.*

*As Ari holds Zone’s dying body his brain has completely melted to a spell which has an effect similar to radiation, but he conveys to her a message related to Cyphina. Unable to phrase his wordings well because of the deterioration of his brain, his message is a bit scrambled but Ari is able to understand most of it.*

*He tells her that this world favored people who didn’t care about living. The senses exist to give people a sense of where they are, but they forget about the things they can’t feel. The way he lived at first was as if everything was meaningless, except for the Cyberse, where he witnessed feelings through a filter. However, through watching another person from inside his dreams, he learned about the power of believing.*

*Zone has no idea what is reality. Perhaps everything he dreamed about was an illusion. Perhaps everything Cyphina dreamt about was an illusion. However, despite the fact that Ari and Zone may be just an illusion, Zone watched Cyphina find strength, look past the emptiness that filled his life by believing in the will of Ari.*

*Zone tells Ari to always be herself, because although life is meaningless for a lot of people out there, the possibility that a person like Ari, who will believe in somebody no matter what, is out there will help people live each day as fulfilled as possible. People live their whole lives believing in this person's existence, and die never seeing but only hoping this person can succeed. In essence, to have seen Ari with his own eyes gives his life the ultimate fulfillment.*

*Ari starts feeling things she’s never felt before, and not knowing how to deal with them, isolates herself. Meanwhile, a new mysterious member joins the new clan...*

*Master penguin*

***~~~THE DREAMS END HERE. But the story still continues in the two timelines.~~~***

### Six Pendulumgraphs

## Sec 2: Cor Contritum

Cyphina realizes that even though Ari never existed in his timeline, the possibility that such a person exists helps him move forward.

With Zone gone, Cyphina is left with a very weird feeling which starts to make him feel emotional about some of his repressed memories.

Cyphina has an old friend who he liked very much back in the day which he thinks of from time to time. He’s always been afraid to see her since he thinks so highly of her in way since she was sort of his rival. One day they cross paths again, and she’s become very successful although she may have neglected one aspect of her life which makes her very sensitive to their reunion. Cyphina decides helps her through this problem, and finally settles down a large doubt in his life as Kitty after Cyphina for wasting his time. At the end Cyphina realizes this whole event was Kitty and his friends mapping his mind to make sure he was ok. Cyphina and Kitty then have a breakthrough moment, and Cyphina decides even if his doubt is never cleared, he would rather imagine the scenario by the happy moment he spent in the dream than do it injustice by wrongly imaging what could be a false hatred

*Are you hurt? Did they make you scared of being vulnerable? Or are you really that evil...*

## Sec 3: Isolation

*Ari hears hints of a man resembling Zone terrorizing the world. This fact helps motivate her to leave the room which she isolated from. She teams up with all of Cyphina’s old teamates, and a new member of the clan who’s proving himself to be very poweful.*

--

Cyphina and the rest of the team have an argument. Desath has been training them under the impression that they become killers, but Cyphina knows his true motivation only lies within the will of Ari Shizuka.

“Snake Girl? What are you doing?”

“What do you mean what am I doing? I’m coming with you.”

“But why?”

“I don’t believe in your being nice spheal, but you know I don’t have any care for anybody but my true teammate.”

“But everyone else…”

“Lets be honest I didn’t care about them at all. I wanted to kill them personally, but they seemed useful at the time.”

“I don’t know if this is the way to go…”

“We’re much more powerful now. At one point we were the weak ones, and they forgot to check up on how far we’ve gone. I’m feeling my original powers coming back, and you become a Master of Human and monster kind.”

Snake Girl had become just as tall as Cyphina so they saw eye to eye.

“I strive to be like that one day.”

## Sec 4: Reunion

Sylphia finds out the so called Phantom Killer is actually Zone turned to the darkness. She and Zone have their final 1v1, but she finds out he’s become a lot more powerful.

**Battle: Zone vs Sylphia Final**

--

# Chapter 8 (Finale): Starry Transcendence

Lycoris Radiata… the myth comes true.

Anime top 10 betrayals #1

By dying we can control the flow of time. Who’s life will be erased?

