(Set in a similar world as 10 fsi, but no Yamolnin in this side story. Those are two different worlds with similar settings, just as how 2 medieval stories can both have castles but be in different worlds)

The world has a dark morbidity, set in a France-like setting. Dark metals- shadowy purple, gold, red and green- adorn the cities. Clowns parade everywhere, speaking in riddles and laughter. These jesters have a wicked side to them. Penny farthing cycles- called "oom"- are seen throughout. Chocolate is a national delicacy, especially those rich in secrets. Buildings are casted in Baroque black iron, and quiet lanterns light up the constantly solemn night sky. Daytime is rare, and there are several moons. The fashion is darkly colorful, a mix of Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance and medieval.

In lighter parts of the cities, thin silver metals connect together colors of various forms and white pearl faces. They look like a playing card come to life. Flowers and small gardens are present everywhere, but not densely packed; rather, they are sparely spread throughout.

A greedy, sharp-talking traveling merchant seeks to gather a series of ancient toys and tinker with, and then trade them for something she desires. She dresses like a clown, but not so outlandish, and has no clown makeup.

Outright sadism is too boring. The mystery revolves around the clowns and the Amphitheaters. The clowns are an outlet for the people and influence how they think. Their actions mirror the people's opinions, but they can be controversial and hated so much that mobs surround and rip them apart. They incite war and debate, but can also foster peace. People are not sadistic outright, but it's hard to know when they're serious. Serious matters are glossed over and treated with jokes, so people act pragmatically but rarely take the time to mourn. The culture of the City of Jisfuil is scary at times- many people act aloof yet cunning like the Joker, lacking empathy.

Fionna, the greedy, charismatic merchant, is very sensitive and has a hard time fitting in with this culture. Growing up on these native streets, she gradually became adept at guessing how these people would react and played them to get what she wanted. She knew they were easily amused by parlor tricks and jokes, and rejoiced in chaos. So as long as she could mislead them with the sleight of hand, they wouldn't suspect her secret motives, which they did not understand- they could not empathize with vengeance or loss of pride.

So while many fit into this culture, there are many who do not, and slowly unraveling who is who is a main theme.

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The show was starting soon. Fionna knew she only had a small time to work this out, or else she was back on the streets, and it would all be for nothing.

"Look, I'll give you twenty of these toys. The finest you've ever seen. Look, you just wind it

up, and it starts walking..." Trying not to look into the annoyed eyes of the theater owner, she hastily fumbled around her pouch and grabbed a handle of the wind-up walkers, and threw them across the table. She picked one up and started frantically winding it, finally setting it down and beaming as it etched across the table."

The theater owned twirled his mustache. "Hmm..." he scrutinized. Without a word, he looked away, pulling the curtain aside to see how his show was starting.

"Mr. Grunch!" Fionna pleaded with desperation, "Your show is missing some valuable puppeteers! You- and I- we both know you can't do the show without those puppets. At least let me be of help- these toys will surely replace those puppets for now, at least this very show!"

The owner gave her a side glance, looked back, then muttered, "And what about after the show? I'll just find new puppeteers. Then I wouldn't need these things anymore. I'll call off this one show, and save myself all the trouble from having to even touch those things."

Fionna cleared her throat, took a breath, then said, "You do know that there aren't many people who will be willing to work under these... Conditions... You have here?"

"What?! What conditions?!?"

Fionna, with a face of stone, pointed up. "I see that to cut costs, those wooden planks aren't every stable. It's hard for people to want to take the risk to walk up there... Your theater is falling apart."

Surprised, Mr. Grunch growled, and looked back to the show, unwilling to look at Fionna.

"Mr. Grunch, the show is starting soon. You know how much money this one show could make. You buy the toys now, and you save not only this one show, but many more. And if you don't, I may have sold them to someone else already..."

The lights blared up. The crowd stopped chattering, and got silent.

Mr. Grunch turned around and finally looked Fionna into her eyes. "Okay," he whispered, "How much for twenty of these?"

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Fionna cradled the small toy in her hand, reminiscing of her childhood out on the dirty, ash covered streets. Rain poured down and crafted hill and valleys of mud throughout, while glistening off the red, green and silver ornaments that decorated the merchant's carts.

'I have to find the other pieces,' she thought to herself. The toy was broken- it was an off-color, vaguely humanoid thing, with old patches of red and gold etching off it. Long ago, a

civilization had built these toys for the children to play with, yet something was hidden inside of them. It was a message left by these children, but one that was now buried under this city of Jisfuil.

She looked up, and a gentleman wearing a feather hat and parachute pants caught her eye. "Mr. Seven!" She lifted herself off the ground. "Remember me, from yesterday? You were interested in buying thirty of these small tops..."

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The toys have to be put together, interacting, to reveal secrets about the ancient city and even the people living there right now.

In severe debt from ripping off theater owners, Fionna is cornered and has to find a way to make money for a theater in 3 days. One of her toys, from her childhood, is a lady in a fancy hat who is having tea with someone else. That other person is broken from the set. One day, she sees a clown dressed just like how that other figure is supposed to look. She dresses like the Lady having Tea and engages in a roleplay with the clown, tricking her into having tea. The clown is excited and keeps on insisting that Fionna drink her tea. Though she refuses at first, she eventually gives in. Finally, at the last minute before the clown leaves, the theater's hired bandits arrive to kidnap the clown. Fionna had tried to sell a clown into slavery, but the clown outwits her and steals Fionna's toys. The clown knew of Fionna's intentions and had put hallucinogens in the tea. Now she negotiates with the theater to drink them that she is the Lady Having Tea- the clown trope that always gets tricked into falling asleep. The theater laughs and says they have been looking for such a clown. Fionna, after a long trance, falls unconscious, and wakes up to being a clown in a show. The crowd's applause and laughter at her wakes her up.

Angry, she confronts the traveling troupe, and meets one of the hired bandits. The bandit shares Fionna's love of money, but she believes it should be earned through agreed upon contracts, not through shady deals. She is constantly opposed to Fionna's methods and trickery, and her exploitation of slaves.

Fionna promises the bandit many riches. She finds the troupe has several toys which match her own, but now she does not have those toys anymore. She hires the bandit, Lily, to track down the clown and retrieve her sack of toys, and they leave the troupe in secret. When a clown is drawn and quartered by an angry mob, while all the other clowns stand around and laugh, they use this as a distraction to escape.

Meanwhile, conflict lurks throughout the city as control for the theater is put into play. The clowns control the theater- but their motives are unknown. They are like seers, who act in total chaos yet leave the people questioning what is right and wrong. Absolone is a theater owner who hates the clowns. A former teacher of philosophy, he has desired for the longest time to learn how to better society. He sees that the clowns have the potential to get the people to question their biases and look deep inside of them, yet instead of leading the people on a

straight path with the goal for betterment, they do not give clear answers and instead confuse and mislead people- not intentionally, but because they are unclear and do not instruct people on right and wrong, and merely put on a show.

Several playwrights have the job of suggesting plays, but while the main structure of their shows are played out, the clowns usually find a way to twist the meaning of their messages and annoy the defeated playwrights. The clowns will only agree to certain scripts, and if they see the playwright as too controlling, they will refuse to put it on. Regular actors do not have such access to people's emotions as the clowns, and thus companies who use clowns will draw far bigger audiences than those who do not use them, and put them out of business. One of these playwrights, Antony, wears a monocle and is soft spoken with purple hair and green eyes. He was trained and destined to be a clown, but his desire to make his own creative ventures gets the better of him and he finds a way out of that lifestyle through grueling methods. However, at night, his dreams of his former life- that smirking clown, drawing people in and laughing at them- returns, and he is happy. Yet he wakes up and knows that he cannot live both lives at once. He chooses his new independence, even if it means being a laughingstock to the clowns.

The clowns are strange, magical beings. When mobs rip them apart and try to see what they're made of, they find confetti, to which the clowns act surprised and then start laughing. Sometimes, there is no confetti, but blood (from just one clown) which floods the streets, causing carriage jams and loss of business. Sometimes the clown poofs away in a cloud of smoke. But one thing is for sure- their makeup can never be removed. And if it does, it reveals a face which can quickly be removed (like makeup as a 2nd layer) to reveal a totally different face, and so forth.