Everything you did for me Cyphina…

*I’m not trying to be her savior. I’m simply repaying my debt. She saved my life. She saved me from myself…*

*--Cyphina on raising Snake Girl.*

--

Cyphina attempts to link all he knows from the future, and the present, to save Snake Girl. Whether he chooses to die and let Zone the Invoker exist, or whether he wants to continue living as Cyphina, will be determined…

## Sec 1: Ryukashin’s Truth

## Sec 2: Gamble with your Life

### Divine Chaos vs Undead M,

*There is not much empathy in this world. Those in power have no empathy for the people underneath them, and thus I have none for them.*

*The red chaos is a mutation born from extreme hatred… hatred of myself. The only reason DivineChaos became so powerful was because she had a rival who never gave up on her… but one day she killed him.*

*The divine tree said to atone for her sins she must kill the people whose existence threatens the Ancients.*

*Instead of killing the world DivineChaos asked the Divine tree if she could atone her sins by being the goddess of these new people, at least for two years until Snake Girl awakened and destroyed the world.*

Undead M asked me if I was ready to kill Divine Chaos. I didn’t believe it. But

8 of the most despicable beings erased who have no speck of humanity besides being born in a human society, and Cyphina finally finds a naked frame. Through the lens Cyphina sees a garden, lacking a single pair of flowers, and Divine Chaos, looking as elegant as when they first met.

Divine Chaos despised Minerva because her treatment of Kitty reminded her of what happened to her own brother. In a heartless world such as the Ancient World, Divine Chaos realizes years after that bonds only mean as much as we believe them to be. And her older brother, Cinna, though several hundred years older than her, believed in the familial bond. At least that’s the lies the Queen told Divine Chaos. But later, she realizes that the bond he shared with her wasn’t that of a brother or sister, but of severe sadness. He would always protect her because he thought his life was over long ago, when he found the page that revealed him killing their parents before the end of the Era.

Divine Chaos has been a puppet for the queen, trying to get Cinna’s page. Performing countless heartless acts, Divine Chaos has found herself in a moral hole where she believes there’s no point escaping. But Cyphina was supposed to die that day on the bus. The oracles of the tree predicted it. However, he lived, and constantly caused contradictions in their predictions. Finally, when she saw Cyphina and Ari invoke some sort of judgment on all of the most heartless people in existence, Divine Chaos thought he must be the gatekeeper.

And now she only wishes for him to judge her. To tell her the words that needed to be heard 50000 years ago.

And UndeadM tells her like every other person he’s passed judgment on, she must gamble, with her life.

“If you win… I will die for the sake of you. And you will live stamping on my dead corpse. If I win, I will die for me. And if you wish to find resolve, you will follow Cyphina to the end of the fated hour.”

**Battle: Desath, Cyphina, and Party vs DivineChaos.**

DivineChaos opens up with crimson rain which typically kills everything, but Desath is able to traverse through the all piercing spears of blood by slowing her perception of time with Relative Darkness. Desath then stabs DivineChaos through the heart with her longsword, but DivineChaos then blows up, revealing it was only a clone that Desath stabbed. The clone releases a barrage of blood everywhere as it dies, and Desath runs a distant away but has to end her Relative Darkness due to it rapidly draining her energy.

To counter Desath’s space-time manipulation, DivineChaos uses her cerulean eye’s power to bring an area’s temperature down to absolute Zero. Desath uses her mastery of nature based magic to create a bouquet of roses which she burns using a basic fire spell. The roses cause the flames to burn much hotter than normal, turning the flames pink, but the absolute freeze spell casted by DivineChaos is powerful enough to even freeze her bouquet.

Desath then uses

## Sec 3: Extinction

## Sec 4: One Last time, Smile at Me

*Cyphina must make the ultimate choice as he fights Snake Girl. By figuring out that he died saving DivineChaos in their final battle together against Snake Girl, he can change his fate because he knows the details of his future mistake. However, if he does so, he realizes that Zone’s timeline may change, and thus the timeline as he knows it may not even exist. Cyphina must make the ultimate choice: whether to die again so the timeline he’s dreamed about, the timeline he’s worked so hard to preserve by helping Zone, isn’t lost forever, or if he will change his fate to continue with the timeline he’s worked so hard to establish.*

*We are the will of Ari Shizuka…*

**Battle: Cyphina and DivineChaos vs The Dragon Empress Sylphia**

And before my eyes closed forever, I barely saw a blurry image of Elaine. I couldn’t have been happier, to know my dream of sharing her to the world had somehow come true. I think Undead Morpheus sensed the happiness inside of me, and decided to leave my broken body to rest. I saw something fall from his face, I’d like to imagine they were tears. Why you ask? Well, behind sadness is a desire, a dream. Let your dreams carry you. I dreamed of her… I dreamed of another life. Chances are, your dreams aren’t where you’ll be, but wherever you go, if you do so because of those dreams… there’s no regret. This ending, which in my eyes, lasts forever, isn’t what I wanted. But if I know… this is only the ending I’ll see. The real end… is yet to come. I think if this end never occurs, the true ending, will never reveal its face. And thus I have no regrets about this end, but one thing. Kitty… just one more time, smile at me.