The theaters are not like regular plays- they have dark, magical elements to them which heighten people's emotions and powers, bringing out elements of their subconscious they never encountered before. Plays fill people with emotions and sights they cannot feel anywhere else, and get them to question the world by sharing information previously unconnected from one mind to another. Lesser plays only replay old ones (in slight reinterpretations and parodies), but the Greater Plays are new stories, often ones tied to current events, or that single out certain audience members and let people peer into their emotions- never directly, always metaphorically. Someone who has trouble with his wife and feels anger may battle a giant bear-crow in a hilarious fashion. He would feel embarrassed, and lash out at the laughing audience, to which they respond by mobbing him and ripping him apart. Or they may all gather in support of him as he breaks down crying and they hug him.

Absolone's niece, Rhiiia, is a clown (not the same one that Fionna meets), and she is at odds with him. Absolone leads a sect of thinkers, who believe the right thing to do is to lead the people on a clear path. They have coexisted with other schools of thought for centuries. The School of Aldeiah believes people should seek answers in a scientific, rigorous method. The School of Raythosi believe in more flexible ways, more akin to the clowns (but not as extreme), where stories are told and people explore them up to subjective interpretation. They

believe conflict is eternal, and thus being clear is too restricting- multiple interpretations must always exist. The clowns allow for this, although this causes conflict as no one has affirmation as to what is right, and wrong views are not shot down. The School of Aldeiah is not authoritarian, but they think that if a view is wrong, it should be shot down, and the people have to be told that- they can't discover it for themselves just by viewing the jungle of many views expressed by the clowns and jesters. The clowns do not belong to any school, though many in Raythosi support their ways. Aldeiah seeks to rebel against what they see is the 'reigning destruction' caused by Raythosi.

Both of these main schools arose in opposition to authoritarian ideologies, which no longer exist in this world.

Yet a third school of thought is the Haleidolei, which is a straightforward school that only cares about laughter and other pure emotions. They do not believe in answers, yet they are not anarchists- they seek to impose plays which do not deal with questioning complex things, yet make people explore complex emotions devoid of words, only feelings and images and other primitive senses they have not felt before. They indulge in the Chocolates and Gold Foil delicacies, always seeking new ways of crafting food which has never been experienced by any soul before. All schools oppose them, yet Raythosi try to see how they think and treat them like they are beggars on the street- to be treated nicely, but not to interact with. They seek to interpret plays in terms of their emotions- to heighten and expand them with interpretations.

A fourth school of thought are the Metaphorum, which is an ironic name for a school of thought which champions indirect metaphors. It is consisted of many sub-schools which are at odds with one another. Like Haleidolei, they are slightly allied with Raythosi, but instead of being more/less extreme than them, they are orthogonal to them (just like the Haleidolei). They seek to only live in interpreted worlds- to turn true memories and feelings into metaphors in stories, and to NEVER interpret these metaphors, as once one steps into the fantasy world, one should not step back. Unlike the other 3 schools, they do not seek to better the world in a certain way. They have given up on this world, and hedonistically want to revel in plays while on their short time on this world.

Raythosi is allied with almost every school that favors free interpretation instead of treating stories as serious means to lead society, which has gained them popularity and power. Aldeiah (which has several sub-schools) is disgusted with this as they see them as children who are not leading the world on a right path full of debate and philosophical enlightenment. But because all schools seek to offer rational, calm discussion instead of suppressing thought, they are all lying in a shaky coexistence with one another, only drawing out their strongest emotions in the shadows.

A smaller school of thought is the Pen's Refuge, which seeks to give power over to the playwrights, wringing it from the clowns. They want the playwrights to have very clear messages, rather than clowns messing it up and turning it from author's intent into ambiguity

or an intentional, opposite message from the intent. They have allied with Aldeiah, one of the few allies Aldeiah has.

The most dangerous school is the Cacklelackle, who the clowns reject but seek to mislead all to create chaos. They do not seek pure chaos, but rather want to oppose every playwright's intentions (unlike clowns who do it 50/50), which may lead to them contradicting themselves at times. They revel in spreading misinformation. It is a school that is born from children twisted by the clown's misleading messages. Aldeiah often use this small school as an example of how the clown's indirection has caused society to fall into this danger, and warn that they will grow larger if action is not taken. As Cacklelackle grows more powerful, the other schools fear the Raythosi and become more drawn to Aldeiah's message.

These 6 main schools of thought, and mixed interpretations of them, drive individuals to seek to control the theaters, in response to the many moral dilemmas that are plaguing the Cities at the moment. Fionna and Lily do not directly encounter the main players, but brush aside them constantly in their quests, as their actions affect the duo's story indirectly.

As Fionna and Lily journey to piece together the mysteries lying within the toys, they encounter these dilemmas. They encountered shadowy clowns in the distance, which no one else sees. They discover people are plagued by hallucinations, making them unable to agree with each other about what is right or wrong, for even the most 'sane' seem to be seeing different things than even the other sane people are seeing. Fionna and Lily discover they see things in different colors, and often argue about what is and isn't happening. Mad mothers drown their children, but sometimes those children truly are evil. In this strange land, it's soon apparent it's must different than our own world- they are no clear causes and effects, and it's almost impossible to put things on a scientific basis. People are forced to live and adapt in this chaos by not caring about reason and fairness, and just living with local reason in the moment. Morals are different than what they are in our world.

Fionna's mentally unstable nature makes her fear what's going on, and Lily often has to ground her into place. But Lily's strict and strange habits prevent her from adapting to this wild world, and she has to rely on Fionna's quick thinking to get out of situations. Fionna was an orphan, but managed to live by making friends easily and influencing people what to do. Yet despite seeming brave, she is cowardly on the inside and only puts on a face to survive. She has blonde hair, amber eyes and is constantly smirking, though her outfits are not well ironed and is slightly unkempt- her Lady Having Tea dress as sloppy and clumisly put on, allowing the clown to see past her.

Lily is a cynical loner who has strange rituals, such as never using her left arm to swing a sword. She's witty and often offensive to complete strangers. She prefers fighting with a crossbow, but carries a sword for close combat. The only thing she cares about is money, which leads to her bonding with Fionna. At first, it's apparent that once Fionna runs out of money, she leaves her and doesn't return until Fionna finds another means of income. But they grow closer as they journey together more. Lily enjoys dancing and performing, but has

a fear of clowns, which she tries to ignore as she's hired by circus troupes over and over again. When Fionna wants to leave, she gladly goes with her new source of money. Lily fights using colorful 'ribbon whips' too, which can bind people to prevent them from escaping. She has dark green pigtails and freckles.

These disparities between people's experiences are not so outlandish that people always see different things. Rather, events happen consistently (usually)- it's the interpretation of the details that are different. There are 'imaginary' beings some see, and others don't. Raythosi has dealt with this by acknowledging all beings are existing, to which Aldeiah scoffs at, believing there is an answer behind all this they have to seek. They constantly strive to devise new ways of determing which beings are imaginary and which are not, but even when one method has a streak of suceeding, it encounters counters eventually and fail. Not only are being imaginary, but things people say, hear, and sense.

Absolone, who seems like the central authoritarian figure, is not as extreme as others in Aldeiah. He seeks to consider to all viewpoints when judging them. However, others in Aldeiah believes certain hallucinations are wrong, while others are correct. Cormen, despite saying otherwise, is another powerful teacher and leader who thinks what he sees are correct. Absolone opposes him because there are many 'crazy cultists' who do not belong to the main schools, but are fringes of society, who lead people into thinking only the leaders are correct, and they should follow them unquestionably. Absolone argues that these schools- especially Aldeiah- were built to attack those cults, which drove people into wars and authoriatarian oppressive regimes many years ago. Cormen claims he isn't like this- he says that even though he believes the statue is green, those who follow the Theogitine method say it's blue, and he'll stick to that method. Absolone argues that just being blind to a method again, just like the cultist fringe leaders, but Cormen says he's open to new methods, as long as they can prove they're better. Rhiiia hates Cormen, and it's one of the few things she agrees with her uncle about.