History repeats itself, because I chose it to. And I feel a little bit better about dying. But before I go once again, I’ll leave a little something for Zone to find out. And maybe we can all have happy endings.

## Sec 5: The Phantom Killer

*Ari finds out that the hooded man who joined their clan is actually Cyphina who took an alternate route. Instead of killing himself, he disappeared for 6 years so he could train in solitude for the day where he’d have to help her fight Zone.*

**Battle: Cyphina and Ari + 2 vs Phantom Killer Infinity**

**Final Battle: Cyphina Lyena and Ari Shizuka + 2 + Reincarnated DivineChaos vs Virtual Image of Decay, Flesh Consumed Goddess, Undead Morpheus, The Will of Living, and The Will of Hatred**

*Free the mind*

*Sharpen my perceptions*

*Keep minding yourself*

*Sacrifices must be made*

*Stop bleeding time*

# Chapter 9 (NG+): Death is not the End

***Main Plot:***

***Section Plot:***

***Points:***

It’s only the beginning…

All is the result of what you have done…

Maybe my life wasn’t so great, but then I met you… and we did what we never could.

In NG+, Cyphina can unlock an alternative ending where both timelines continue even after the fated hour. Somehow they merge together, and Cyphina becomes Undead Morpheus the Gatekeeping Invoker. Here he can attempt sidequests to get the most powerful equipments, and challenge these godly beings to figure out the sacrifices they’ve taken to get to their positions. UndeadM doesn’t seem very fond of his old cohorts, claiming that hearing them again 50,000 years later, nobody knows their place…

Perhaps along this journey, Cyphina can also find closure for Ari…

It was destiny... that the letter arrived to me. My name is Zone, pronounced Z – one. There’s nothing in my eyes as important as winning… in my favorite game BLR. People always tell me about how to spend life, or that I’m bleeding time. And then they go back to making some sort of meaning to this otherwise meaningless existence. I may live in my own way, but at least I’m living. Every day, has purpose… to get better.

Maybe I don’t know how to respond to your questions, but that’s because I’m spending my time thinking about life. I’m living it. I don’t expect you to understand how I feel… but please, know that concerning yourself with such existential questions is a waste. Everything… is possible.

I saw him a few days ago. He sounded like one of those naïve, hopeful businessmen. But I don’t care who the hell he is. He had two freaking Ultimate Gamer Cards on sale for half off. I didn’t know I was funding madman. A couple days later, I’m freaking out trying to find Sylphia, and I see him, all fancily dressed, now the owner of one of the most powerful companies around, RevelationX. I was pretty happy for him, until he decided to piss me off with his incessant gloating. He did however, give me a special key, to access the information database of BLR. He knew I wasn’t going to do anything malicious, since I’m all about victory by honor. But he wanted to help me get back some items I deleted. And then I saw Sylphia’s messages, which had somehow ended up in this stash where data rested before it would be cleaned. The suicidal tone lit something up in me. My best friend… my best sniper… was in trouble.

## Sec 1: Calling You:

I went back to the owner of RevelationX, and although under ordinary circumstances, I wouldn’t be able to access his office, I found him waiting for me outside. That’s when he told me, the reason he was able to do what he did, was because he traveled from the future, to the past.

## Sec 2: Unbounded Perceptions vs Veritas

In this twisted timeline, Zone’s team consisting of himself, Sylphia,

# Chapter 10 (NG++): Memory’s Fragment

So… everything I became, was because of those lost memories

## Sec 1: The Abyss of Eternal

Zone goes to the pit that Ari dreams of in her memory banks. Everybody in the party knows only a few souls ever reached the pit without decaying which is in the epicenter of destruction, yet the party marches on, into what seems like a bottomless hole filled with traps…