The shaky alliance between all the Schools and their subsets begins to quake when Cacklelackle tricks several fringe cults into fighting each other over whether a child was truly murdered, or if he was possessed by a clown and was the murderer. The fringe cults were able to be suppresed before by the plays, which allowed them to see other's point of view and question themselves as the stories allow them to self-insert into 'simulations' that would kill them if they were real. The clowns, as actors, can take the hits by being murdered as hated figures in these stories that the masses take serioiusly. But Cacklelackle messes with these stories by driving intentional messages in it: they claim the child was innocent (despite the many dead found near him that he seemingly killed), and this disrupts the lofty attitude many people have as instead of throwing around tons of views nonsensically and forgetting about them, this message is driven into them, causing them to be angry, as some disagree with it. Now, not all messages are treated equally- one is treated above all.

Aldeiah and Raythosi begin to debate on what to do. As always, Raythosi wins the majority support, and people flock to see their newly drafted plays on what to do in this conflict.

Aldeiah argues this play is only a temporary sedative- the underlying detest and unclear intentions will cause more conflict, instead of squashing it by having 'clear enemies' about who is wrong/right. Tivvaka, a Raythosi student, becomes conflicted with her boyfriend Tgar, who is on Aldeiah. An Aldeiah leader, Wonthos, whose son was the child who was murdered, disobeys the Raythosi protocol that the clowns (the true 'power' as they decide which plays get put on) have accepted. With their own rogue troupes of clowns, they set up their own plays, which the main union of clowns have not approved of. This causes confusion among the clowns, who are now infighting not due to hatred of insubordination, but because they are truly confused and wants to squash out their own insecurities the only way they know howby being more nonsensical, to avoid being controlled. They do have one desire: to be free to be chaotic, and those who seem 'Aldeiah-like' are killed. But it's not clear, with their unclear moralities and methods, who truly is. With this disruption between clowns, the two Schools have broken the truce between them. Tgar, a meek and shy person with a good heart, follows Wonthos, who secretely murders several prominent Raythosi. Using their rogue clowns, Wonthos tries to prevent multiple viewpoints from being expressed in the plays by setting up his own plays which causes only certain views to be expressed. In response, extremists from Raythosi set up their own plays to try to counter him, and they end up becoming fake Raythosi subsects who are neither Aldeiah nor Raythosi, but fringe cults.

In an attempt to make things right, Absolone attempts to reign in these ideological traitors by enlisting Antony to write up plays which open people's understanding into realizing there is confusion in the midst, and they must think for themselves. Many from Raythosi despise Absolone's strict, blunt nature and his sternness, and they suspect him of pulling something similar to Wonthos. They accuse him, and seveal Aldeiah leaders, of betraying their own ideas and pulling their followers into fringe cults. To Absolone's surprise, Cormen backs him up, delivering a speech which makes Raythosi leaders realize their own flaws. But now Aldeiah blames the whole mess- and many smaller, similar messes- on Raythosi, which has not given direction to the people for years, causing them to lose moral understanding in favor of lofty sedation, where they cannot decide on what is right/wrong for the plays have made them experience all viewpoints.

Every story is narrated from the 1st person point of view, meaning whatever seems right is only right from that character's perspective. Murders definitely happen, but did that person truly say that? Was there really a shadowy figure in that room? If something is knocked over, was it because of that figure, or the wind, or some person did it? The plague upon the world is that one does not know who to blame, for physically, there is no true answer. Perpetrators often do not even know their own intentions themselves, or forget them- but who knows if they're telling the truth? The lack of omniscience makes things unclear. It seems there is no true right answer to physical events.

The split between Raythosi and Aldeiah causes them to seek immediate alliances with smaller Schools, wanting to know their immediate loyalty. Pen's Refuge is Aldeiah's main ally, with smaller sects of the other 2 Schools (besides Cackleackle, which allies with no one) joining with various sides. Haleidolei largely remains neutral, but its subsects join the other two.

Meanwhile, these alliances are illusions, as some in each School seek to take power for their own School, rather than the 2 main schools.

One of Raythosi's leaders, Kallen, is a former Aldeiah scholar who became disllusioned with trying to find what is right/wrong. Kallen stomps out several Raythosi traitors who have become fringe cults, but he cannot get everyone. He dislikes Absolone for his stubbornness, claiming Absolone is an idealist who, while open to Raythosi's views, has too much blind faith that there are always true, physical events. Tivvaka is one of Kallen's top students.

Fionna and Lily journey to find the clown, and discover ancient dollhouses and giant cities that resembles toys from long ago. They meet rogue clowns who have been employed by fringe cultists to send their biased messages.

Fionna plays into the big picture by making deals and gambles which have a large impact on the Cities. She and Lily are left trying to decide which ideology to agree on for each decision, often switching and never pledging loyalty to one School. Fionna wishes there was a scientific reason for each occurrence, to know whose fault was whose, but fails to find this occurs. Fionna and several members of the Schools engage in ways to outwit and outguess one another.

This story is not meant to explore philosophical and moral themes, but is meant to deliver an atmosphere of mystery, where clowns and dolls reign supreme over Baroque landscapes. The illusions and hallucinations are meant to support that mysterious atmosphere, not the other way around.

The Cities have giant gardens filled with opaque chess pieces and strange sculptures. Colorful quilt patterns line the streets. When it looks like the fringe cultists and Aldeiah defectors are 'controlling' the clowns, it's revealed the clowns have been double crossing and playing them all along. Wonthos descends more and more into madness trying to control them, but slowly learns otherwise. Tivvaka, his daughter, makes him realize that the error of his ways. However, his disciple, Tgar, becomes more mad and eventually kills Wonthos for downplaying their cause. These cultists remain more a nuisance than a major threat, however, and are puppets of Cacklelackle, which does not seek authoritarian rule but rather are full of hatred and sadism who only seek to oppose those with agendas. In a way, they are like Raythosi, but instead of wanting to use the Amphitheathers to lead a better society or for hedonism, they want to use it to incite conflict. Cacklelackle is not even a main antagonist either, but are byproducts of the madness that are used as examples as to why Raythosi is failing.

The main conflict comes from what people's fear of the unknown makes them do; how does their fear make them make decisions, and seek power? Both Fionna and Lily are fearful, but learn from one another to control these fears. Both fear the unknown, but in different ways. Fionna becomes calmer when she has an answer to the unknown, while Lily becomes calmer when she stops trying to understand and ground the unknown, and rather just flows with it. Lily, with her sharp senses, is able to tell Fionna what is going on, even if those answers

aren't correct (more Aldeiah). Lily has to stop believing in any correct answer and accept there may be many correct answers (more Raythosi).

Fionna remembers that there is a strange dollhouse from her childhood, and some of her toys are pieces of it. Meanwhile, Kallen lives in a house which is describe exactly like this dollhouse. One duchess who lives in his estate has a face that is never seen- she is always looking out in the Monet-like lake, and only her backside, her terrifying yet calm hair, is seen. Kallen passes by her every once in a while, and for some reason seems to 'love' her. He tells himself to be rational, and wants to interpret his situation to get answers. He sets playwrights and clowns to make plays to help him find answers, but they fail. He's an obsessive, philosophical man who wants answers to why things are. But he eventually considers Haleidolei's views, which seek interpreted answers in terms of emotions that cannot be explained in words and reason.

Mgon from Haleidolei seeks to control the Theaters to understand the visions which only he sees. He cares about society deeply, and thinks interpretation cannot be done with words. He seeks to manipulate Kallen, who comes to him for help, to turn Haleidolei into a major School.

The two sides battle mainly for how people react to the plays, not how they react outside of them. Raythosi believes in the audience should have subjective interpretation, while Aldeiah believes the audience should seek the correct interpretations, while acknowledging they may not get it- they should just try. Their conflict is about how the masses should think. Fionna and Lily encounter these masses intimately.

Fionna participates in these plays

Fionna encounters an old priest who used to head her orphanage. The priest was mean and abusive, but now he begs Fionna to help him with the destruction wrought by the plays. The orphans have disobeyed his orders to see the plays, and now they have come back with strange drawings and scupltures. Fionna and Lily befriend one orphan, but soon discover he has been making strange, disfigured sculptures. Eventually, Fionna discovers one of these sculptures and drawings is of her, but in a badly misshapen way.